



**WRIGHT'S**  
**Education & Family**  
**Services**

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Overcoming the Myth of Sameness  
An Understanding of Racial Difference

1. Self-Introduction
2. The Myth of Sameness
3. Principles of Cross Cultural Counselling Effectiveness
4. Nichol's Model of Understanding Cultural Difference
5. Introduction to Literature Which Enhances Understanding of African American Culture (for more local examples I greatly recommend the writing of G.E. Clarke and M. Tynes)
6. Towards Cultural Competency
7. Self-In-Context Mapping
8. Break **2:15-2:45**
9. Group discussion (groups report back)
10. Discussion of Case Studies (groups report back)

## The Myth of Sameness

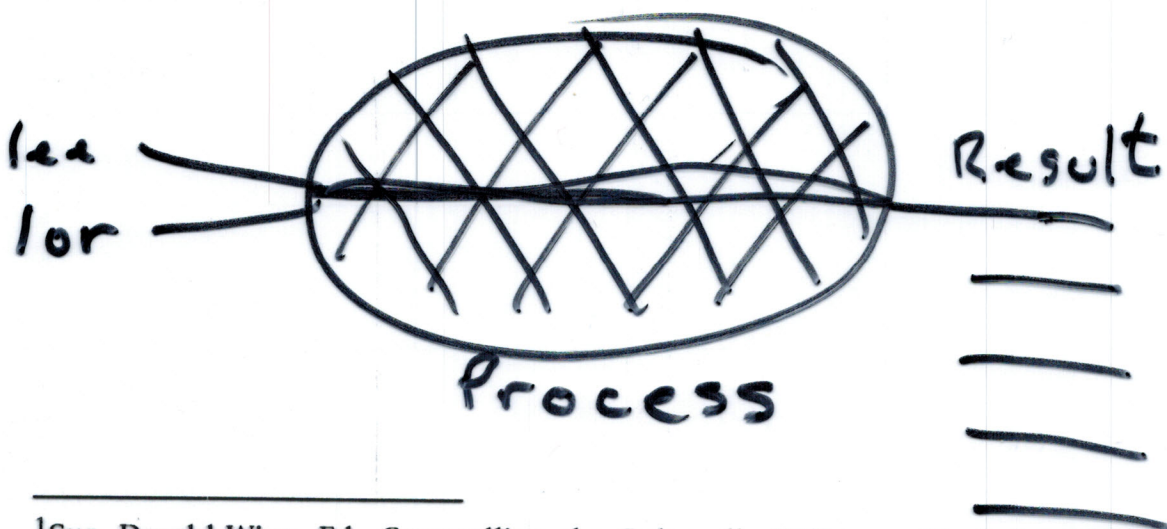
Hence, many of the issues in counseling minorities are related to cultural differences and the extent to which these differences affect the counseling interview. Cultural considerations have, in large measure, determined how counselors define a client's needs, how they function in the therapeutic situation, how they determine treatment, cure, and even reality itself. Culture has been, then, the silent intruder in the counseling relationship, and, because of its very silence it has often gone unrecognized.

Much of the counseling literature has tended to support this idea (Vontress, 1970; Golightly, 1971). Whenever we have talked about the existence of differential client-counselor expectations or the difficulties in counseling minorities, we were alluding essentially to the issue of culture and how it affects the helping relationship. Counseling is culture bound, and this fact becomes even clearer when the counselor and client are also members of different racial and socio-economic groups.

But it is in the area of cultural expectations that we get into the most difficulty with each other. When white majority Americans expect minorities (and vice versa) to think the way they do, to act the way they act, and talk the way they talk, we set the stage for conflict instead of understanding...

Hence simply talking about cultural differences and how we must respect them has become a hollow cliché in the counseling profession. Most of us have heard, for example, these phrases: "We're all alike under our skins"; "They're just like use"; or "I treat everyone the same-be they Black, blue or green." Such statements are at best self-delusionary and at worst, simplistic in thinking. To treat everyone the same is to deny their humanness, their individuality, and their sense of cultural heritage.

As Hall (1976b) has stated, any time we hear someone say that Blacks or other ethnic groups are no different from us, then we also know that that person is living in a single-context world and is as incapable of describing his or here world as he or she is of describing that of Blacks. We are not the same under our skins. Our culture and our individual interpretations of it are more than skin deep.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Sue, Derald Wing, Ed., Counselling the Culturally Different, City?: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1981

## Cross-Cultural Counselling Effectiveness: Some Propositions

**Proposition 1** *Cross-cultural counseling effectiveness is most likely to be enhanced when the counselor and client share the same world view. World views are frequently correlated with a person's cultural/racial heritage, ethnic identification, and experiences in society. As a result, the credibility and attractiveness of the counselor is likely to be high.*

**Proposition 1a** *All things being equal, attitudinal/belief similarity will tend to facilitate cross-cultural counseling because it enhances counselor credibility and attractiveness.*

**Proposition 1b** *All things being equal, membership group similarity will tend to facilitate cross-cultural counseling because it enhances counselor credibility and attractiveness.*

**Proposition 1c** *Whether membership group similarity is more important than attitudinal similarity in cross-cultural counseling depends on the client's minority identity development.*

### **Implications**

These assumptions underscore the impotence of the counselor understanding and being able to share the world view of his/her clients. This statement does not mean counselors have to hold these world views as their own. Rather it means that the counselor is able to see and accept, in a non-judgmental manner, the legitimacy of alternative ways to view the world. This implies several things that make for a culturally skilled counselor.

- 1. The culturally skilled counselor is one who has moved from being culturally unaware and sensitive to his/her own cultural baggage.*
- 2. A culturally skilled counselor is aware of his/her own values and biases and how they may affect minority clients.*
- 3. The culturally skilled counselor will have a good understanding of the socio-political system's operation in the United States [and Canada] with respect to its treatment of minorities.*
- 4. A culturally skilled counselor is one who is comfortable with differences that exist between the counselor and client in terms of race and beliefs.*
- 5. The culturally skilled counselor is sensitive to circumstances ( personal biases, stage of ethnic identity, socio-political influences, etc.; that may dictate referral of the minority client to a member of his/her own race/culture.*

**Proposition II** *Cross-cultural counseling effectiveness is most likely to be enhanced when the counselor uses counseling modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences/cultural values of the client.*

## **Implications**

- 6. The culturally skilled counselor must possess specific knowledge and information about the particular group he/she is working with.*
- 7. The culturally skilled counselor must have a clear and explicit knowledge and understanding of the generic characteristics of counseling and therapy.*
- 8. ...the culturally skilled counselor must be able to generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal responses.*
- 9. The culturally skilled counselor must be able to send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and "appropriately"<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Sue, Derald Wing, Counseling the Culturally Different, City?: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1981

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We can Treat other people differently because they are  
different.

(Being interpreted this means...)

[Property Owning Protestant Caucasian Americans] can  
treat [African Americans, Indigeonous Peoples, Catholics  
and Women] [poorly] because they are [inferior, sub-  
human, morally degenerate, weak etc.]

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Ivey (1980) suggested:

For the future, one can predict a counseling psychologist who will be skilled in one-to-one counseling but will be more interested in teaching what he or she knows to others via the psycho educational model. And, with each individual or group with whom the counseling psychologist works, the emphasis will be first on the transactions then on the environment. Where necessary, individual counseling interventions will be initiated, but more often systemic and planned interventions to facilitate change and growth in BOTH the person and the environment may be expected.

Underlying this model will be an increased awareness of the decisional model underlying the structure of the helping interview, planned change in institutions or environmental services, and the decisional process of the client. Decision making is not new, but our understanding of the process will lead to many new discoveries. Facilitating the decisional process will be computer-assisted counseling and computer modeling of alternative futures. Aiding in this process will be an increased awareness of the linguistic frames that organize the helping process. Awareness of cultural and social differences will increase.(p.15)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A. E. Ivey (1980), "Counseling 2000: Time to take charge!", The Counseling Psychologist, 8 (4), 12-16

There is much you can do:

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## Towards Cultural Competency In Education

### The Profession

1. Provide pre-service training in cross-cultural education
2. Recruit culturally different students to under graduate and graduate education programs

### The System

3. Promote in-service training opportunities in cross-cultural education
4. Develop formal consulting networks involving, teachers, school counselors, culturally competent community members and counselors from other settings.
5. Employ culturally competent and culturally different educators
6. Give study to the present school administration and student services structure to assess its cultural flexibility and implement change or develop resources as warranted

### The Individual Educator

7. Take advantage of in-service training opportunities in cross-cultural education
8. Develop an informal consulting network with culturally competent community members and counselors from other settings
9. Develop a personal network of community informants to assist you in developing greater cultural competency and structuring your practice to be more culturally flexible
10. Attend events of cultural groups, read their literature, visit their homes in effort to gain greater understanding of cultural differences (study nuance)
11. Use classroom assignments, extracurricular activities and discipline-ing opportunities to better understand each child's familial, social, cultural and educational context.

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To these efforts I pray you will apply yourself. In these efforts I wish you

Godspeed,  
*[Signature]*

## Towards Cultural Competency In Guidance Counseling

### The Profession

1. Provide pre-service training in cross-cultural counseling
2. Recruit culturally different students to graduate counseling programs

### The System

3. Promote in-service training opportunities in cross-cultural counseling
4. Develop formal consulting networks involving school counselors and culturally competent counselors from other settings.
5. Employ culturally competent and culturally different counselors
6. Give study to the present guidance structure to assess its cultural flexibility and implement change or develop resources as warranted

### The Individual Counselor

7. Take advantage of in-service training opportunities in cross-cultural counseling
8. Develop an informal consulting network with culturally competent counselors from other settings
9. Develop a personal network of community informants to assist you in developing greater cultural competency and structuring your guidance practice to be more culturally flexible
10. Attend events of cultural groups, read their literature, visit their homes in effort to gain greater understanding of cultural differences (study nuance)

## Cultural Pain & Racial Issues

Cultural pain is when we feel insecure, embarrassed, angry, confused, torn, apologetic, uncertain, or inadequate because of conflicting expectations of and pressures from being a minority and an African American.

- Resentment when another African American seems to be denying his or her blackness.
- Discomfort when another African American uses black English in the presence of white people.
- Embarrassment when a white person tries to act black.
- Discomfort when a white person is patronizing on racial issues.
- Anxiety when a white person seems to expect us to explain or defend questionable behavior by other African Americans.
- Anxiety when we wonder if we have done enough for the African American community.

Discussing racial issues when both African Americans and whites are present usually creates an undercurrent of tension. Shelby Steele describes this dynamic as a struggle for innocence (Shelby Steele, "I'm Black, You're White, Who's Innocent?" *Harper's* (June 1988):45-53.). Neither African Americans nor whites want to feel responsible for the current problems in the African American community; both groups attempt to maintain their "innocence" for causing or contributing to these problems.

White people tend to see the problem as one of class. Their position is that this is America where, with hard work and self-discipline, people can "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." If people are poor and uneducated, it is the result of their own lack of effort. Seeing the problem as one of class allows many white people to maintain their innocence.

Many African Americans, on the other hand, tend to see the problem as one of racism, which keeps us down and denies us opportunities. Seeing the problem as caused by racism allows us as African Americans to maintain our innocence.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Bell, Cultural Pain and African Americans: Unspoken Issues In Early Recovery, (1992, Hazelden Educational Materials.)pp.8-11.

## Racial Self-Hate

This is often the result of negative stereotypes assigned to African Americans.

Some of us may feel ashamed of the supposed lack of progress in parts of the African American community. We may feel the need to justify or explain our community's tragic realities, such as crime, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, breakdown of the family, and illiteracy. Should we take responsibility for every problem or issue that exists in black America? No. But feeling that we must may overwhelm us.

One of the most difficult and painful issues for African Americans is the extent to which we have adopted a "white" standard of beauty by valuing straight hair, light complexions, and sharp features. How we feel about the standards of physical beauty may have a major impact on our lives. It may determine how we think of ourselves, our body, our clothes, our mannerisms. If we do feel conflict about these areas, and don't acknowledge and attempt to resolve that conflict, it may continue to cause us emotional pain.

It hurts us emotionally when we assess our worth in terms of how closely we approximate "whiteness." We need to value our traits and characteristics without defensiveness. We should acknowledge shame where we have felt it so that we can resolve it.

Black pride is neither an idle phrase nor an antiwhite concept. Black pride is rediscovering the values that embrace our heritage and community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Bell, Cultural Pain and African Americans: Unspoken Issues In Early Recovery, (1992, Hazelden Educational Materials.)pp.14-15.

An excerpt from A Rap on Race:

Baldwin: I'm not talking about that kind of cosmic guilt for the human race. Actually I meant that if I were a child of this country I would judge my elders very harshly. Whether I would be wrong or right is scarcely at this time relevant. Because this is the world my elders have created. This is the world that they've created and this is the future-.

Mead: But one generation of them didn't create it. It was created by hundreds of generations.

Baldwin: Of course. But a boy of fifteen doesn't have that perspective, does he? Martin Luther King discovered this himself when he finally went to Chicago: that there was a whole generation of black people whom he was completely unable to touch. Their lives, the lives of black boys in Chicago, were so much different from the lives of black boys in Montgomery, so much more fragmented and in so many ways so much more bitter.

It was so much more devious to say to one of those kids, "We shall overcome." To say that, with patience, time will do this or that was absolutely meaningless. The boy was standing on a street corner looking at his friends dying on the needle, possibly dying on the needle himself. He certainly had a friend in jail, certainly had a girl friend on the block, certainly knew the reasons for the lives led by his mother and father. You couldn't go to a fifteen-, sixteen- or seventeen-year-old boy and say anything to him at all, except try to teach him something that he himself really wanted to learn. What you had to do was deal with him as though he were a valuable human being because no one had ever treated him as though he had any value.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mead/James Baldwin, A Rap on Race, (1971, Philadelphia: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1974)pp. 64-65.

An excerpt from A Rap on Race:

Baldwin: Not touching a person is a way of rejecting him. And it's also a way of being rejected. I remember when I was much younger, when I was in junior high school and also in the pulpit, I went through great traumas. I was about fourteen and was taught by my mother to always stand up on subways and give a seat to a woman. But some of the preachers told me that I should never give a seat to a woman. This gave me a tremendous conflict for a while, because standing up for a white woman would have seemed to be an act of servility. I solved this problem very neatly by never sitting down in the subway. But it was traumatic because I had to think about it and think it through for myself and decide whether a woman's color is more important than the fact that she's a woman. You get over it, but I think that every black person must have gone through this kind of private warfare, especially a black man.

Being black. Black. Black. That's another aspect of this whole thing that no one has ever really dealt with! What it means has been suggested by many people, but it has never really been apprehended. His sexuality is menaced from the moment his eyes open on the world. And the only person who really knows anything about that, who knows it most intimately, is also the most dangerous figure in his life-his mother. His father, for the most part, has no relationship to his kid anyway. Also, it's not something his father can do much about, because his own manhood is menaced and he's facing knives every day, partly to feed the child. So it evolves upon the mother to invest the child, her man child, with some kind of interior dignity which will protect him against something he really can't be protected against, unless he has some interior thing within him to meet it.

In my own experience I did a lot dodging and side-stepping, but I had to do a great deal of frontal attacking, too. Part of the great dilemma was how in the world, first of all, to treat a black woman. When I was growing up one was very ambivalent about oneself, and this was not one's fault. The schools I'd been to, the books I'd read, the people I knew didn't know anything about themselves either, and to find out about myself I had to do several difficult things. But how to deal with a black girl whom you knew you couldn't protect unless you were prepared to work all your life in the post office, unless you were prepared to make bargains I was temperamentally unfitted to make?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Mead/James Baldwin, A Rap on Race, (1971, New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1974)pp. 54-55.

An excerpt from Maya Angelou's Gather Together In My Name:

For the first time the farmers acknowledged my maturity. They didn't order me back and forth along the shelves but found subtler ways to make their wants known.

"You all have any long grain rice, Sister?"

The hundred-pound sack of rice sat squidged down in full view.

"Yes, ma'am, I believe we do"

"Well then, I'll thank you for two pounds."

"Two pounds? Yes, Ma'am."

I had seen the formality of black adult equals, all my youth but had never considered that a time would come when I, too, could participate. The customs are as formalized as an eighteenth-century minuet, and a child at the race's knee learns the moves and twirls by osmosis and observation.

Values among Southern rural blacks are not quite the same as those existing elsewhere. Age has more worth than wealth, and religious piety more value than beauty.

There were no sly looks over my fatherless child. No cutting insinuations kept me shut away from the community. Knowing how closely my grandmother's friends hewed to the Bible, I was surprised not to be asked to confess my evil ways and repent. Instead, I was seen in the sad light which had been shared and was to be shared by black girls in every state in the country. I was young, yes, unmarried, yes-but I was a mother, and that placed me nearer to the people.

I was flattered to receive such acceptance from my betters (seniors) and strove mightily to show myself worthy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maya Angelou, Gather Together In My Name, (1974, New York: Random House Publishing Company, 1985)pp. 66-67.