INTEGRATIVE MULTITHEORETICAL PSYCHOTHERAPY

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Chapter 10

Multicultural-Feminist Psychotherapy: Adapting to Cultural Contexts

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INTRODUCTION TO MULTICULTURAL-FEMINIST PSYCHOTHERAPY

Historical Context

Multicultural and feminist approaches to psychotherapy arose during the second half of the twentieth century and can be seen as outgrowths of the civil rights movement and the women's movement. In 1963, Betty Friedan suggested that the traditional female role may contribute to psychological problems like depression. In 1972, Phyllis Chesler pointed out that traditional psychotherapy—provided by male psychologists and psychiatrists—might have a harmful effect on women by enforcing traditional submissive roles and ignoring the realities of sexual abuse, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexism. The women's movement helped generate the idea that psychotherapy could be tailored to meet the needs of women and to support societal change. This led to the emergence of *Feminist Therapy,* emphasizing an egalitarian relationship between therapist and client, recognition of the impact of external forces like discrimination, and the need to foster women's independence and assertiveness. In its contemporary form, *Feminist Therapy* has been described as a philosophy of psychotherapy rather than a prescription of techniques (Brown, 1994). This philosophy often acknowledges the political and cultural nature of providing psychotherapy for women and highlighting restrictive and oppressive social structures. Carolyn Enns (1997) identified distinctive beliefs associated with *Feminist Therapy* including that "the personal problems women encounter are connected to the political and social climate in which they live" (p. 8–9) and that "many symptoms represent 'normal' reactions to a restrictive environment" (p. 10). In addition to improving psychological treatment for women, feminists have encouraged all psychotherapists to recognize the influence of restrictive gender roles for both

females and males. To complement the special emphases of *Feminist Therapy* for women, many psychotherapists have written about the special needs of men in psychotherapy (e.g., Good & Brooks, 2005).

Multicultural Counseling shares a similar origin based on observations about how psychotherapy may not benefit all clients. In the late 1970s, counselors working with ethnically diverse clients, like Donald Atkinson and his colleagues, concluded that "counseling has failed to serve the needs of minorities, and in some cases, proven counterproductive to their well-being" (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1979, p. 11). This conclusion was based on the observation that "minorities are diagnosed differently and receive 'less preferred' treatment than do majority clients" (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1979, p. 11). In 1982, Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues proposed the first set of cross-cultural counseling competencies that described specific beliefs, skills, and knowledge that culturally competent therapists should possess. Ten years later, a revised version of Multicultural Counseling Competencies and Standards were published by the American Counseling Association (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992). In 1990, Paul Pederson hailed multiculturalism as a "fourth force" in psychotherapy, complementing the three traditional forces of psychodynamic, behavioral, and humanistic psychotherapy. Most recently, the American Psychological Association (2003) published Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists. These guidelines pointed out that "all people are cultural beings, that all interactions are cross-cultural, and that all of our life experiences are perceived and shaped from within our cultural perspectives" (American Psychological Association, 2003, p. 382). These guidelines stressed the need for the development of culture-centered skills that can be used to account for the impact of culture in psychotherapy and other psychological interventions. Although there was an early emphasis on race and ethnicity, multiculturalism has now embraced a broad definition of culture that "recognizes the broad scope of dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions" (American Psychological Association, 2003, p. 380). In this chapter, strategies drawn from *Feminist Therapy* and *Multicultural Counseling* are described together because of their common emphasis on the impact of cultural contexts, including gender roles, on the way that individuals think, act, and feel.

Multicultural Adaptation

Chapter Three suggested that the purpose of psychotherapy is to facilitate human adaptation to different environments. Fostering adaptation to cultural contexts was identified as the purpose of multicultural and feminist approaches to psychotherapy. Two types of cultural adaptation were introduced

in that chapter. First, it was suggested that multicultural-feminist psychotherapy can help clients adapt to new cultures or subcultures and respond to oppressive cultural contexts. For example, multicultural strategies are often used to help immigrants adapt to new cultural environments while not losing touch with the values of their original cultures. Many individuals face the challenge of adapting to two or more cultural contexts in which they regularly interact. For example, a Chinese American woman in San Francisco may live in a predominantly Asian neighborhood and speak Chinese at home but may work in a Euro-American work setting and speak English with white, Hispanic, African American, and Asian American colleagues. For ethnic minority clients like these, multicultural strategies are helpful for assisting clients to adapt to the mainstream culture while not forsaking their own unique values and preferences. Multicultural-feminist adaptation also includes helping clients adapt to oppressive or restrictive environments and making active choices about how to respond. For example, a gay client in psychotherapy may need help in deciding how to talk about his relationship at work and how to respond to homophobic comments by colleagues. Because culture is such a pervasive backdrop to our everyday lives, it is always important to attend to the ongoing process of cultural adaptation.

The second type of cultural adaptation introduced in Chapter Three is the type of adaptive worldview and cultural values that allow individuals to flexibly respond to cultural forces. Many models of cultural identity development "propose that members of racial/ethnic minority groups initially value the other group (dominant culture) and devalue their own culture, move to valuing their own group and devaluing the dominant culture, and integrate a value for both groups in a final stage" (American Psychological Association, 2003, p. 386). Originally, identity development models were developed to describe the experience of racial minorities and other marginalized groups (e.g., Cross, 1971). More recently, however, identity development has been extended to focus on white racial identity development (e.g., Helms, 1990), recognizing that all people are influenced by culture and encounter experiences that shape the way they view themselves and others. As a result, awareness of cultural forces and values has been recognized as part of understanding all clients in psychotherapy. Many multicultural theorists describe the ideal outcome of cultural identity development as a type of "integrative awareness" (Helms, 1995) or "multiperspective integration" (Ivey, 1995) that allows people to value their own culture as well as those of others. Therefore, multicultural psychotherapy should foster an internal form of cultural adaptation that results in an integrative worldview embracing pluralistic cultural values and allowing people to effectively interact with people from a variety of different backgrounds and cultures. Feminist therapists describe the importance of

helping clients discover their own voice in a form that is no longer distorted or silenced by a restrictive or oppressive cultural context (Brown, 1994).

Multicultural Conceptualization

Focusing on Culture

Chapter Three suggested that a multicultural conceptualization should be formulated when culture becomes a focal dimension in psychotherapy. A multicultural conceptualization focuses on the way that cultural contexts shape people's thoughts, actions, and feelings. Compared to interpersonal patterns or social systems, culture is a broader context that has a more subtle impact because it includes the influence of people that have never been met as well as societal structures and values that covertly shape individual experience. The American Psychological Association (2003) defined *culture* as "the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological process (language, caretaking processes) and organizations (media, educational systems)" (p. 380). In psychotherapy, cultural contexts may influence clients' ethnic identity, gender roles, or religious values that impact perceptions of self-efficacy and attribution style. Some clients may enter counseling with a keen awareness of the way their presenting concerns are related to cultural experiences, like racial discrimination or homophobia. Other clients will not readily recognize the way their circumstances have been shaped by traditional gender roles or the way they have been taught by the culture to attribute success to external factors and to take personal responsibility for failure. If a psychotherapist concludes that a client's primary concerns are related to cultural contexts, it may be appropriate to look more closely at three types of cultural experiences: (1) cultural messages, (2) acculturation and cultural identity development, and (3) the client's worldview and cultural values. These three elements of a multicultural conceptualization are illustrated in Figure 10.1. In this approach to multicultural conceptualization, cultural messages can be seen as the lessons a person learns from different cultural contexts. Cultural identity development or acculturation can be seen as the ongoing process of adjusting to cultural contexts and responding to cultural messages. The result of identity development is an individual's worldview that encompasses current cultural values and shapes the way that the world is perceived and understood.

Cultural Messages

The first step in formulating a multicultural conceptualization is to identify *cultural messages* that clients may have learned from different cultures or contexts in which they have interacted. Identifying specific messages, like "Men should be strong" or "Chicanos are lazy," represents a way of capturing

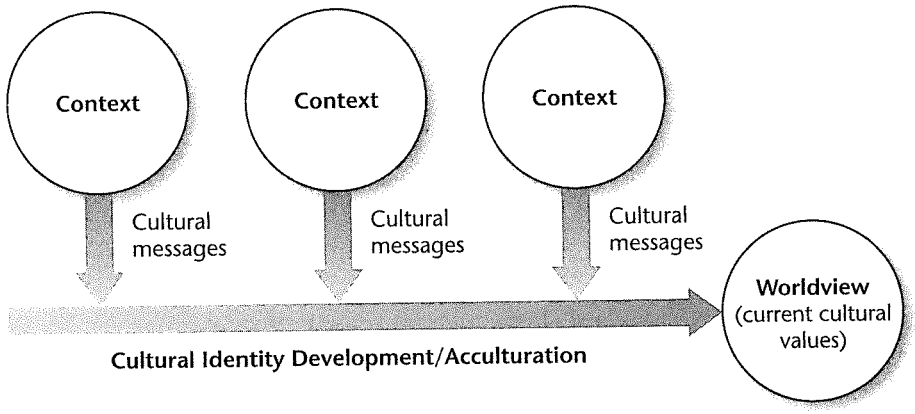

FIGURE 10.1 A multicultural conceptualization looks at the way different cultural contexts contribute messages that combine to shape the process of cultural identity development that results in an individual's worldview and cultural values.

small bits of information gleaned from the broader culture. For some people, like recent immigrants to a new country, the different cultural contexts they have encountered are vastly different with contradictory cultural messages. For others, like individuals who grow up in small homogenous communities, the different cultural contexts are more subtle. For a boy growing up in an isolated village, his family home, the school where he is educated, and the church he attends may represent three different cultural contexts that each communicates slightly different cultural messages. For example, this child might be taught at home to value cooperation. At school, competing in academics or athletics may be learned. At church, a commitment to self-sacrifice based on a spiritual value may be seen as most important. Identifying the various cultural messages that have impacted a client will form the basis of a multicultural conceptualization.

Many cultural messages are transmitted through the family. For example, parents might teach their children that it is the father's responsibility to provide for the family and it is the mother's responsibility to nurture the children. Other messages are taught through religious or other cultural institutions. For example, some religions teach that men should always assume leadership roles or that homosexual relationships are forbidden. Although some cultural messages have been taught overtly, other cultural messages are implicit and may never have been spoken. For example, many Americans have learned to value material possessions as an outward sign of success and base their self-esteem on the amount of money they earn without having been taught to do so by parents or educators.

Part of formulating a multicultural conceptualization is to listen for and identify overt and subtle cultural messages that may be shaping clients' current

concerns. For example, clients may be distressed by self-critical thoughts because they are engaging in actions that are culturally prohibited. For example, a lesbian woman raised in the deep South may have received the message that "girls should always be gentle and feminine." Later, when this woman begins interacting with a lesbian community in college, she may hear the message that "women can act as strong or masculine as they like." Figure 10.1 illustrates the way different contexts relay different cultural messages.

Acculturation/Cultural Identity Development

The second part of constructing a multicultural conceptualization is to look at experiences related to *acculturation or cultural identity development.* Both of these concepts refer to the way people adjust to different cultural environments and the way they respond to cultural messages in an ongoing attempt to form a coherent worldview to guide them. Acculturation has been described as the way an individual adjusts to a new culture, and this concept is particularly helpful in understanding the experience of people who move from one culture to another. For example, a therapist working with an immigrant client, may want to see what values and cultural practices the client maintains from her culture-of-origin, which values of mainstream American culture she has adopted, and the interaction between these two forces. Cultural identity development has been used to describe the experience of members of minority groups adjusting to the tension between their own subculture and mainstream society. A psychotherapist can explore identity development by looking at the ways clients may overvalue or undervalue their own worldview and members of their own cultural group, compared to other cultural perspectives or members of other groups. For example, a gay client who reports spending time only with gay friends may be experiencing an "immersion" or "gay pride" stage of identity development in which one's own group is prized and other groups are devalued. Figure 10.1 illustrates cultural identity development as the way people process and internalize cultural messages. Let's return to the example of a lesbian raised in the American South. During an identity comparison or confusion stage of development (Cass, 1979), this woman may have internalized traditional gender roles that led to feelings of self-doubt because she did not live up to cultural ideals. Subsequent messages from the lesbian community in college may have helped her move to a new stage of identity tolerance, acceptance, or pride in which she assumed roles and attitudes that fit a new cultural context.

Worldview and Cultural Values

The third part of a multicultural conceptualization involves generating ideas about how cultural experiences have been internalized in the form of a *worldview* that encompasses current *cultural values.* APA (2003) described

the relationship between culture and worldview in the following way: "Culture has been described as the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices" (p. 380). Within the context of psychotherapy, it will be particularly important to identify cultural values that support therapeutic goals. For example, if clients embrace a collectivistic perspective, then it may be helpful to discuss ways that psychological growth and behavior change will allow clients to give back to their communities. Other cultural values, however, may create a challenge for psychotherapy. For example, some clients may have been taught not to discuss personal issues outside the family, and this value may result in feelings of guilt about talking to a counselor. To understand a client's worldview, it is important for a psychotherapist to be aware of cultural values that may support therapeutic goals and others that may hinder psychotherapy. Figure 10.1 portrays an individual's worldview as the result of cultural identity development. However, it should be noted that since new cultural contexts are encountered that communicate different messages, cultural identity development is an ongoing process. Therefore, worldview should be seen as a dynamic and evolving set of values. Examples of questions that can be used to explore cultural contexts and identity and formulate a multicultural conceptualization are listed in Table 10.1.

TABLE 10.1 Questions for a Multicultural Conceptualization

Cultural Messages

- What values did you learn growing up?
- What were you taught was most important in that particular cultural context?
- What did you learn about people like yourself?
- As you have moved through life, have you been exposed to different messages?

Acculturation/Cultural Identity Development

- In what cultural context do you feel most comfortable?
- Do you think you have learned to value some people more than others?
- How do you view your own cultural values compared to values held by others?
- Do you relate more easily to people like yourself or to people who are different?

Worldview/Cultural Values

- How would you describe your personal outlook on the world?
- Do you still hold most of the same values that you were taught growing up?
- How are your current values different than those of your family of origin?
- What ideas or goals are most important to you now?

Case Examples of Multicultural Conceptualization

Multicultural Conceptualization of Substance Abuse

When Dana entered psychotherapy with Dr. P., cultural influences were not initially obvious, and culture was not one of the focal dimensions originally agreed upon. However, over time, Dr. P. came to recognize the importance of understanding the way Dana's cultural context supported her excessive use of alcohol.

- **Cultural Messages:** Dana had grown up in a poor family in a rural area of the southeastern United States. Within this cultural context, drinking alcohol was an important part of socializing and celebrating important occasions. One of the ways Dana remembered this cultural message is that she recalled her father saying, "Everyone deserves to have a good time." Within Dana's subculture, having a good time meant drinking alcohol and becoming intoxicated.
- **Acculturation/Cultural Identity Development:** Although Dana was Euro-American, she felt that her experience growing up in rural Appalachia made her different from Euro-Americans who grew up in urban or suburban America. When Dana entered psychotherapy she held many negative values about her own culture and referred to herself as a "former redneck." She had distanced herself from the community she grew up in and did not like returning home. She had tried to assimilate to urban life and forget about her poor, rural roots.
- **Worldview/Cultural Values:** Dana had been taught to work hard and then reward herself by socializing with friends, listening to music, and drinking alcohol. Dana had learned to view herself as a cultural outsider in urban America and had tried hard to adjust to city life and to fit into the mainstream. Growing up in a poor community, Dana had been taught to pitch in and take care of others in need. However, in her current life in the city, she was not involved with her neighbors and did not have an outlet for this positive value.

Multicultural Conceptualization of Health Behaviors

When Dr. P. and Abe explored cultural experiences together, they discovered some cultural messages that created barriers for Abe as well as other values that supported change.

- **Cultural Messages:** Abe had been taught that he should work hard and do well in order to set a positive example for other African Americans. His deceased father used to tell him, "You'll have to work twice as hard to be afforded the same opportunities as others." Abe had translated this message into a pattern of workaholic behavior that now threatened his

physical health and family relationships. Although he had also been taught to take care of his family, he had learned to enact this value primarily through providing financial support. Abe had a hard time trying to work less in order to spend more time in a supportive or nurturing role with his family.

- **Acculturation/Cultural Identity Development:** In private school, college, and law school, Abe had adapted to white values and had downplayed his black identity. He felt more comfortable interacting in white social circles and felt uncomfortable visiting his mother in her predominantly black neighborhood after his father's death. Abe sometimes criticized African Americans who were not ambitious and did not overcome the barriers that he had surmounted.
- **Worldview/Cultural Values:** Abe had been taught to take care of his family although he often focused on being a good provider to fulfill this role. As he explored ways to maintain his physical health and improve communication within his family, Dr. P. was able to help Abe see that these actions were consistent with his cultural values about the importance of family. He also realized that he would not have succeeded without the emotional support of his father, and he wanted to give his own children the same support he received.

MULTICULTURAL-FEMINIST STRATEGIES

The fourteen multicultural-feminist strategies described in this chapter are representative examples of the kinds of strategies that psychotherapists can use to focus on cultural context, identity, and the interaction between the two. The first two skills focus on understanding clients' worldviews. The next three skills (MCUL-3 through 5) are designed to create a culturally appropriate therapeutic relationship. Multicultural-feminist strategies 6 through 8 can be used to facilitate cultural identity development. The next three skills (MCUL-9 through 11) are used to help clients respond to societal structures and expectations. Integrating spiritual awareness (Strategy MCUL-12) is a complementary role that psychotherapists have not always been encouraged to practice. The last two skills (MCUL-13 and 14) focus on awareness of one's own worldview in order to reduce biases in psychotherapy. Together, these strategies provide a way for therapists to focus on culture and to promote identity development and multicultural adaptation. These skills offer an initial attempt to help psychotherapists "develop skills and practices that are attuned to the unique worldviews and cultural backgrounds of clients by striving to incorporate understanding of a client's ethnic, linguistic, racial, and cultural background into therapy" (American Psychological Association, 2003). The strategies described in this chapter are summarized in Table 10.2.

TABLE 10.2 Multicultural Strategies for Psychotherapy

MCUL-1	Viewing Clients Culturally
MCUL-2	Clarifying the Impact of Culture
MCUL-3	Creating Culturally-Appropriate Relationships
MCUL-4	Celebrating Diversity
MCUL-5	Illuminating Similarities and Differences
MCUL-6	Recognizing the Impact of Identity
MCUL-7	Facilitating Identity Development
MCUL-8	Appreciating Multiple Identities
MCUL-9	Highlighting Oppression and Privilege
MCUL-10	Exploring Societal Expectations
MCUL-11	Supporting Social Action
MCUL-12	Integrating Spiritual Awareness
MCUL-13	Becoming Aware of the Therapist's Worldview
MCUL-14	Reducing Cultural Biases

Viewing Clients Culturally

Strategy MCUL-1. **Observing and understanding clients' thoughts, actions, and feelings from a cultural point of view**

Theoretical Context

Cultural background has a pervasive impact on normative verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Formality of speech and other verbal behaviors should be appreciated in light of clients' culture. Eye contact and physical proximity have different meanings in different cultures. In addition to being aware of the cultural source of different behaviors, it may be helpful for counselors to adapt their own verbal and nonverbal behavior to match clients' culture-based expectations. For example, if clients come from cultures in which direct eye contact is seen as a sign of disrespect, it may be important to adjust your own eye contact accordingly. Richard Brislin (2000) highlighted the importance of attending to cultural norms in this way:

> A willingness to communicate, then, refers not only to spoken and written languages but also to nonverbal behaviors. People who want to establish close intercultural relationships are well advised to learn about nonverbal behaviors and to engage in as many as possible. Such behaviors can include much more touching than they are

> accustomed to, more bowing, longer periods of silence, different sets of gestures, greater use of the hands when speaking, greater sensitivity to the way time is used, and so forth. (p. 247)

Observing and understanding clients from a cultural perspective will allow a therapist to adjust psychotherapy to meet the cultural expectations of clients and in ways that will increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Strategy Marker

Observing and understanding culture's influences on communication style is helpful in a cross-cultural exchange, especially when a client seems uncomfortable or there is a misunderstanding. Psychotherapists will need to lay the groundwork for cross-cultural psychotherapy by preparing clients for potential errors in communication in spite of one's best efforts and by stressing the mutual need for patience and understanding.

Suggestions for Use

This strategy creates a foundation for multicultural psychotherapy by recognizing cultural contexts that shape human functioning. Careful observation and awareness serve as preparation for more overt culture-focused interventions. Initial exploration may start with simple observations or questions for which clients may or may not make cultural attributions. You may choose to keep your initial hypotheses about cultural influences to yourself. However, over time, it may be appropriate to share your cultural observations with clients in order to create a collaborative understanding about the impact of culture on clients' presenting concerns. It is also possible to identify cultural values or resources that support therapeutic goals.

Expected Consequence

Observing and understanding a client's communication style from a cultural point of view will help clients and psychotherapists negotiate problems in cross-cultural communication. These tasks will enhance cultural empathy and engender respect for clients' patterns of discourse. The outcome of this sensitivity should be understanding, rapport, and trust.

Case Example

Dr. P. had noticed that Dana seemed to communicate with a sense of apprehension or hesitancy. Dr. P. was not sure if Dana was uncomfortable in psychotherapy or if there was some other reason for the apparent caution. Dr. P. began this exploration with an observation and an invitation to explore.

> *Dr. P.:* I noticed that when you answer my questions, you choose your words very carefully.
>
> *Dana:* Do I?

Dr. P.: You usually pause for a moment. Even when you're speaking, there is care put into your words. Are you feeling apprehensive?

Dana: Oh, I think I know where that comes from.

Dr. P.: Where does it come from?

Dana: I'm trying not to sound like a "redneck."

Dr. P.: Tell me more about that.

Dana: When I first moved to the city, I got teased a lot for sounding like a "hick." So, I learned to think through everything I wanted to say before opening my mouth. I guess I'm translating everything to "city speak."

Dr. P.: It sounds like a lot of work.

Dana: Yeah, sometimes. But, it's better than being dismissed or teased.

Dr. P.: How do you think your fear of being stereotyped impacts the way you interact with other people?

Dana: I'm not sure. I'm usually not aware that I'm doing it. You said that I seemed apprehensive?

Dr. P.: I wonder if others perceive you that way.

Dana: Maybe.

Dr. P.: Perhaps we can spend some more time looking at the way your concerns about being stereotyped impact the way you think, feel, and act.

Clarifying the Impact of Culture

Strategy MCUL-2. **Clarifying the impact of cultural contexts on current functioning, interpersonal relationships, and social systems**

Theoretical Context

As it is conceived here, culture is a broad context that subsumes and shapes social systems like families and interpersonal patterns that occur between individuals. In order to understand concurrent dimensions like thoughts, actions, and feelings, it is important to understand the contexts in which they occur. Multicultural and feminist approaches to psychotherapy emphasize that a thorough understanding of individuals cannot be accomplished without considering the larger cultural context. George Gushue and Daniel Sciarra (1995) pointed out that cultural values are often transmitted through the family:

> Both the family and the multicultural perspectives in counseling and psychotherapy share the premise that no adequate understanding of

> a particular individual may be attained apart from an understanding of a larger context—family and culture, respectively—that shapes the person, as well as his or her understanding of the presenting problem for which treatment is sought. (p.586)

Carolyn Enns (1997) pointed out that feminist therapy often involves, "understanding the role of culture in defining and reinforcing women's difficulties, identifying women's relational strengths, discovering an authentic self free from cultural biases, and building mutual empowerment through association with other women" (p. 282). Because culture has such a pervasive impact on individuals, it is important to explore its impact on current functioning.

A client's current worldview is shaped by past familial and cultural experiences. Both one's own internalized culture and the cultural expectations of the people in one's life affect the interaction with the world. In order to develop the most accurate pictures possible of clients' issues and experiences, it is necessary for psychotherapists to help expand their understanding of situations to include familial, social, and cultural factors. Cultural factors include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, and age. Feminist therapists have emphasized the impact of irrational prejudice and restrictive gender socialization as salient parts of culture that have a pervasive impact on clients (Enns, 1997).

Strategy Marker

Recognizing cultural influences is useful when clients are unaware of the relationship between external experiences and internal perceptions. Clients who do not understand the impact of cultural contexts may view their worldview as universal, hold fast to stereotypes, and devalue other belief systems. When clients are unaware of the cultural roots of their worldviews, it may be important to facilitate exploration and awareness.

Suggestions for Use

When clarifying the impact of culture, it is important to introduce the topic gently and to proceed with caution at first. Some clients may not be comfortable with discussing culture at first, whereas others may be more overtly aware of its role in their concerns. Because this is an area of potential discomfort, it is best to listen carefully to the language clients use to describe their ethnicity or other cultural variables. Generally, it is best to avoid using cultural labels with which clients may be uncomfortable. For example, when discussing sexual orientation, it is best to use the language that clients use to describe themselves rather than introducing language that may seem threatening. If a client refers to her "same-sex attraction," it is best to use these words rather than introducing words like, "gay," or "lesbian." In this way, you will be clarifying the impact of culture from the client's phenomenological perspective rather than imposing your own cultural assumptions.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist clarifies the impact of cultural contexts, the anticipated result is that clients will begin to understand their own worldviews and recognize external constraints. Ideally, clients will question their assumptions, develop flexible expectations of themselves and others, value alternative ways of knowing, and consider their role in cross-cultural conflicts. Cultural exploration in psychotherapy can encourage effective choices based on understanding clients' thoughts, actions, and feelings within a broader context.

Case Example

When Dr. P. began meeting with Abe, she noticed that he never talked about his African American identity. In fact, it seemed that Abe made attempts not to consider how race might impact his current situation. Dr. P. had been careful to respect this unacknowledged boundary at first, but decided that it was appropriate to assess how Abe thought culture might be impacting his presenting concerns.

Dr. P.: You've talked about how hard you have to work as an attorney and how you have to prove your worth to the firm. Do you think it's harder because you're African American?

Abe: I guess I try not to think about it that way.

Dr. P.: Why's that?

Abe: I think all the lawyers in my group work pretty hard. I don't think I'm all that different.

Dr. P.: So, is the work environment pretty progressive? Do you feel like you're treated fairly? Do you think you have the same opportunities that white lawyers might?

Abe: Well, when you put it that way, I guess my race might have some impact. I don't think I have the same chance of becoming a partner.

Dr. P.: Because of your race?

Abe: Yes, because of my race.

Dr. P.: So, how do you think your race might be impacting your stressful work environment and your concerns about your health?

Abe: I guess I try to pretend that race doesn't matter, but I also know I try to work harder to prove that I'm just as capable as anyone else.

Dr. P.: In order to prove yourself in the firm, do you think you have to work harder than some of the white lawyers?

Abe: I don't know if others think that way, but I feel it on the inside. I see some of the women in the firm doing the same thing. Trying harder to prove they're just as good.

Dr. P.: What's it like to acknowledge this to me?

Abe: It's a little strange. I feel like I'm breaking a bit of a taboo. Like I'm not supposed to tell a white woman that I have to try harder to make it look easy.

Dr. P.: I'm glad that you told me. I hope this is an area that we can explore together because I think that it may help us understand the context for some of your other concerns.

Creating Culturally-Appropriate Relationships

Strategy MCUL-3. **Creating therapeutic relationships that appropriately match clients' cultural expectations**

Theoretical Context

Different theoretical approaches to psychotherapy have emphasized different types of therapeutic relationships. For example, *Psychoanalysis* suggested that the therapist should remain a blank slate onto which the client would project. *Cognitive Therapy* suggested that collaborative empiricism is an appropriate role to help clients change their thoughts. *Feminist Therapy* described the need for psychotherapists to create an *egalitarian relationship* that would help empower female clients rather than keeping them in a one-down position. Laura Brown (1994) provided the following definition: "I define an egalitarian relationship as one structured to move toward equality of power, in which artificial and unnecessary barriers to equality of power are removed" (p. 104). *Multicultural Counseling* recognizes that different clients will have different expectations about the therapeutic relationship and that it will be helpful for the counselor to create a relationship that is in line with these expectations. Sue and his colleagues pointed out that relationship preferences will frequently be related to cultural expectations and values:

> The effectiveness of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy is most likely enhanced when the counselor uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of the client. No single approach is equally effective across all populations and life situations. The ultimate goal of multicultural counselor/therapist training is to expand the repertoire of helping responses available to the professional, regardless of theoretical orientation. (Sue, Ivey & Pederson, 1996, p. 19)

When comparing the feminist emphasis on an egalitarian relationship and the multicultural emphasis on tailoring the relationship to cultural expectations, it should be recognized that some clients will not want an

egalitarian relationship and may expect a psychotherapist to play an expert role in a hierarchical relationship. Advocating a customized approach to each therapeutic relationship, Arnold Lazarus (1997) suggested that "it is most important to determine whether the client will respond best to someone who is directive, supportive, reflective, cold, warm, tepid, formal, or informal" (p. 14).

Strategy Marker

Creating a culturally appropriate therapeutic relationship is a foundational skill that is particularly useful at the beginning of psychotherapy. If clients desire a formal and directive relationship, then it will be helpful for the counselor to give direct advice early in the relationship. If clients desire an informal or nondirective relationship, it will be useful for the psychotherapist to create a warm environment without direct advice.

Suggestions for Use

The easiest way to match clients' expectations may be to ask them what kind of relationship they desire. An open discussion of desired levels of formality or direction, for example, may result in a greater ability to conform to expectations in order to create a comfortable and facilitative experience for clients. Even when the relationship is not overtly discussed, a psychotherapist can think consciously about the type of relationship clients seem most comfortable with and can adapt to those expectations.

Expected Consequence

When a counselor creates a therapeutic relationship that matches clients' cultural expectations, the anticipated result is greater comfort and success in psychotherapy. If a counselor maintains a style of relating that is comfortable for clients, then trust and self-disclosure are likely to result. Particularly at the beginning of a relationship, matching expectations strengthens the therapeutic alliance and builds a foundation for success.

Case Example

Dr. P. had noticed that Dana communicated with her in a very formal manner and wondered if this is what Dana expected psychotherapy should be like. Dr. P. wanted to explore Dana's expectations so she could create a relationship that would feel comfortable and would support therapeutic goals.

Dr. P.: I notice that you always call me Dr. Pappas even though I introduced myself as Zoë when we first met.

Dana: I guess I want to respect your position.

Dr. P.: So, for you, the use of titles is a way of conveying respect.

Dana: Yes, I think so. Would you prefer that I call you Zoë?

Dr. P.: Well, I'd like for us to decide what kind of working relationship we want to establish.

Dana: What do you mean?

Dr. P.: Do you want our relationship to be more formal or informal? Do you want our work to be more collaborative, or do you think it would be helpful for me to be more directive?

Dana: I didn't think I would have any choice. I guess I thought we would be pretty formal because you are the doctor and I am the patient.

Dr. P.: I want to try to create the type of relationship that would fit best for you. I don't think that our relationship has to be hierarchical like a traditional doctor and patient. Many of the people with whom I work prefer a more informal and collaborative relationship.

Dana: I guess that's what I would like. I just didn't know if you were okay with that. I think it would be nice if it felt like we were both on the same team.

Dr. P.: That's what I tend to prefer if you are comfortable with it.

Dana: So, should I call you Zoë?

Dr. P.: That might be a good place to start.

Dana: Okay, Zoë.

Dr. P.: How did that feel?

Dana: It felt nice. It felt like I could relax and be myself.

Dr. P.: Good. I want you to be able to be yourself.

Celebrating Diversity

Strategy MCUL-4. **Celebrating diversity in order to help clients accept and express their uniqueness**

Theoretical Context

Multicultural Counseling recognizes the way that rigid societal expectations or oppression can distort identity and contribute to psychological problems. In this context, Allen Ivey (1995) describes psychotherapy as a form of liberation:

> Liberation psychotherapy focuses on helping clients learn to see themselves in relation not only to themselves but also to cultural/contextual influences, with special attention to the family. *Self-in-relation* replaces our traditional conception of the individual self. . . . As a liberating process, [multicultural counseling and therapy] seeks to inform the individual as to how the social and

> historical past, present, and future affect cognition, emotion, and action. (p. 53–54)

Celebrating diversity means reframing clients' unique characteristics as differences to be valued and appreciated rather than as pathological deviations from a societal ideal. By emphasizing that there are many different but equally adaptive and valid worldviews coexisting within society, clients can free themselves of internalized oppression, stigma, and self-criticism. Feminist therapists often focus on liberating clients from restrictive gender roles whereas multicultural counselors frequently try to liberate clients from racism and ethnic stereotypes that may restrict them.

Strategy Marker

Celebrating diversity in order to help clients accept and express their uniqueness is helpful when clients feel inhibited or express shame about their cultural identity or personal characteristics. If individuals perceive their diversity to be a liability, they may alter their thoughts, actions, or feelings to reflect more closely those of mainstream society. When clients disengage from their cultural community or suppress their differences to fit in, it is important to affirm the value of the clients' cultural experience.

Suggestions for Use

When you are trying to celebrate clients' diversity and to liberate them from restrictive roles or stereotypes, it may be helpful to begin by identifying sources of discrimination or negative societal messages that hinder growth. For example, working with a lesbian woman might include identifying the restrictive messages that she has learned about what it means to be a woman as well as negative stereotypes about lesbians. Next, you may want to question the assumptions that a client has learned from society. This might include encouraging the lesbian client to make a conscious decision about whether to embrace a traditional female role and asking her if she believes negative messages about lesbians. Finally, it is important that you, as a counselor, offer affirmation of clients' uniqueness in order to counteract negative societal messages. In the example, this might mean telling the lesbian woman that you value her as a unique person, as a nontraditional woman, and as a lesbian.

Expected Consequence

When you celebrate diversity, the anticipated result is that clients will feel validated within their cultural experience. Individuals will question thoughts, actions, and feelings that create dissonance and isolate them from their cultural community or their true identity. In an atmosphere of cultural empathy, people can develop greater awareness, understanding, and respect for their own unique contributions to a multicultural society.

Case Example

Dr. P. wanted to challenge Abe's perceived need to hide his black identity. She knew that many African Americans have been taught to downplay racial differences, and Dr. P. wanted to help Abe recognize and celebrate some of the strengths of his cultural heritage and identity.

Dr. P.: You've said that you learned to hide your black identity. I'm wondering if we should open that door and shine some light in that direction.

Abe: What do you have in mind?

Dr. P.: I was wondering if you could tell me about some of the positive aspects of your cultural heritage.

Abe: I don't usually think about any positive aspects. I tend to think about the economic and social barriers.

Dr. P.: I don't want to deny those barriers, but I want to take a few minutes to try to look at the other side of the coin. Are there positive values that you may have learned from the African American community?

Abe: I guess we learned that no one else was going to help us out. That if we wanted something we would have to work pretty hard for it.

Dr. P.: So, the value of hard work is a value you learned from your community.

Abe: A lesson I may have learned all too well, perhaps.

Dr. P.: Perhaps. But your ability to work hard has taken you a long way. Are you able to see that as a cultural value that you learned?

Abe: I guess so. It's certainly what my parents tried to teach me; work hard, take advantage of every opportunity, keep on trying.

Dr. P.: That's quite a gift they gave you.

Abe: Yes, I guess it is.

Illuminating Similarities and Differences

Strategy MCUL-5. **Illuminating similarities and differences between psychotherapist and client, and acknowledging the impact of power on the therapeutic relationship**

Theoretical Context

Because all people are complex individuals, any relationship will include similarities and differences on different dimensions. Therefore, every counselor-client

dyad will include similarities and differences. When a psychotherapist and client are very similar, there may be a tendency for the therapist to overidentify with the client and overlook or misunderstand differences that may exist. If a client is very different from a psychotherapist, then it may be difficult for the therapist to understand the background and experience of the client. When presenting concerns revolve around cultural factors or when the focus of treatment is interpersonal, differences between the client's and psychotherapist's cultural identities may have a strong impact on the psychotherapy experience. Under these circumstances, it will be necessary for the psychotherapist to explore how cultural differences may be affecting the relationship. For example, some cultural differences may make clients or counselors uncomfortable. Patricia Arredondo (1996) suggested that "culturally skilled counselors recognize their sources of discomfort with differences that exist between themselves and clients in terms of race, ethnicity, and culture" (p. 363). Once discomfort is recognized, adjustments can be made to create a smoother therapeutic relationship. Discomfort sometimes stems from transference or countertransference that is culturally based. Cultural transference is the way clients' cultural worldviews influence their perceptions of therapists. Similarly, cultural countertranference describes the way cultural worldviews influence psychotherapists' perceptions of clients.

Feminist Therapy acknowledges *power* as an important difference that should be explored in psychotherapy:

> Essential to a feminist therapist's understanding of how to create and maintain egalitarian relationships is a thorough, thoughtful, and complex understanding and acceptance of her power. . . . The feminist therapist must attend to the manner in which the politics of context can transform that relational power to enhance or diminish her effectiveness with clients. (Brown, 1994, p. 105)

By acknowledging power differences in psychotherapy, a counselor can help clients redefine the way they understand power and relate to authority figures. Psychotherapists can offer an alternative definition of power by using the therapeutic relationship to nurture clients and to empower them. In this way, power is no longer seen as a limited commodity that people compete for but a resource that can be shared between people and can be cultivated by healthy relationships. By acknowledging power in a new way, psychotherapists are less likely to abuse their role in ways that may restrict or oppress clients.

Strategy Marker

It is important to illuminate differences and similarities between the psychotherapist and client when they may impact the therapeutic relationship or the goals of treatment. Therefore, psychotherapists should appreciate

differences that may result in breaks in cultural empathy or similarities that may result in overidentification.

Suggestions for Use

When exploring differences that may present barriers in the therapeutic relationship, it is important to look at what those differences mean to clients. Clients may perceive certain variables as more closely related to the therapeutic encounter than others. For example, some female clients recovering from a recent sexual assault may prefer to work with a same-sex counselor to lessen the power differential. Later, some female assault survivors might benefit from working through their fears by working with a supportive male counselor. In some cases, racial and ethnic minority clients may prefer to work with psychotherapists of a similar background, perceiving a shared attunement to issues of oppression. In other cases, clients who are trying to enact behaviors that are dissonant with culture or family may feel more comfortable with a culturally different psychotherapist. Therefore, it is best to explore clients' perceptions of the relationship rather than making assumptions.

Expected Consequence

Comparing and contrasting client and psychotherapist identity and its impact on the therapeutic relationship will expose shared or divergent cultural perspectives. A shared worldview may facilitate understanding and empathy, but it may narrow the range of alternative perspectives, creating the risk for overidentification. A different worldview may increase the potential for breaks in cultural empathy yet offer opportunities for perspective taking and a corrective experience. Therefore, this dialogue will help to identify perspectives and experiences that might facilitate or hinder psychotherapy and the therapeutic relationship.

Case Example

Dana had always talked about her poor background as if it were something that Dr. P. could never understand. Dr. P. was aware that there were both differences and similarities in their respective backgrounds. In order to facilitate more openness in the relationship, Dr. P. wanted to bring these issues out in the open where they could be explored.

Dr. P.: We've been talking about how growing up poor has created barriers for you. Has it been hard exploring these issues with me, knowing I come from a different background?

Dana: It was at first.

Dr. P.: At first?

Dana: Yeah, at first I figured you couldn't understand my experience, and I thought you were probably from some rich family.

Dr. P.: And what do you think now?

Dana: I think you can understand me now.

Dr. P.: And my background?

Dana: Well, it helped when you mentioned that your father got sick and your family had some hard times.

Dr. P.: How did that change the way you viewed our relationship?

Dana: I realized that although we've had different struggles, we've both seen hard times.

Dr. P.: And that makes it easier to trust me?

Dana: Yes it does.

Recognizing the Impact of Identity

Strategy MCUL-6. **Assessing identity development and recognizing its impact on how clients value different worldviews and make attributions of personal success and failure**

Theoretical Context

Clients' cultural identities can have strong effects on what they believe to be the causes of their problems. Individual experiences of prejudice and discrimination may become internalized, fostering a diminished sense of self-efficacy. People may come to believe, through societal messages, that they are inherently incapable of achieving personal and professional success in society. Conversely, cultural experiences may be externalized, causing them to perceive society as hostile, which might impact their choice and manner of social interactions. Sue and his colleagues described identity development in this way:

> Developing a cultural identity represents a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral progression through identifiable and measurable levels of consciousness, or stages. Though theorists vary in the specifics, these stages appear to follow this sequence: (1) naiveté and embedded awareness of self as a cultural being, (2) encountering the reality of cultural issues, (3) naming of these cultural issues, (4) reflection on the meaning of self as a cultural being, and (5) some form of internalization and multiperspective thought about self-in-system. (Sue, Ivey & Pederson, 1996, p. 17)

Clients at all stages of identity development may need help understanding how some of society's negative stereotypes about different groups may have been internalized or incorporated into self-image. Rather than rigidly applying external models of identity development, it is important to stay close to

clients' phenomenological experience: "Feminist therapy theory defines clients as the experts about the meaning of their lives" (Brown, 1994, p. 115).

Strategy Marker

Recognizing the impact of identity on personal attributions is useful when clients have a tendency to internalize their cultural experiences in the form of guilt or shame or if they externalize their experience and blame others. If clients consistently display an internal locus of control, it may be helpful to examine external influences on behavior. If clients always make external attributions and do not take responsibility for their actions, it may be useful to encourage more internal control. When clients experience internalized oppression or perceive pervasive discrimination in an unrealistic manner, psychotherapy can provide an opportunity for clients to become aware of these biased attributions and develop more accurate perceptions.

Suggestions for Use

When looking at how identity development impacts attributions, it is helpful to begin with observations or subtle questions before overtly offering cultural explanations. Attribution style may have many determinants including personality, academic, or work experiences. It is also important to remember that cultural values are transmitted through families and a variety of other social systems.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist recognizes identity development's impact on attributions of personal success and failure, clients will acquire more realistic perceptions and recognize their own internal control. Developing more accurate cultural perceptions will allow clients to develop more optimal responses to society, such as employing their anger constructively to improve social conditions. Over time, clients' distorted attributions will decrease and a sense of self-efficacy will increase. Further, they will come to perceive themselves as capable individuals who can meet personal and professional goals in spite of obstacles.

Case Example

Although Abe had accomplished many things that he might be proud of, he often did not take credit for his successes. Dr. P. wondered if this was related to his cultural experience as a minority overcoming societal barriers. She wanted to explore this idea to get a sense of how Abe's identity development might impact his attributions of success or failure.

Dr. P.: When you were going through college and law school, how do you think your race impacted you?

Abe: I think it made it hard for me to take credit for my success or my failures.

Dr. P.: What do you mean?

Abe: I think when I did well, I thought the professors were taking pity on me because I was black, and when I did poorly I thought they were being racist.

Dr. P.: It sounds like Abe got lost in a way. It wasn't you that was being evaluated; it was your race.

Abe: That's the way it felt. And it left me with a big chip on my shoulder. I'm sure there was a little bit of truth in both views. I'm sure there may have been some discrimination here and there, but I felt like the whole process distracted me.

Dr. P.: Distracted you?

Abe: I was too worried about discrimination or tokenism, and I didn't get to feel pride in my accomplishments or give myself a good kick in the rear when I didn't live up to my potential.

Dr. P.: Do you still think this way?

Abe: Maybe not as much. But I still have a hard time congratulating myself for a job well done.

Dr. P.: So, this is a long-term pattern that still exists. If you do a good job, you're getting charity. If something bad happens, then you're being singled out. Is that right?

Abe: That's it in a nutshell.

Dr. P.: Perhaps we should look more closely and see if we can discover some successes you might be responsible for and cultivate a sense of pride for what you've accomplished.

Abe: That might be nice.

Facilitating Identity Development

Strategy MCUL-7. **Facilitating the awareness and development of cultural identity in order to promote self-acceptance and empowerment**

Theoretical Context

Seeking escape from experiences of prejudice and discrimination, individuals may strive for assimilation in mainstream society. As they downplay their cultural characteristics, clients may report experiences of alienation from their own cultural group who view them as outsiders. These same individuals may report dissonance as they devalue and disown their cultural identity. By contrast, other clients may reject all ties to mainstream society, cultivating social ties exclusively with members of their cultural community. Across the lifespan, clients experience variations in their self-concept and value for in-group

and out-group social interactions. Here is how Phinney (1993) described cultural identity development:

> The process of ethnic identity formation . . . is the way in which individuals come to understand the implications of their ethnicity and make decisions about its role in their lives, regardless of the extent of their ethnic involvement. (p. 64)

Because identity development has a pervasive impact on the way people think, act, and feel, it is a critical variable for psychotherapy. Empowering the client is the ultimate goal of facilitating identity development in psychotherapy (Brown, 1994).

Strategy Marker

Facilitating awareness and development of cultural identity is useful when clients report diminished self-concept while interacting with individuals who are similar or dissimilar to themselves. If clients do not know who they are, in the context of their own culture, it may be helpful to promote awareness. If clients are stuck at an unhealthy stage of development, encouraging them to explore their cultural identity can facilitate growth.

Suggestions for Use

Working with clients on identity development often involves moving back and forth between awareness and development. First, awareness involves highlighting where clients are in their experience of their own ethnicity or another aspect of identity. Second, development involves promoting movement toward greater acceptance of one's own culture in order to feel more personal empowerment. In most cases, awareness is a necessary precursor before facilitating identity development. Because identity involves many different variables, clients may be at different stages of development for ethnicity, gender, religion, or ability. Therefore, facilitating identity development may involve shifting focus from one aspect of identity to another.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist facilitates cultural identity awareness and development, clients may become aware of societal influences on perceptions of themselves, their cultural community, and mainstream society. Individuals will develop a self-concept reflecting the values of both cultural reference groups. Over time, individuals will develop self-acceptance and empowerment, knowing that cultural identity development is a fluid, ongoing process.

Case Example

Dana often seemed ashamed of her poor, rural past. She seemed like she was trying to ignore the first eighteen years of her life. Dr. P. had hoped to explore this part of Dana's identity, and when Dana mentioned a high school reunion, this seemed like a good opportunity for exploration.

Dr. P.: You said last week that you had a high school reunion coming up and wanted some help in deciding whether to attend. Is that something you still want to talk about today?

Dana: Yeah. I still haven't decided what to do, but I can't keep thinking about it. I'm really confused about the whole thing.

Dr. P.: So, part of you wants to go and part of you doesn't?

Dana: That's right.

Dr. P.: Can we take a look at both parts? What part of you wants to go?

Dana: The part of me that wants to see my old friends and show them that I'm doing okay.

Dr. P.: What part of you doesn't want to go?

Dana: I guess it's the part of me that doesn't want to be reminded of my redneck past.

Dr. P.: Tell me more about that feeling.

Dana: I guess I spend so much time distancing myself from being a dirt poor, country hick that I don't want to be reminded that there is still a group of redneck bumpkins that might remember that I used to be one of them.

Dr. P.: So the "new you" doesn't want to be reminded of the "old you"?

Dana: That's right.

Dr. P.: It's almost like the two aren't compatible even though they exist at different points in time.

Dana: I guess I'm afraid the redneck might sneak back into my life.

Dr. P.: I wonder if there is any way to integrate the two.

Dana: Like how?

Dr. P.: I wonder if the contemporary, urban Dana might be able to go a little easier on the country girl. What would it be like to acknowledge that you really are the same person but that you have grown and developed?

Dana: Do you think going to my reunion might be a way to try that out?

Dr. P.: It might be. Let's talk about some ways that you might be able to experiment with creating an alliance between the "old you" and the "new you."

Dana: Okay. It sounds like it might be helpful.

Dr. P.: Ultimately, the goal may be to accept both parts of your identity.

Appreciating Multiple Identities

Strategy MCUL-8. **Appreciating the intersection of multiple identities including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class, ability, and age**

Theoretical Context

Cultural identity never depends solely on a single characteristic. Instead, cultural identity consists of multiple interacting characteristics; the salience of each may shift dramatically in the face of the current context. This is how Paul Pederson (2000) describes the intersection between multiple identities:

> Culture is the context in which all behaviors are learned. Imagine yourself surrounded by thousands of people whom you have met, learned from, and come to appreciate in your lifetime. Each of these culture teachers has taught you something that you have incorporated into your identity. You do not have just one cultural identity; rather, thousands of different potentially salient identities are presented by ethnographic, demographic, status, and affiliation groups as they take turns whispering advice in your ear. (p.64)

Feminist therapists agree with multicultural counselors about the complexity of identity and remind psychotherapists of the importance of helping clients construct their own identity (Brown, 1994). Appreciating the complexity of cultural identity and its interaction with society can help clients understand their life experiences more fully. Clients who are members of more than one oppressed group may face greater barriers than those struggling with only one source of discrimination. Successful negotiation of cultural encounters requires attunement to explicit or subtle social expectations. Depending on the context, individuals may engage in cultural discourse to foster an optimal connection with others. For example, individuals may negotiate a novel social situation by drawing attention to salient cultural characteristics both parties share.

Strategy Marker

If clients' current experience is impacted by more than one type of cultural identity, it will be important to attend to the intersection of these different identities. Appreciating the intersection of multiple cultural identities is helpful when clients communicate confusion about their personal experiences of diversity. Exploring how and why clients choose to culturally identify can reveal their perspectives, biases, and expectations about their multicultural identities.

Suggestions for Use

When helping clients understand the intersection of multiple identities, it may be helpful to describe values associated with different subcultures in which a client interacts. When the cultural rules associated with different contexts sometimes contradict, there may be internal struggles. When different cultural contexts are internalized as contradictory values, there are intrapsychic struggles. These internal conflicts can be uncovered and resolved in psychotherapy. It may be best to discuss cultural influences individually first before addressing the intersection. For example, for one client it may be best to discuss her Hispanic ethnicity first, then her experience as a female, and finally her lesbian sexual orientation, before discussing how these three parts of her identity intersect and interact to influence her experience.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist appreciates the interaction between cultural affiliations, clients will broaden appreciation of roles and scripts used in different cultural contexts. Individuals will gain awareness of how they negotiate social expectations through role and script adjustments. They will deepen their understanding of various forms of societal oppression that might impede their expression of multiple identities.

Case Example

Dr. P. had noticed that Abe seemed to be dealing with his identity as an African American and his role as an attorney in a detached manner. In some settings, he was black; in others, he was a lawyer. Dr. P. wanted to look at these two parts of Abe and see if she could encourage any sort of integration.

Dr. P.: When do you think you started distancing yourself from your African American culture?

Abe: Let's see . . . I guess it started in junior high when I got a scholarship to attend a private school because they thought I showed "intellectual promise." I think I started to live a double life. I was a smart kid at school, and I was a black kid in my neighborhood.

Dr. P.: And those two subcultures had different rules and values?

Abe: That's for sure. I played down my school experience with other black kids. At school, as the only African American, I tried to act white.

Dr. P.: So, you were trying to adapt to two different subcultures. How did that impact you on the inside?

Abe: I guess I got a little lost. I was playing these two roles and forgot about the real me.

Dr. P.: And as you grew older?

Abe: In college and law school, the smart kid fit in better so I gradually let go of the black kid.

Dr. P.: When we look at the two contrasting subcultures you grew up in, your cultural experience starts to make more sense.

Abe: Yes it does.

Highlighting Oppression and Privilege

Strategy MCUL-9. **Highlighting the impact of societal oppression, privilege, status, and power on clients' thoughts, actions, and feelings**

Theoretical Context

Our society creates an uneven playing field where different groups and individuals have different barriers and advantages. Multicultural-feminist psychotherapy encourages counselors to explore this societal playing field with clients. Because culture impacts clients' lives in such constant and pervasive ways, they may not be aware of its direct presence. Clients belonging to the majority culture may be unaware of mainstream culture's influence on their self-concept and self-value. They may not recognize the protection their dominant group membership affords them in mainstream society. Clients of the dominant group may experience discomfort when asked to recognize the privilege conferred upon them by their cultural status, choosing to own, ignore, or avoid dialogue on racial inequality. Clients belonging to minority or marginalized groups may struggle to affect changes in racist institutions, leading to a sense of disempowerment and disenfranchisement. A psychotherapist may help clients make the connection between societal factors and personal reactions or responses. Because oppression and privilege impact members of minority and majority groups differently, the development of identity differs for these two groups. Wayne Rowe and his colleagues pointed out the difference between recognizing oppression and privilege in this way:

> Minority identity development models provide a framework with which to understand the development of positive attitudes toward oneself (positive identity) and one's racial/ethnic in-group. . . . On the other hand, white racial identity development models are more concerned with the development of attitudes toward out-group members. . . . It may be, that because of this, whites do not ordinarily experience a clear sense of racial identity to the degree that racial/ethnic minority members do. For whites the salient aspect is not their own difference that they must come to terms with, but

rather the fact that some other people who populate their world are different." (Rowe, Behrens & Leach, 1995, p. 224–225)

Oppression and privilege are also important considerations in *Feminist Therapy*. Feminist therapists often focus on power differences related to gender that result in sexism, harassment, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Enns (1997) pointed out that many feminists have concluded that "society must be changed at its very roots in order for women to experience equality" (p. 163). Psychotherapy can help clients work through their own oppression in ways that may prepare them for social action that changes society itself (see Strategy MCUL-11).

Strategy Marker

Highlighting the impact of oppression or privilege is beneficial when clients of dominant or minority cultural groups seem unaware of societal factors mediating their cultural experiences. Engaging clients in this dialogue can increase awareness of how social issues impact their experiences of self in the world and foster self-empowerment as they seek to affect change.

Suggestions for Use

When helping clients look at barriers and advantages, it is important to stay focused on clients' perspectives. Rather than making assumptions about how clients may experience particular situations, it is important to see how they understand their own experiences. For example, a psychotherapist may perceive some clients as privileged by their wealthy upbringing. In contrast, the same clients may focus on the restrictions and isolation they experienced. Therefore, it is important to view privilege and oppression from within the client's own personal worldview.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist highlights the impact of privilege or oppression on thoughts, feelings, and actions, the anticipated result is awareness of cultural factors that mediate relations in society. Clients will learn to explore expectations of self and others, and recognize reality-based constraints for identity development.

Case Example

Dana had talked about many economic barriers to success, but Dr. P. wondered if there were any cultural advantages of being white. Dr. P. started the discussion by asking about the barriers that Dana was more comfortable recognizing.

Dr. P.: How do you think growing up poor impacted you?

Dana: I don't know. I guess it's just how things were.

Dr. P.: Did your family's economic situation create barriers for you?

Dana: Of course. Even when I was doing okay in high school, my parents said that I wouldn't be able to go to college.

Dr. P.: Because of money?

Dana: Yes. The expectation was that I would get a job. College was for rich kids.

Dr. P.: In addition to these barriers, did you have any cultural advantages?

Dana: I think being white made some things easier.

Dr. P.: Like what?

Dana: Like getting a job. I grew up in a town that was still pretty racist. I think I was better off than the blacks in my town.

Dr. P.: So, there were economic barriers but you're also aware of some privileges that came from being white?

Dana: Yes, that's right.

Exploring Societal Expectations

Strategy MCUL-10. **Exploring societal expectations and supporting informed decisions about which roles to embrace and which to discard**

Theoretical Context

Although some societal and cultural effects can be obvious and overt—such as blatant racism—many other factors are so faint as to be outside clients' consciousness. Subtle but powerful societal messages about stereotypes, stigma, self-worth, status, expectation, potential, and power pervade mainstream culture. Because of this, many clients internalize societal messages without being aware of it. A psychotherapist can help make these internalized messages overt, highlight their origin in society, and work collaboratively with clients to decide how they want to embrace or revise societal expectations. By highlighting societal expectations and supporting informed choices, a therapist is helping clients become aware of the way their own narratives have been distorted by societal messages. Brown (1994) described the way that psychotherapy "can empower the client to begin to change the story" (p. 117) and pointed out the way that *Feminist Therapy* places "the client's experiences within a social and political context" (p. 117).

James Prochaska and his colleagues described cultural choosing as a logical outcome that follows consciousness raising and catharsis. In this view, *Multicultural Counseling* frequently begins with consciousness raising that helps clients "understand how the dominant culture has shaped their views

about themselves and their culture" (Prochaska, Norcross & Sweeney, 1999, p. 422). Then catharsis is supported in which "suppressed anger over discrimination and cultural alienation often comes to the surface" (p. 423). Finally, culture-centered counseling involves choosing "how to express and channel their new-found energy" (p. 424).

Strategy Marker

Exploring societal expectations and supporting informed decisions about which roles to embrace or discard is helpful when clients seem unaware of varied cultural influences shaping their identity formation. Clients may not distinguish their ambitions from those of family, cultural community, and mainstream society. They may feel pressured to adopt roles and responsibilities that are incongruent with their personal values, beliefs, and aspirations. Therefore, it is important to identify societal expectations that might influence clients' choices.

Suggestions for Use

When helping clients make informed decisions about societal expectations, it is helpful to identify specific cultural rules clients may have learned. Many of these expectations may not be within clients' awareness in spite of their pervasive impact on thoughts, actions, and feelings. This is a case in which a fish may not see the water in which it lives until it is pointed out. Once society's rules and the roles assigned to different individuals have been explicated, then overt decisions can be made. When helping clients make cultural decisions, it is important to help clients look at the advantages and disadvantages of choosing new values. Some clients may be holding on tightly to societal expectations that may be hindering them. Other clients may be too quick to discard cultural values without understanding the impact or potential costs.

Expected Consequence

When you explore societal expectations and support informed decisions about cultural roles, clients will become conscious of implicit values about self, culture, and mainstream society. Individuals will become more aware of internal processes, distinguishing them from external influences. Clients will learn to make conscious choices about their cultural identity development and deal with the external pressures as they enact their own values.

Case Example

As Abe had talked more about his identity as an African American man, Dr. P. wanted to see what expectations he perceived from his cultural group and wanted him to make active decisions about how to respond to these expectations.

Abe: Last week you asked me to think about the messages that I've received from the black community about being successful.

Dr. P.: Did you have a chance to think about that some more?

Abe: Yes I did. And I wrote down two main messages.

Dr. P.: I'm curious what you came up with.

Abe: First, as a successful black man, I should always be a role model to other blacks. Second, I should give back to the black community in some way.

Dr. P.: Okay. Those make sense in the context of what we've been talking about. What do you think of these two messages?

Abe: I'm a little ambivalent about the first one. I'm not really sure how a "role model" is supposed to act, and I don't like the idea of having to play a role all the time.

Dr. P.: Okay, so that one may need to be modified. How about the second one? About giving back to the community?

Abe: I like this one a little better. I think I agree with the essence, but I think the role model part of the first message might actually interfere.

Dr. P.: Really? How so?

Abe: I think I have avoided giving back to the black community because I was worried that I might not be a good enough role model.

Dr. P.: That's interesting. So, you want to give to the community, but you may not want to have to be a role model, especially not all the time.

Abe: That's right.

Dr. P.: So, at this point, you want to embrace one of the messages but to let go of the other?

Abe: I think if I let go of having to be a role model, it might be easier to contribute to the community.

Dr. P.: That sounds good. Let's talk about how to let go of having to be a role model, and then we might be able to identify ways to enact the value that you want to keep by finding appropriate ways to give back to the community.

Abe: Okay.

Supporting Social Action

Strategy MCUL-11. **Supporting clients who participate in social action in order to change oppressive societal structures or practices**

Theoretical Context

Multicultural Counseling often includes helping clients move from a place where they feel negatively impacted by societal oppression to a position in which they can have a positive impact on society through efforts to change oppressive practices. For example, Ivey (1995) sees "praxis—the integration of thought and action" as an important goal for *Multicultural Counseling:*

> Supporting development at this stage are community and network efforts in which the individual or group seeks out new goals and actions. The individual at the multiperspective level will be able to see many points of view *and* take action, as appropriate to the situation. The transforming consciousness seeks to move toward action and to make a difference in the world. (Ivey, 1995, p. 69)

Psychotherapy can be a place where clients can explore options for transforming their cultural experiences and values into proactive social action. *Feminist Therapy* also recognizes that psychotherapy and social action are closely related. Edna Rawlings and Diane Carter (1977) suggested that social and political change is the goal of *Feminist Therapy,* and a therapist's participation in social-change activities is an important extension of her therapeutic role.

Strategy Marker

After clients have had a chance to understand the way they have been impacted by societal structures and expectations, they may want to take action to contribute to social change. If a client chooses to participate in social action, then it may be helpful for a psychotherapist to look at how these external behaviors complement and grow out of personal awareness and internal changes related to thoughts and feelings. Recalling the discussion of multidimensional adaptation in Chapter Three, effective actions should be consistent with accurate thoughts and adaptive feelings.

Suggestions for Use

Clients may be faced with many choices about how to participate in social action. It may be helpful for a counselor to facilitate a process of brainstorming and evaluating alternatives before deciding on an appropriate action. Social action often occurs through formal groups (such as social activist organizations) or informal channels (like daily social interactions), and looking at the goals and methods of different organizations carefully may help clients choose to affiliate with groups whose approaches are consistent with their internal values.

Expected Consequence

If therapists support social action, then clients are more likely to make healthy choices about behaviors and groups that are consistent with internal

values. If clients participate in social action, they may have a positive outlet for the thoughts and feelings that may have arisen through exploration of cultural experiences. Contributing to proactive social change may help individuals translate awareness into action in a way that is consistent with identity.

Case Example

As Dana became more comfortable with her poor, rural background, she began to look for ways to take action. She shared an experience with Dr. P. that she considered a form of social action related to the development of awareness of her cultural identity.

Dana: I want to tell you about something I did that might fit in with some of the things we've been talking about.

Dr. P.: Okay. What is it?

Dana: We've been talking about how I distance myself from my past. How I don't want anyone to know I was so poor growing up.

Dr. P.: Yes?

Dana: Well, a couple weeks ago, I volunteered to be the United Way campaign coordinator at work to try to help raise more funds. I went to the first meeting a few days ago, and I realized that this is connected to what we've been talking about.

Dr. P.: In what way?

Dana: I guess that working with an organization that helps poor people get more of the resources they need is a good way for me to deal with my past and integrate it into who I am now.

Dr. P.: That sounds great. Tell me more.

Dana: I've always wanted to find a good way to help others, but I'm not a real touchy-feely type and didn't know what to do. But I am good at raising money and keeping track of those sorts of things. So, this might be a good way for me to contribute.

Dr. P.: Tell me more about why you feel it is important to contribute in this way.

Dana: I guess when I was young, we needed a lot of help with lots of stuff. Sometimes we got the help we needed, sometimes we didn't. I guess now that I am doing okay financially, it is important that I do things to help others and maybe change things.

Dr. P.: As you talk about this, I can see how it fits in with the things we've been talking about over the last several weeks.

Dana: And working with the United Way seems like something I might be good at. I'm going to another meeting next week to learn more about the organization.

Dr. P.: I'm glad that you have identified a way to get involved that helps you express an important part of yourself in a positive way.

Integrating Spiritual Awareness

Strategy MCUL-12. **Integrating clients' spiritual awareness or faith development into holistic growth**

Theoretical Context

Understanding and developing cultural identity means exploring all the salient parts of clients' experiences, including their spirituality. Integrating spirituality or faith development into holistic growth requires both a nonjudgmental investigation of clients' current beliefs and an understanding of how clients want their spirituality to play a part in their lives. Sue and his colleagues described respect for spirituality in this way:

> Culturally skilled counselors respect clients' religious and/or spiritual beliefs and values about physical and mental functioning. . . .
> Culturally skilled counselors are not adverse to seeking consultation with traditional healers or religious and spiritual leaders and practitioners in the treatment of culturally different clients when appropriate. (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1995, p. 635–636)

Clients should be encouraged to be proud of whatever spiritual beliefs or faith they hold and to recognize them as a vital part of their cultural identity. In reviewing methods for integrating spirituality with psychotherapy, Robert Sollod (2005) endorsed the usefulness of three approaches: (1) being knowledgeable about religious and spiritual aspects of clients' lives; (2) working in conjunction with a client's spiritual program; and (3) borrowing techniques from spiritual traditions and bringing them into psychotherapy.

Strategy Marker

Integrating clients' spiritual awareness is advantageous when clients express confusion or despair resulting from a lost sense of spirituality or disconnection from a religious community. Individuals who perceive a connection to God or a higher power may seek moral instruction for their spiritual experiences. In this case, it may be important to address spiritual concerns as they may help mobilize internal and external resources.

Suggestions for Use

When encouraging spiritual awareness or development, it is important to start with an understanding of the role that religion or spirituality has played in a client's life. If you are unfamiliar with certain religious traditions, it is important to ask questions that will help you appreciate the client's subjective experience. After understanding a client's spiritual history, you can encourage exploration and movement. The role of a psychotherapist will usually not include prescribing a particular spiritual path but can include encouraging clients to be aware of the path they have chosen and to use spiritual resources to support psychological goals. For some clients, spiritual development will involve returning to a faith tradition that has been neglected. For others, it may involve finding a spiritual community that is more consistent with current values and needs.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist incorporates spiritual awareness or faith development into holistic growth, the anticipated result is that clients will more fully process experiences of mind, body, and spirit. Spiritual awareness can help clients create or recognize meaning of internal and external life experiences. Individuals who increase their spiritual awareness may be able to gain empowerment through connections to a higher power and a spiritual community.

Case Example

As Abe was getting more comfortable with his cultural identity, Dr. P. wondered if spirituality was a part of this emerging identity. Dr. P. knew that religion is often a common bond in the African American community and wanted to know if Abe was thinking about this dimension of his culture.

Dr. P.: As we have been talking about the way you distanced yourself from your cultural background, I was wondering if this was true of religion as well.

Abe: That's an interesting question. My wife and I were talking about that this weekend. My wife and kids go to church, but I don't go with them.

Dr. P.: Why is that?

Abe: I guess I associate church with childhood. The church I grew up in was pretty rigid, and I needed to separate myself from that as I grew up.

Dr. P.: How about your wife's church? Is it as rigid as the church you grew up in?

Abe: No. It's more open. I guess I've liked it the few times I've attended, although I'm usually too busy to go.

Dr. P.: You said that you and your wife were talking about church this weekend?

Abe: She would like for me to go to church with them.

Dr. P.: What do you think of that idea?

Abe: It would be hard for me to let go of my independence and be open to spiritual ideas again.

Dr. P.: But it also sounds like it fits with some of your other goals about being more involved in the family. Is going to church with your wife and kids something you'd like to consider?

Abe: It is something that we can do as a family. And it would mean a lot to my wife.

Dr. P.: Do you want to give it a try this Sunday, and then we can talk next week about what it was like for you.

Abe: Okay. I can give it a try. It might do me some good to think about the role of religion in my life again.

Becoming Aware of the Therapist's Worldview

Strategy MCUL-13. **Becoming aware of one's own worldview and how it impacts your role as psychotherapist**

Theoretical Context

All people, including psychotherapists, have a unique worldview based on family, culture, and community experiences. As a result, all psychotherapists will have expectations, assumptions, and blind spots. It will be helpful for a psychotherapist to be on watch to see how their cultural blind spots may be playing out in psychotherapy. Pederson (2000) refers to a counselor who is not aware of his or her own worldview as "encapsulated":

> The tendency to depend on one authority, one theory, and one truth has been demonstrated to be extremely dangerous in the political setting. It is no less dangerous in the counseling context. The encapsulated counselor is trapped in one way of thinking that resists adaptation and rejects alternatives. By contrast, a broader definition leads counselors toward a more comprehensive understanding of alternatives and a more complete perspective of one's own beliefs. (p. 38)

It will be helpful to investigate how the "culture" of mental health professionals may be playing out in activities of assessment, conceptualization, therapeutic interventions, and the therapeutic alliance. In this way, it is important

for counselors to recognize their own values that may impact the process of psychotherapy.

Strategy Marker

Understanding your own worldview and its influence on your role as a counselor is useful when seeking greater awareness of perspectives and orientations guiding your work with clients. Therapists will want to examine their own worldview when interactions with clients yield strong reactions, personal discomfort, conflicting cultural values, or cultural countertransference. Examining one's own worldview can help psychotherapists gauge and modify how they interact with and influence clients.

Suggestions for Use

One way to understand your own worldview is by discussing your perspective openly with clients in order to compare perspectives or experiences. If you openly compare your values with your clients', this should be done in a spirit of exploration rather than judgment. Expressing curiosity about worldview differences offers a means to encourage cultural exploration and to facilitate the development of a healthy therapeutic relationship. Although it is always helpful to be aware of one's own worldview, it may not always be appropriate to use self-disclosure as it may distract from clients' experiences. In this regard, clinical supervision or professional consultation may prove helpful in making decisions about self-disclosure.

Expected Consequence

Understanding one's own worldview will help you acknowledge preexisting perspectives arising from your own familial, cultural, and social experiences. It will help to highlight perspectives and orientations of the mental health culture that might impact the therapeutic relationship/alliance. Acknowledging your cultural template will alert you to possible biases and assumptions that might influence your work with clients. Ultimately, this process will help you communicate, with fewer cultural biases or distortions, more clearly with clients.

Case Example

When Dr. P. began to explore cultural expectations about gender, Dana turned the tables and asked Dr. P. about her experience. This was an opportunity for Dr. P. to acknowledge what she had learned about gender and how this had impacted her worldview.

Dr. P.: We've talked about how growing up poor has impacted you. What about gender? What were you taught about being female?

Dana: I think that plays into some of my lack of ambition, too. I think I was waiting for Prince Charming to come along and rescue me.

Dr. P.: That's a message that lots of women in our culture learn.

Dana: But what about you? You must not have believed the Prince Charming story.

Dr. P.: I think my experience as a woman was a little different.

Dana: In what way?

Dr. P.: My dad got real sick for a long time when I was a teenager and wasn't able to work for over a year. During that time, my mother had to go back to work unexpectedly. She felt trapped because she had bought into traditional gender roles and then got burned by them. So, she actively taught me not to believe in Prince Charming. She taught me and my sister that we needed to be able to support ourselves no matter what.

Dana: I think I wasted a lot of time waiting for Prince Charming and was pretty shocked when the man I married didn't turn out to be a prince.

Dr. P.: That is a hard lesson for women to learn.

Dana: It's encouraging to know that not all of the women in our culture learn the same message.

Dr. P.: I'm glad it was helpful for you to hear about a different experience.

Reducing Cultural Biases

Strategy MCUL-14. **Recognizing possible cultural biases and presenting options with as little partiality as possible**

Theoretical Context

Because psychotherapists are human beings, they all have culture-based assumptions and expectations. However, working in an egalitarian style means that the psychotherapist must empower the client as much as possible, within an appropriate and ethical therapeutic relationship. Clients may need help recapturing personal power and responsibility for choice in their lives. Psychotherapists will need to present possible decisions in such a way that clients are able to choose a course of action without being pressured by the psychotherapist's own expectations and agenda. When psychotherapists do have a strong preference or bias, they have a responsibility to own the reaction and may choose to share it with clients. This can help the client become aware of possible biases and may help separate the psychotherapist's professional role from his or her personal reactions. Sue and his

colleagues described the importance of becoming aware of personal biases in this way:

> Culturally skilled counselors are aware of their negative emotional reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups that may prove detrimental to their clients in counseling. They are willing to contrast their own beliefs and attitudes with those of their culturally different clients in a nonjudgmental fashion. (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1995, p. 634)

The aim of reducing biases is to provide more effective psychotherapy. Ann Fischer and her colleagues pointed out that "an intervention that is relevant and effective for one client may not be as relevant or effective for another client, depending on the degree of relationship, shared worldview, and positive expectations" (Fischer et al., 1998).

Strategy Marker

Presenting options with as little bias as possible is important when a counselor observes personal discomfort with decisions that clients may be making. In these circumstances, psychotherapists may be tempted to steer clients in directions based on their values rather than on clients' preferences. Presenting options to clients in a neutral manner is vital when your own reactions or motives may be biased.

Suggestions for Use

When presenting options, it is helpful to identify several choices before a decision is made. When clients are making important decisions, it is usually best for counselors to maintain a sense of neutrality while actively facilitating the discovery of clients' personal choices. However, if clients have trouble generating alternatives, a counselor may suggest a possibility in order to facilitate brainstorming. After contributing an idea, the therapist should encourage the client to suggest the next possibility.

Expected Consequence

When a psychotherapist presents options with as little bias as possible, clients will be empowered to make personal and informed choices. Providing clients with a choice of all available options helps them select a culturally appropriate course of action. It also conveys a counselor's trust in clients' rights and capacities to make their own decisions.

Case Example

Abe wanted help in deciding whether to take a difficult case that a senior partner in his law firm was asking him to work on. Abe had some ethical reservations and asked for Dr. P.'s advice. Dr. P. did not want to make a direct recommendation but was willing to brainstorm some alternative actions. Dr. P. wanted Abe's final decision to be his own.

Dr. P.: It sounds like a difficult decision.

Abe: So, what do you think I should do?

Dr. P.: I don't know what you should do, but I can help you identify the options that you might choose between. What's one possibility?

Abe: I can turn down the case and tell my boss why I am uncomfortable.

Dr. P.: That's one option. What's another?

Abe: I can ignore my reservations and take the case.

Dr. P.: That's number two.

Abe: Can you think of any others?

Dr. P.: A third option is to consult with a colleague about the case to see if he or she sees the same problems.

Abe: Is that what you think I should do?

Dr. P.: I think you should figure out what fits best for you.

Abe: I appreciate having the chance to lay out my choices.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter introduced a method of multicultural conceptualization based on identifying cultural messages from different contexts, understanding experiences of cultural identity development or acculturation, and identifying salient cultural values that make up a client's worldview. Cultural messages can be seen as input from different cultural contexts. Cultural identity development is the ongoing process of processing and internalizing different cultural messages and experiences. A client's worldview is the summation of current cultural values that have resulted from the ongoing process of identity development. This method of conceptualization helps counselors understand clients' cultural experiences and sets a foundation for multicultural-feminist interventions.

Fourteen strategies drawn from *Multicultural Counseling* and *Feminist Therapy* were described that allow psychotherapists to promote cultural adaptation in the form of positive cultural practices and pluralistic values. The first five skills focus on understanding clients' worldviews and creating a culturally appropriate therapeutic relationship. (MCUL-1) *Viewing Clients Culturally* reminds counselors that all social interactions are cross-cultural and that culture shapes all relationships, including psychotherapy. (MCUL-2) *Clarifying the Impact of Culture* provides an opportunity to look closely at the way cultural experiences shape clients' thoughts, actions, and feelings. (MCUL-3) *Creating Culturally-Appropriate Relationships* means that counselors should

tailor therapeutic relationships based on clients' cultural expectations of helping relationships. (MCUL-4) *Celebrating Diversity* allows a therapist to honor and value parts of clients' identities that may not be appreciated by others. (MCUL-5) *Illuminating Similarities and Differences* allows counselors and clients to understand things they share in common as well as ways they differ in order to overcome biases and create a successful working relationship.

The next three multicultural-feminist strategies focus on the internal process of cultural identity development and encourage movement toward a pluralistic worldview. (MCUL-6) *Recognizing the Impact of Identity* allows a counselor to look at ways cultural identity development impacts different dimensions of clients' psychological functioning. (MCUL-7) *Facilitating Identity Development* encourages a counselor to understand clients' current stages of development and to help them move to more optimal worldviews, valuing both self and others. (MCUL-8) *Appreciating Multiple Identities* reminds therapists that diversity is a complex construct and that each aspect of clients' identity intersects with many others.

Four of the multicultural-feminist strategies focus on the external process of responding to societal structures and the development of positive cultural practices, including spirituality. (MCUL-9) *Highlighting Oppression and Privilege* allows clients to understand the societal barriers and benefits that different people experience. (MCUL-10) *Exploring Societal Expectations* encourages clients to reflect on cultural messages and make conscious choices about which values to embrace or discard. (MCUL-11) *Supporting Social Action* is a way for counselors to help clients work toward positive changes and engage in adaptive cultural practices. (MCUL-12) *Integrating Spiritual Awareness* acknowledges that religion and spirituality are important aspects of culture and that faith development can support cultural identity and psychological well-being.

The last two skills encourage psychotherapists to be aware of their own worldviews in order to reduce biases. (MCUL-13) *Becoming Aware of the Therapist's Worldview* acknowledges the need for self-reflection on the counselors' cultural identity and its impact on therapeutic relationships. (MCUL-14) *Reducing Cultural Biases* is an important application of self-awareness, ensuring that counselors' culture-based values are not imposed on clients. All of these multicultural-feminist strategies highlight the pervasive influence of culture on all aspects of human functioning. Integrative psychotherapists can use these skills that promote cultural adaptation in combination with strategies from other approaches to explore how culture influences thoughts, actions, and feelings. These multicultural and feminist ideas remind us that humans are cultural beings and that psychotherapy can be a positive force for societal change.