Increasing Your Cultural Competence

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 **Introduction**

In preparation for writing this paper, I took two implicit association assessments in which one was centered around race and the other gender. We will talk through the summation of both assessments that were taken, the strength and areas of growth, areas of growth and cultural competence, three goals related to increasing my cultural competence, the importance of understanding racial and cultural biases, and counselor dispositional expectations.

**Test identification and Summary Results**

The two Implicit Association assessments that I took covered race and gender. My initial thoughts on the tests were that they were setting me up to associate bad words and behaviors with Black people and that isn’t fair. Then as the assessment went on, I see that they did the same word association with White people and matching their faces. While they did both, I did feel as if the assessment gets you used to what they are asking with the first set, which could make you answer faster with the second set because you now know what they are looking for. However, the summary stated that I was equally sorting Black people with Bad and White people with good and sorting White people with bad and Black people with good (Projectimplicit, n.d.). These results didn’t surprise me because of the way that I feel about all ethnicities. I believe in equality and don’t think there are groups of people above another group. What surprised me about the results were the summation that they gave about overall findings. The highest result was White people moderately and much faster at being sorted with good.

**Strengths and Areas of Growth**

The second assessment that I took was about gender and how they are associated with career and family. The assessment that I mentioned in above and this one both have the same results for me personally. My responses suggested little or no automatic association between female and male with career and family. This is a strength for me because I believe that my association is healthy within which I look at both genders and the roles that they play. As I reflect on areas I could grow, it would have no automatic association between the two. Being raised in a home where y mom was the family and career person shaped some of those thoughts for me. As a husband and father, I have assumed some responsibilities of both and I have seen my wife do the same. There are times that we both assume the responsibilities for everything and that gives me the perspective and disposition that I have on both genders being equally yoked. Looking at the overall findings, most people responded moderately and strongly toward male with career and female with family (Projectimplicit, n.d.)..

**Areas of Growth and Cultural Competence**

 Cultural competence “refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, languages, interpersonal styles, and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff members who are providing such services (SAMHSA, 2014). I plan to address this area of growth and increase my cultural competence by being self-aware, continually seeking education and training, and being as inquisitive as a kid. Self-awareness will allow me to understand my own beliefs and biases and being cognizant of not projecting what I am or who I am onto someone else. For me to continue to be educated in this area, I would watch seminars, read books, talk with mentors and others that have lived experience and gain as much knowledge as possible. The last thing I would do is continually seeking understanding. Knowing that I will never fully understand all aspects of every culture but to be open to learning and making sure I am valuing what they believe and keep the focus on them.

**Three Goals Related to Increasing your Cultural Competence**

The first Goal that will increase my cultural competence would be to gain cultural awareness. For me to truly understand different cultures and traditions I will plan to go to a minimum of one workshop a month. Another goal would be meeting a mentor that is from a different culture and have bi-weekly meetings with them to gain insight and understanding. The third goal that would increase my cultural competence would be watching videos and reading books on the topic. I would set a goal to watch a video a week and write out what I learned and even do role-playing with others to apply what I have been learning.

**Importance of Understanding Racial and Cultural Biases**

Counselors do not condone or engage in discrimination against prospective or

current clients, students, employees, supervisees, or research participants based on age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/partnership status, language preference, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or any basis proscribed by law (ACA, 2014). Being ethical in every sense is key, and we must respect and honor each client without have any racial or cultural biases. Adhering to our code of ethics will ensure that we are in alignment with where we need to be as counselors.

**Counselor Dispositional Expectations**

 Two dispositions that play a significant role would be empathy and acceptance. Empathy gives the client a safe space to process while having the opportunity to build rapport. Counselors will understand their clients more by getting into their perspective lens and truly understanding them. Acceptance is pivotal in any counseling relationship, but when someone is different from you culturally, we must truly accept who they are, what they believe and not have any judgments toward them. Sensitivity to the client's cultural and personal perspectives, genuine empathy, warmth, humility, respect, and acceptance are the tenets of all sound therapy (SAMHSA, 2014).

**Conclusion**

 In summary, we talked through the summation of both assessments that were taken, the strength and areas of growth, areas of growth and cultural competence, three goals related to increasing my cultural competence, the importance of understanding racial and cultural biases, and counselor dispositional expectations. These areas will allow counselors in training like myself, to remain mindful of how I show up for others, and the tools needed to be competent in this area before serving the culturally and racially divers population.

References

ACA 2014 code of ethics - american counseling association. (2014). https://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf

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