
This article focuses on the need for cultural competency training for supervisors in the counseling field. The authors argue that such training can aid supervisees in developing skills to care for clients of color, whose needs may be different from white clients. The article proposes that supervisors who are unaware of their own biases in their engagement with supervisees of color will transfer those same biases when prescribing treatments for clients of color. Seven types of micro-aggressions were observed by supervisees under the direction of white supervisors: 1) downplaying racial-cultural issues 2) stereotyping black clients 3) making stereotypic assumptions about black employees they were training 4) not giving honest and complete feedback for fear of being racist 5) blaming clients of color for problems brought on by racism 6) failing to consider how treatment recommendations would impact the client.

Those who teach counseling or psychology may use case studies that ask students to investigate how treatment recommendations may differ based on the racial and cultural differences of certain groups.


This short essay—a actually more of a list— is an excerpt from a longer working list created by the author in 1988. The list consists of fifty or more benefits or advantages McIntosh feels she receives on a regular basis by virtue of her race alone. Some of the major themes from the list include being able to choose the group she would prefer to associate with on a regular basis; being able to see favorable representations of her race in multiple spaces on a consistent basis; being heard and respected as a reliable source of information or “truth”; an overall sense of safety for her and her children; freedom to ignore others’ historical contributions without consequence; an overall healthy sense of belonging.

An interview with McIntosh about how she came to write the famous essay was conducted by Joshua Rothman from *The New Yorker* and is located here: [http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-origins-of-privilege](http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-origins-of-privilege).

McIntosh is the founder of the National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) and is the former associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women.

Print.

This book is divided into three sections: what it means to be culturally competent, how to become culturally competent in the classroom and community, and how to work with diverse student populations. Defining cultural competence as “the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than one’s own,” Moule outlines her purpose as helping teachers who work with culturally different students to address the biases and experiences that inadvertently hampers students’ success. Moule outlines culturally competent behavior as:

- Being aware of one’s own prejudices and how they are communicated to students
- Being able to understand students’ communication styles and patterns
- Being able to meet students where they are culturally in order to communicate effectively with them
- Being aware that many of the theories that guide how we teach are based on a Eurocentric framework that does not consider other ways of seeing and knowing
- Being aware of different cultural learning styles and definitions of success
- Being aware of the need to match our teaching style to how students learn

In short, cultural competency is capitalizing on differences and using those differences as leverage in the classroom.

Part 2 of the book, how to become culturally competent in the classroom and community, focuses on the psychological impact of being a student of color and how teachers may use this understanding to address student needs.

The final part of the book addresses the unique backgrounds and challenges that culturally diverse students face both in and outside the classroom. Special consideration is given to Latino/as, American Indians, African Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Arabs and Muslims, and European Americans. Educators are provided teaching strategies to use with each distinct population.

MTV. *White People.* Published 22 July 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zjj1PmJcRM

Web 22 August 2015.

Journalist Jose Antonio Vargas travels the country to ask millennials what it means to be white. What makes this documentary unique are the unique locations and situations in which the discussions take place, beginning with a white, gay male attending a historically black college; a group of white teachers at a predominantly Native American school; a social justice activist with conservative parents; a group of white students who feel they have been denied scholarships because of “reverse” discrimination; and the town of Bensonhurst, NY, traditionally a Jewish and Italian neighborhood, that is now predominantly Asian.

Because of its diverse perspective from young people, this video serves as a great way to begin the discussion of race with students. Paired with Zeba Blay’s “White People, I Hate Talking about Race As
Much As You Do,” at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/white-people-i-hate-talking-about-race-as-much-as-you-do_55afd89ee4b0a9b9485354d8 the discussion promises to be rich.


Talking circles are based on the governance practices of Native Americans. According to the author, a peacemaking circle is a practice of people who come together for a common purpose or goal, whether the goal is to allow for authentic expression in order to discuss issues, to understand differences, to heal from traumatic or painful experiences, to decide disciplinary actions, to provide support, to build community, to resolve conflict, to welcome one back into the community, or to celebrate accomplishments.

Peacemaking circles always consist of the following: a ceremony, a talking piece, a facilitator or keeper, guidelines, consensus decision-making, and personal stories.

Peacemaking circles usually begin with a centering activity, such as a reading or meditation or some other ritual. This helps to provide the element of ceremony for the circle. Opening ceremonies are designed to “help participants to center themselves, be reminded of core values, clear negative energies from unrelated stresses, encourage a sense of optimism, and honor the presence of everyone.”

“Closing ceremonies acknowledge the efforts of the Circle, affirm the interconnectedness of those present, convey a sense of hope for the future and prepare participants to return to the ordinary space of their lives.”

A talking piece is a symbol that is passed around to give each individual an opportunity to speak. Only the person holding the object has permission to speak. While speaking is not mandatory, it is understood that each person has a turn at speaking. The talking piece is a way to maintain order and respect.

The keeper monitors the tone of the group interaction and reminds the group of the guidelines they have established. He or she does not try to impose his or her will on the group.

Guidelines are non-judgmental rules created by the group that will allow everyone to feel respected and heard.

Consensus decision-making allows for buy-in about what will take place in the group. It equalizes power among everyone in the group through agreement of the terms.

Life experience (personal stories) is more valued than expertise since it is understood that everyone brings wisdom through their lived experience. It is this information that is used to build community and to move any conversation forward.

The peacemaking circle is but one strategy that can be used to conduct difficult dialogues about race. Depending upon the purpose of the circle, the outcome varies. For example, a talking circle designed to explore ideas would be considered successful if participants walked away with different ways of viewing reality; a circle brought together for community-building would be successful if members walked away
with ground rules that could help govern each meeting. Talking circles provide room for reflection and expressing varying points of view.


This book was written to explain what makes discussions about race difficult and to provide strategies for facilitators who find themselves engaged in difficult dialogues. According to Sue, dialogues about race become difficult when unintended racial slights against ethnic minorities are made and when biases and prejudices are addressed publicly. Both types of encounters involve strong emotions because values, beliefs, images, and reputations are heavily invested in the topic. And yet failure to address race as a topic can contribute to a feeling of being silenced; the deterioration of one’s mental health; a hostile work environment; physical health problems; decreased work productivity and poor problem-solving skills. Sue argues that difficult dialogues must be had since they offer opportunities for growth, better communication and learning. Perhaps most significantly for our students, race talks prepare our students to compete in a global economy.

Sue posits that race talk is always uncomfortable because it reveals a clash of racial realities for whites and ethnic minorities. While many white Americans view the US as having achieved a post-racial state of racial equality, many ethnic minorities perceive the common insults and slights they encounter on a regular basis as problematic. Consequently, most people like to avoid the strong feelings that emerge from talking about race and therefore prefer to skip the topic, remain silent about it, or ignore racial topics when they do come up. Sue encourages a protocol that defies the societal norm. Race talk, he argues, should 1) address issues such as race, racism, Whiteness and White privilege. 2) Race talk should allow room for strong emotions and should allow participants to talk about their experiences. 3) Race talk should challenge the notion of a color-blind society. 4) Race talk should allow for varying communication styles. 5) Race talk should lead to some type of action to eliminate racism in its different forms.

This book is particularly useful for those looking to understand why discussions about race can be difficult. While most of the book focuses on the problems of racial dialogue, more of it could have been used to demonstrate the process for navigating a difficult race dialogue that achieved a successful outcome. However, Sue reserves successful strategies for the book’s end. To successfully facilitate conversations about race, Sue advocates 1) being aware of one’s own values, biases, prejudices, and assumptions; 2) acknowledging and admitting one’s own racial biases; 3) being comfortable talking about race openly; 4) understanding emotions and being open to all of them; 5) creating the conditions in which all feelings are allowed and validated; 6) being able to get to the deeper meanings that occur in race talk; 6) acknowledging and validating the feelings of participants when necessary; 7) helping participants to explore their own feelings and what those feelings might be saying about them; 8) being able to get past blocks and silences; 9) understanding differences in communication styles; 10) being deliberate and planning ahead; 11) validating and encouraging those who demonstrate risk-taking by speaking authentically.

Wise, anti-racism activist and writer, sits down to talk to Marc Lamont Hill from Huff Post Live about society’s ongoing debate about discrimination against blacks and whites. Wise argues as he does in his documentary, White Like Me, that while the US has experienced gains in terms of its race-relations with blacks-- such as slavery and segregation-- racism is still a systemic issue in society. Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University, Michael Eric Dyson, argues that whiteness is a social construct, which means that white power comes as a result of the meaning others attribute to it. Matthew Heimbach, Towson University creator of the White Student Union, fears the extinction of white dominance if society changes the way in which it views whiteness as equivalent with supremacy. Jared Taylor, a “racial realist,” equates the celebration of diversity as a celebration of whites’ dwindling numbers and influence. Like Heimbach, he feels that whites are discriminated against through programs such as affirmative action. Taylor argues that race is a natural identification that is “felt,” not a social construct. Dyson summarizes the tension felt in the interview and reflected in society as white America coming to a new consciousness, which is oftentimes a painful process. This is one of the shorter Youtube videos featuring Wise and also presents both liberal and conservative views about race. Offputting are ads that pop up intermittently throughout. (~ 30 minutes).

Wise, Tim. White Like Me.  Irate Productions.  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItiXR5m1yAY

In this one-hour documentary, Wise discusses the concept of white privilege, which he defines as the structural advantages for whites built into our system that make social, political and economic advancement more difficult for people of color.

To support his point, Wise provides several examples of what he calls “race-based” favoritism. In 1935, for example, during the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt created programs to help those who had suffered losses; however, these programs excluded agricultural workers and domestic workers in private homes, most of whom were black. In this regard, these types of programs helped to benefit the white middle class. He cites other examples, such as how the Federal Housing Authority allowed funding for first-time homeowners, 98% of whom were white. While the GI Bill of Rights provided benefits to white veterans, such as low-cost mortgages, loans to start a business, cash payment for tuition and living expenses, it did not protect black veterans from forms of discrimination protected by the law, blocking many from the same benefits afforded white veterans.

The film also addresses the question of whether racism is just a thing of the past. Pointing to the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, many have posited that we now live in a post-racial era, where race no longer matters. Wise refutes the claim by referencing Michelle Alexander’s book: The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness. In this book, Alexander argues that we now have a new racial caste system that criminalizes non-violent drug use by targeting African American males.
The last segment introduces the idea of colorblindness, which Wise argues can lead to an intensification of racist thinking. Unconscious racial bias— that is implicit racism— becomes coded in our brains and thus reinforces bias. Rather than being colorblind, Wise encourages us to be color-conscious.

How do we heal? Wise suggests that racial healing can begin by learning about the history of anti-white racism, to hear about allies who fought for justice. I would suggest racial healing begins when we become allies as well.

Mathematics Example


This book provides examples of how to think about math in ways that explore and raise questions about social issues. One of my favorites was “Deco[nstruing Barbie.” The assignment asked students to calculate the ratios of the average size of Barbie, using real-life measurements of students in the room to compare to the ratios of the doll itself. For males in the class, the author used super-action heroes. According to the author, the activity then leads to discussions about body image, self-worth, eating disorders, and sweatshops. This book provides numerous opportunities for students to see how math can apply to everyone. The book contains 32 chapters, each one wrought with exercises and discussion questions that demonstrate how mathematical concepts can be used to raise social awareness.

Science Example


The authors write to dispel the myth that culturally relevant teaching is for the humanities, not the “hard sciences” (2). The authors push against the notion that science is an apolitical and neutral discipline by providing examples of how an instructor might incorporate culturally competent materials into a science classroom. The examples provided are based on the authors’ work with African American students.

To teach a culturally relevant science course, the authors make issues of power, equity, and culture central to the course. The authors define culturally relevant pedagogy as that which “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.” In other words, their concern is not just to see that students learn the material, but to ensure that they can make sense of the content in their everyday lives. The authors also suggest that the teachers must be willing to conduct “microethnographies” about the students, gaining understanding about their communities, their families, what they do for fun, or their political views (5). To this extent, teachers must be willing to learn from students as well.

Students were also encouraged to make connections between new information they were introduced to in the classroom with that which they were already familiar. For example, one teacher asked students to find 10 words from the chapter’s vocabulary list about cells and to locate objects with which they could compare them. One student produced the following analogy: The nucleus is like a brain because
it controls and coordinates the activities of the whole cell in the same way the brain controls and coordinates activities of the body” (5). Relating new information to what was already known gave students a better handle of scientific terminology in class discussions.

Another instructor had students to watch episodes of CSI to get an idea of how DNA impacts everyday life. Students also researched blood disorders that impact the African American community. By researching the life of Charles Drew, an African American scientist who discovered how to preserve blood, students were asked to explore the irony in his death. Drew died in need of a blood transfusion but could not receive one because he was not permitted into white hospitals.

The final example was from a university freshman biology class. The discussion of the production of melanin in the skin led to discussions of the social construction of race and perceptions of race and beauty based on skin tone. Students also conducted research on Madame CJ Walker, the inventor of the straightening comb.

Each of the examples provided demonstrates that a culturally responsive approach to teaching science:

- examines major scientific concepts
- explores those concepts from vantage points that would engage students’ interest
- makes a connection between science and societal perception
- questions how science, as it is commonly practiced, works in service for and against certain groups and its political implications
- examines counternarratives that offer different perspectives and explanations

Nursing Example


This article was written by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, which sets standards for education, research, and practice for the field of nursing. The article was written to address the extreme differences in health care and access to health care that patients face. The article is designed to help nurses see how various factors, including beliefs, values, religions, language, and social class affect the choices of their most vulnerable patients (i.e. ethnic minorities, the poor, and those who live in rural areas). The article serves as a guide to show nurses how they can use cultural competency skills, which is defined as “the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for providing quality care to diverse populations.” The article emphasizes patient-centered care that “respects and addresses differences in patients’ values, preferences, and expressed needs.”

The article is based on a 2002 report by the IOM (Institute of Medicine) which indicated that even when insurance status, income, age, and the severity of the condition were the same, patients of different races were not given equal care.

The AAN considered five competencies that were considered essential for nurses graduating in their baccalaureate program:

1. **Being knowledgeable of how a patient’s culture may affect how care is administered.** This means understanding how “historical, political, and socioeconomic factors” impact how the
patient responds to their treatment and diagnosis and using that information to plan, treat, and evaluate care.

To teach students these skills, the authors recommend:

- providing examples of case studies of patients reflecting differing historical, political, and socioeconomic factors
- comparing and contrasting dominant cultural characteristics for patients that represent a certain group
- creating a cultural care plan for patients and families from different cultures across various life spans
- inviting community members representing specific cultures in to share their healthcare stories
- having students to discuss how their culture affects how they have viewed medical care

2. Being able to critically examine source information and data that reveals information about the patient. This means being careful not to assume that information that is specific to one population or group is true for ALL populations or groups.

To teach these skills, the author recommends:

- integrating patients’ perspectives in planning care for them; in other words, this means not taking on the position of “I’m the expert, so I know what I’m talking about; so you should do what I say.”
- critically examining where the source of information comes from
- participating in the research process for caring for patients
- advocating for vulnerable populations in human subjects research
- incorporating research from “racial and ethnic specific research journals, such as Journal of the National Black Nurses Association, or the Hispanic Healthcare International or the Journal of Transcultural Nursing.

3. Being sure that the outcomes of care are safe for all patients, regardless of their race or ethnicity

- Positive outcomes result from a collaboration with healthcare professionals, patients and their families. This means being able to communicate cross-culturally; being able to manage conflicts across cultures, incorporating healing practices from the individual’s culture such as cultural and folk healers, prayer. So we’re talking about using a variety of healing methods that combine methods from professionals and from what is known by the patient.

4. Advocating for equal care for all patients, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This
means being open to different perspectives and responding to patient needs, including recognizing and reporting discriminatory practices that jeopardize the care of the patient or that places the patient in harm’s way.

To teach these skills, the authors recommend:

- comparing and contrasting behavior that is appropriate, respectful, and inclusive, and behavior that is insensitive, lacks cultural understanding, or reflects prejudice
- discussing how nurses can intervene in interpersonal and interprofessional situations to improve adherence to professional standards of respect and civility.

5. Maintaining cultural competency development among participants

To foster this ongoing process, the authors recommend:

- ongoing self-reflection
- becoming actively involved in activities that lead to greater understanding of cultural difference
- examining one’s own stereotypes and biases about those in different racial, ethnic, religious and social groups, including those with disabilities, from lower socioeconomic classes, and who differ by age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- comparing and contrasting differences and similarities in attitudes, values, and expectations and expectations of care for different cultural groups
- encouraging students to talk about their own experiences of discrimination and what were the effects
- examining and discussing case studies that shed light on discrimination, ethnocentrism, and racism
- participating in a cultural immersion experience
- attending cultural celebrations/religious ceremonies to understand patient values or the values of those from the communities being served
- participating in community forms, health fairs, meetings to understand values and beliefs about health care

**English Example**


While the idea of the I-Search paper is not new, it incorporates many of the concepts that are espoused in cultural competency teaching. Rather than calling the book a “text,” Macrorie describes it as a “contextbook,” whose aim is to explain how a story has developed. It is the opposite of the textbook, which, according to Macrorie, encourages a regurgitation of facts and a blind faith in the storyteller (preface). The aim, then is not only to explain what the author knows but how the author came to know it. By examining how the author has come to know or understand certain ideas or facts, the research process becomes more personal and less mysterious. By reading the author’s story, the student can more readily see himself or herself identifying with the author and is willing to replicate the act of
research. The 350-page book is an intriguing intertwining of relevant stories that makes knowledge both interesting and accessible. Macrorie’s research in writing the book demonstrates the process of the I-Search paper.

Macrorie defines the I-Search paper as a research paper designed to fill a need or desire in the student’s life (64). It contains the following steps:

1. The student describes what he or she knew about the topic when they first started writing.
2. The student explains why he or she is writing the paper.
3. The student explains the “Search” or the story of the hunt.
4. The student explains what he or she did or did not learn.

Macrorie’s The I-Search Paper is written with students in mind. It is easy to read and is designed to remove the intimidation factor associated with research. The book is written to address students’ need to make learning both useful and accessible.

Historically, those who teach composition have relied on those in the scientific community to “legitimate” the field. It may be helpful to know that the I-Search process is very similar to the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) research process used in the sciences and social sciences, as can be seen in the following link: http://owl.excelsior.edu/posts/view/52. The I-Search paper would work well with those who teach in the English, social science, and science departments.