OWNING THE ELEPHANT: TALKING ABOUT RACE IN THE ROOM

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TODAY’S OBJECTIVES

• Explore our own implicit bias and privilege
• Examine the impact of race and ethnicity on the therapeutic relationship
• Develop ways to reduce barriers in the therapeutic process caused by systemic racism
ACTIVITY: BUZZFEED CHECK YOUR PRIVILEGE CHALLENGE

• https://www.buzzfeed.com/watch/video/106938
ROLE OF THE THERAPIST

Can Clinicians Be Advocates for Social Justice?
IMPACT OF RACISM ON THERAPY

- Biopsychosocial disparities
- Intergenerational trauma & resilience
- How microsystems interact within macrosystems
- Power & social positions
- Oppression from the dominant system with pro-racist ideology
- Dispelling stereotypes & harmful dominant narratives
ROLE OF THE THERAPIST: ARE WE ACTIVISTS?

• Therapy has always been political, but often hidden

• Therapist's job: Help improve mental health of clients
  ➢ How do we do so in an environment of disparity and division?

• Therapists & Social Justice Advocacy
  “Marriage and family therapists have a direct responsibility to counter racism. We are uniquely positioned to understand and recognize the systemic effect that oppression, inequity, and overt and covert racism have on individuals in marginalized communities and have a role in fostering healing and growth. Therefore, AAMFT stands in support of our members dedicated to advancing the fundamental rights, health, safety, and well-being of all individuals, relationships, and communities. We encourage all members to have authentic dialogue to advance systemic change. As an organization, we will continue to advocate against societal inequalities and seek solutions in our clinical, research, community, and policy work to ensure that vital change is occurring.” (AAMFT, June 1, 2020)
THERAPIST ROLES

• Clients & their systems
• Colleagues/ Peers
• Supervisees
• Students
• Communities
  • Professional incl. therapy organizations
  • Personal
• Society
• Self
STARTING WITH SELF

First Examine Ourselves
How Privileged Are You?

You live with 30 out of 100 points of privilege.

You’re not privileged at all. You grew up with an intersectional, complicated identity, and life never let you forget it. You’ve had your fair share of struggles, and you’ve worked hard to overcome them. We do not live in an ideal world and you had to learn that the hard way. It is not your responsibility to educate those with more advantages than you, but if you decide you want to, go ahead and send them this quiz. Hopefully it will help.

Intersectionality Score Calculator

Your intersectionality score: **56**

You are more privileged than 24% of others. Please give more to those less fortunate.

Your American Dream Score: **70/100**

While hard work contributes to success, each of us have encountered different people, experiences, systems, and services that have helped or hindered our efforts.

Your score of 70 shows you’ve had a little more working against you than for you. To see what your score means compared to others, click here.

If your life had a soundtrack, it might include Try Everything by Shaking a symbol for all that you’ve had to overcome to get where you are today.

If your score is:

- 53 or less: Nearly every factor has been working in your favor
- 54-65: The majority of factors have been in your favor.
- 66-79: You've had more working against you than for you.
- 80 and higher: Almost every factor has been working against you.

*Everyone starts off with a score of 60, to reflect our individual effort and the highest score one can obtain is 79, as no one truly does it alone. Look below to have more about how your score was calculated and which factors were working for and against you.*

https://www.buzzfeed.com/regajha/how-privileged-are-you
https://intersectionalityscore.com/
https://movingupusa.com/calc/
SELF-ASSESSMENT

- Awareness of own biases, privileges, values, & assumptions:
  - Harvard’s Implicit Bias Test
  - Person-of-the-Therapist
  - Self-of-the-Therapist
  - Genogram with Ecomaps
  - Supervision
  - Peer Group
  - Therapy

Source: AWDI
RACE

• Associated w/ physical characteristics (skin color, facial features, hair)
• Socially constructed & changed through the years
• Need of categorization to treat people of color as not human and justify slavery during the Enlightenment
• Prior to 16th century, identified with breeding line or stock of animals in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, & French folklore
• More studies on racial than cultural differences in psychology
RACE

• Census: “The racial categories included in the census questionnaire generally reflect a social definition of race recognized in this country and not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. In addition, it is recognized that the categories of the race item include racial and national origin or sociocultural groups.”

• Official categories:
  - White American
  - Black or African American
  - “American Indian” & Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander
  - Some other race
ETHNICITY

• Common nationality, culture, or language

“...a group’s commonality of ancestry and history, through which people have evolved shared values and customs over the centuries. Based on a combination or race, religion, and cultural history, ethnicity is retained, whether or not members realize their commonalities with one another. Its values are transmitted over generations by the family and reinforced by the surrounding community. It is a powerful influence in determining identity. It patterns our thinking, feeling, and behavior in both obvious and subtle ways, although generally we are not aware of it.” (McGoldrick, Giordano, Garcia-Preto, 2005, p. 2)
CULTURE

• 164 definitions by 1952 (Kroever & Kluckhon)
• “Set of worldviews, beliefs, values, practices, and traditions shared by a group of people” (Falconier, Randall, & Bodenmann, 2016)
• “Set of shared world views and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership in a variety of contexts” (Falicov, 1988)
PREJUDICE, BIGOTRY, DISCRIMINATION, & RACISM

- **Prejudice**: negatively pre-judging based on a cultural grouping; no power dynamic involved
- **Bigotry**: severe mindset often accompanied by discriminatory behavior, not necessarily requiring power
- **Discrimination**: differential treatment & harmful actions based on group ID
- **Racism**: system that allows the dominant group to retain power
  - Preferential access to rights & resources (housing, education, jobs, voting, citizenship, food, health, legal protection, etc.)
  - Simultaneously impeding access to others
  - Members of minority racial groups cannot be racist
MICROAGGRESSIONS

• Microassault
  ➢ Explicit verbal/nonverbal racial derogation, e.g. name-calling, avoidant behavior, purposeful discrimination

• Microinsult
  ➢ Conveys rudeness and insensitivity, demeaning a person's racial heritage or identity
  ➢ Can be subtle snubs, ignorant perpetrator, hidden insulting message to recipient

• Microinvalidation
  ➢ Excludes, negates, or nullifies the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of persons in a specific group
What's missing?
INTERSECTIONALITY

• The interaction of the multiple social categories we inhabit simultaneously
  • e.g. Race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation

• How does the intersection of identities interact with systems of power?
  • Higher perceived status provides greater privilege
  • Lower perceived status results in oppression, domination, & discrimination
  • Psychological & intellectual costs (e.g. helplessness, frustration, sadness, guilty, shame)
  • New acronyms being developed, incl. BIPOC, URM
PERSON-OF-THE THERAPIST QUESTIONS

• What are your beliefs and values?
• Which social categories are of most importance to you? Which do you identify with the most?
• What is your “singular issue” and are you managing it? (Aponte)
• How are you handling what’s happening on the news? Do you feel neutral, anger, hopeless, etc.?
• What are you doing to express your feelings?
• If you feel compelled to do something, assess what those are and if they feel adequate to you
• Therapy as a therapist is a gift, consider giving to yourself often!

Self-help
How to stop time: kiss.
How to travel in time: read.
How to escape time: music.
How to feel time: write.
How to release time: breathe.
SELF-OF-THE THERAPIST QUESTIONS

• How do you generally address conflict in the room?
• In what ways do you allow space for subjective reality of the client even if it’s counter to your own?
• Are you asking clients questions or talking about your own feelings and experiences?
• Have you ever made assumptions about how clients feel and think, esp. based upon their race/ethnicity?
• Have you asked clients how they perceive you?
• Do you feel powerful or powerless in session?
WORKING WITH CLIENTS
White Therapist ──── URM Client

URM Therapist ──── White Client
RACIAL-CULTURAL THERAPY

“both a helping role and process that uses modalities and defines goals consistent with the life experiences and cultural values of clients, recognizes client identities to include individual, group, and universal dimensions, advocates the use of universal and culture-specific strategies and roles in the healing process, and balances the importance of individualism and collectivism in the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of client and client systems” (D. W. Sue & Torino, 2005, p. 35)
CULTURAL HUMILITY: A WAY OF BEING

The “ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the [person]” (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington and Utsey, 2013 p. 2)

“Lifelong process of self-reflection, self-critique, continual assessment of power imbalances, and the development of mutually respectful relationships and partnerships” (Gallardo, 2013, p. 3)

Beginner's Mind
In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, But in the expert's there are few.
- Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi
CULTURALLY COMPETENT THERAPISTS

• Accept fear and anxiety as normal, reducing blindspots
• Be transparent – if you’re unsure, say so
  ➢ Clients teach us who they are, but they are not responsible for your competence
• Explore client’s racial & ethnic identity
  ➢ Explore client problems for current race-related stress
  ➢ Address race-based stereotyping
  ➢ Investigate intersections of trauma & other forms of oppression with race-related stress
  ➢ Refrain from victim blaming
  ➢ Are mindful of automatically dismissing or assuming exaggeration or lies—if you’re being rigid about a belief, sink into that in sup/therapy
• Without assumption or judgment, ask about their experience
  • E.g. How do the protests for racial justice impact you? How do you feel about what’s on the news right now?
CULTURALLY COMPETENT THERAPISTS

• Understand the impact of microaggressions (Minority Stress Theory)
• Guard against (as therapist and from clients):
  • Colorblindness
  • White (survivor’s) guilt: focus often on acceptance & forgiveness rather than changing their own actions or beliefs
  • White fragility: discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice
• Learn more about URM experiences through multiple sources
  • Events/activities to taste a culture
  • Read books and articles/watch videos, engage in social media
  • Ask the client for suggestions to learn more about their world incl. pop TV
Sensitively explore the relationship attuned to therapist power

• How do our different cultures impact our work together & our relationship?

• Do you ever feel uncomfortable with me? In what ways, and what could we do to work on it?

• What impact does your intersectionality have on your life?

• How could having a therapist from a similar culture (race, ethnicity, spirituality, etc.) contribute to your comfort level in therapy? In what ways might that be more difficult?

• How can I be more sensitive to your culture/ ways of communicating/ family’s values?

Explore these first yourself!
• Adopt a “not knowing” stance – learn about other worldviews
• See “Resistance” as lack of connection
• Does the client come from a collectivist or individualistic culture/family/society? How closely do they align with those values? Are there generational value conflicts esp. if there has been immigration and acculturation?
• How do they define healing? Does their culture value acceptance more than change? How is therapy viewed?
• Do they belong to a hierarchical society, and does it favor an inactive/nondirective approach?
• Is using their first name and self-disclosure compatible with their cultural values?
• Touch may be highly offensive or avoidance of physical contact could be rejecting
• Include anyone they deem important on a genogram or safety contract as “family” may have a different meaning than the traditional Western concept
• If they are from a collectivist culture, revise assumptions regarding boundaries, esp. enmeshment
• Working on autonomy, self-differentiation, & individual needs may not be consistent with collectivistic cultures. Does the client focus on the collective good or autonomy? How is this the same/different from their culture?
CULTURALLY STEREOTYPED COMMUNICATION STYLES

• English descent: Words used to accomplish one’s goals, utilitarian & pragmatic approach among families of

• African-Americans & Black families: High-context communicators

• Jewish, Italian, Greek, Latino families: Highly verbal interaction
  ➢ Hyperbolic & dramatic use of words among Italians, Latinos

• Chinese families: Symbolic ways of communicating

• Anglo, Irish, Scandinavian families: Less intense interaction with more distance to manage problems

• Indian families: High use of implicit rules for generational benefit
WHAT NEXT?

Resources & Suggested Activities
Resources for MFTs in a Racialized Climate: [https://blog.aamft.org/social-responsibility/](https://blog.aamft.org/social-responsibility/)

Allegories on race and racism: Camara Jones: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNhcY6fTyBM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNhcY6fTyBM)

The future of race in America: Michelle Alexander: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ6H-Mz6hgw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ6H-Mz6hgw)

Mellody Hobson: Color blind or color brave? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKtALHe3Y9Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKtALHe3Y9Q)

How to Talk about Race: Eric Deggans: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UojLHDG_Y4w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UojLHDG_Y4w)

Jane Elliott’s project on racial privilege: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MYHBrJ1IFU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MYHBrJ1IFU) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A89xhMV63rQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A89xhMV63rQ)

“Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man” with Emmauel Acho: [https://uncomfortableconvos.com/](https://uncomfortableconvos.com/)
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

• Take the Race IAT test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html
  ➢ Discuss your results with a colleague who seems similar to you, then with a colleague who seems different from you
  ➢ How do you feel about the results? Were they as expected? How did you feel about the test itself?

• Role play being a therapist with a client of a different race who asks, “What is your position on race and racial differences? What do you really think of my race?”

• Participate in a privilege walk: https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml


THANK YOU!

- Questions/ Discussion?

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