Working with offenders across cultures: A practical approach

Dr. Sherrise Truesdale-Moore, PhD
Department of Sociology & Corrections
Minnesota State University - Mankato
Outline of the Training Modules

I. Worldviews and correctional counseling approaches
II. Biases
III. Socio-political influence of counseling
IV. Communication
V. Acculturation
VI. Dr. D’s & Daryl’s Case Studies
Cultural competency in corrections means that correctional practitioners have a measured knowledge and skill for working with marginalized groups (i.e. people of color and LGBTQ). This person recognizes its discipline in a holistic nature; it understands the historical realities of offenders, their families, their communities, and organizations/entities that might affiliate with the process of institutionalizing offenders, and agencies and other practitioners that work to help rehabilitate them. More importantly, it gives appreciation to community assets and cultural context to enhance quality of life, successful reentry into the community, and to recidivism reduction.
Making sense of cultural competency: Worldviews

- consists of assumptions an individual holds about the makeup of his/her world.

- Your place in the world that causes actions, reactions, and interactions.

- Perceptions of your relationship to the world (nature, institutions, other people, and things)
Making sense of cultural competency: Resistance

- Resistance acts as an obstacle to building cultural competence.
  1. Cognitive resistance (Alternatives)
  2. Emotional resistance (powerful feelings)
  3. Behavioral resistance (Making adjustments)

4. [Link to video on Brene Brown and Empathy](https://www.google.com/search?q=brene+brown+empathy+video&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS885US885&oq=brene+brown+emp&aq=chrome.2.69i57j0l7.7426j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)
How would different worldviews create communication problems between probation officers and offenders?

- Worldview is culturally based variable that influences the relationship or communication between individuals. When differences exist, counselors can fall prey to making negative assumptions or judgments about their client’s behaviors, perceptions, attitudes, and values.

- Communication breakdowns occur because they use different structures of reasoning that stem from their philosophy of life, worldview, or belief system (epistemology).
Traditional approaches Versus Culturally sensitive approaches

- Traditional approaches are Eurocentric (white middle class worldview) that is westernized that prevents them from seeing beyond.
- Embraces universality of human condition
- Disorders are similar and cut across societies
- Lacks knowledge of ethnic cultures
- Task oriented and individualistic
- Failure to pick up clinical clues provided by their clients
- Unaware of the socio-political forces in the lives of marginalized groups
- Lacks openness to professional limitations.
Harm of Cultural Incompetence

- Insensitive to the needs of the culturally diverse offender
- Offenders of color, women, and LGBTQ might complain about being abused, intimidated or harassed by nonminority personnel.
- Mental health practices are embedded with biased diagnoses and treatment
- Mental health and correctional counselors are trained in programs in which ethnicity and LGBTQ is ignored
- Lack of knowledge and not putting in the necessary work to reach better outcomes
Tripartite Development

- You are no different from me is a counseling fallacy! Why?
- See Tripartite Development of Personal Identity
- Group level – all individuals are, in some respects, like some other individuals
- Universal level – all individuals are, in some respect, like all other individuals. What is the historical experience that might impact how today’s counselors and others are knowledgeable about this issue?
Why use a multicultural approach?

- Broaden the role that you can and expand the repertoire of counseling/case management skills.
- Aim to use modalities, intervention strategies, and goals that are inclusive of cultural appreciations and consistent with racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientations.
- Helps to recognize that cultural groups have many dimensions (individual, group, and universal).
- You want to recognize that some ethnic offenders might respond better to cultural specific approaches.
- Helps you balance individualism and collectivism in counseling or case management approaches.
- Give consideration to individuals, institutions, policies, practices with whom they interact.
BIASES DISTORT WHAT WE SEE AND HOW WE ACT.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCESSES TOGETHER INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES.
Motivational Bias – A person is motivated to provide a particular kind of outcome to please a person or group (i.e. motivational interviewing?).

Notational Bias – What the interviewer or person sees when making notations on a report (hoodlum, aggressive, resistant). This generally has a cultural aspect that is hidden (i.e. PSI?).

Cognitive Bias – Systematic patterns of irrational judgments based on an illogical fashion that lead to distortion (i.e. counseling conversations with offenders or with employee others?).

Observational Bias – A subcategory of cognitive biases that limit and distort our ability to observe properly (Worldviews?).

Confirmatory bias – The tendency to notice what we expect to see, while ignoring the rest (Increases the persistence of stereotypes).

Fundamental attribution error – The tendency to view others’ action as stemming from their personalities or characteristics, while underestimating the influences of other situations.

Halo effect – The tendency to allow an aspect of a person to spill over into the evaluation of the whole group.
Understanding how the sociopolitical climate affects the manifestation, diagnosis, case management, counseling, and treatment of marginalized groups
Examine historical issues/incidents
Consider Trust and historical research
and the medical experience

- Marian Sims, grandfather of gynecology
- Henrietta Lacks
- Tuskegee Experiment
- John Hopkins led paint poisoning research
Why traditional counseling might be oppressive

- History of studies involving counseling people of color
- Inherited worldviews and practices
- Historical and contemporary practices in education and training of practitioners
- Socially devalued groups are often viewed through the lens of Eurocentric worldviews
  1. Lack understanding about ethnic values and their interaction with a racist society
  2. Practitioners often graduate from programs that view people of color as inherently pathological and treatment is just a simple modification of behavior
- Hiring practices: Traditional vs. The Tinto Model
- Lack of cultural specific services and programming
Traditional correctional Counseling Practices

- Normal versus Abnormal
- Positive versus Negative behavior
- Diagnoses as a method to control
- Assessments as a method to label
- Curriculum and training deficiencies
Making the Adjustment

Ethnocentric Bias
- Only the westernized approach is worthy. Other forms of counseling and programming are delegitimized.

Ethnocentric Orientation
- Embracing other forms of practices.
- Natural support systems
- Community outreach programs
- Rather than disregarding them, find out why they might work.
What model is best?

Genetically Deficient Model
Inherited factors

Culturally Deficient Model
Environmental factors

Culturally Diverse Model
Alternative lifestyle and values
Daryl’s Case

- What worldview is being used in Daryl’s case?
- How do they examine the issue?
- How is he labeled?
- What model is being implemented? What do you find problematic?
- What counseling intervention guides their thinking?
- What approach should be used?
Communication
The blunted affect and relationship with resistance

- Is a mental health term used to describe the lack of emotional reactivity by an individual.

- It is a failure to express feelings either verbally or non-verbally.

- This effect is often influenced by cultural differences and it is often misdiagnosed as schizophrenia, particularly among African Americans.
Language and memory in people who are bilingual

- **Compound bilinguals** – More likely to encode experiences in two languages (learning both languages with experiences and emotions simultaneously).

- **Coordinate bilinguals** – Learn each language in different settings, which may create very distinct memory traces. Different moods and environmental triggers are associated with different words and concepts in each language.

- The language in which the interview is conducted can shape memories also.
Being Mindful of our own behaviors

- When a person has a heavy accent, we often assume the person is not intelligent.
- Being allowed to speak in one’s first language is more likely to produce good moods and mental status.
- People who are assessed in their second language are often misdiagnosed (Client might struggle to choose the right word).
- People who are not comfortable in speaking the second language might shutdown and become silent.
- Interrupting interviewees because you believe they are done speaking when they are just trying to collect their thoughts is problematic.
- Viewing a given behavior or statement as evidence of a problem (pathological) when it actually is just an example of a cultural difference.
- Using a work in English or another language in a way that inadvertently offends the person you are interviewing.
- Making inaccurate assumptions about a person.
- Failing to accommodate the person’s culture can damage rapport (i.e. scheduling a meeting during religious holiday).
- Misunderstanding cultural issues as noncompliance
Is the multicultural perspective definitive?
Models of Acculturation

- Traditionalism – People maintain, practice, and value the traditions of their culture.
- Transitional Period – People participate in their original culture and their new one but do not feel at home in either.
- Marginality – People are unable to meet the demands of old or new culture.
- Assimilation – Assume the practices of the new culture and reject the old.
- Biculturalism – They create a sense of identity drawing on elements of their original culture and the new. They are bilingual and very functional.
The way offenders struggle with racial identity can impact correctional outcomes?
Assimilation

- Offenders who assimilate accept the mainstream culture, but become disengaged in their own culture and run the risk of being rejected by their family, communities, and the majority culture.

- Outcome – will experience high levels of stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and susceptible to social problems.
Traditionalism

- Offenders retain their cultural identity, values, and behaviors while rejecting those of the majority culture.

- Problem – These individuals are socially effective within their cultures of origin, may not be able to negotiate or get full benefit from the institutions of the majority culture (i.e. education, economics, health/mental health care, government).

- Outcome – Are more likely to go to indigenous social supports (cultural ways of healing, counseling, educating)
Marginality

- Offenders are rejected by both ethnic and majority group cultures.

- Problem - They will lack cultural identity, groundedness, and sense of self.

- Outcome - They are more likely to experience high levels of stress and psychological maladjustment

  - i.e. mixed-race identity
Biculturalism

- Referred to as integrated. Is the adaption of some majority culture attitudes and practices coupled with the retention of ethnic cultural practices and identity.

- Outcome - These individuals demonstrate psychological flexibility across cultures.

- Problem/Issue - They will feel a sense of belonging to both cultures.
Questions?