

Understanding Resistance to Multicultural Training

Obstacles to Developing Cultural Competence

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Acknowledge and understand personal resistance to multicultural training.
2. Identify how emotional reactions to topics of prejudice, discrimination, and oppression can act as obstacles to developing *cultural competence* and *cultural humility*.
3. Understand *worldview* differences between majority and socially devalued group members in U.S. society.
4. Make sense of why majority group members often react differently from marginalized group members when issues of racism, sexism, or heterosexism are discussed.
5. Be cognizant of how *worldviews* may influence the ability to understand, empathize, and work effectively with diverse clients.
6. Realize that becoming an effective multicultural counselor or therapist is a lifelong journey.

Reading and digesting the content of this book may prove difficult and filled with powerful feelings for many of you. Some readers find the substance of the book difficult to absorb and have reacted very strongly to the content. According to instructors of multicultural counseling and therapy (MCT) classes, the powerful feelings aroused in some students prevent them from being open to diversity issues, and from making classroom discussions on the topic a learning opportunity. Instead, conversations on diversity become “shouting matches” or become monologues rather than dialogues. These instructors indicate that the content of the book challenges many White students about their racial, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity realities, and that the book’s socio-cultural/political orientation also arouses deep feelings of defensiveness, anger, anxiety, guilt, sadness, hopelessness, and a multitude of other strong emotions. As you begin the course, it is important to know that multicultural psychology is much more than an intellectual exercise. It is also a journey of self-discovery, filled with deep feelings about the subject matter, and often-uncomfortable personal revelations.

Students who have embarked on a journey to understand MCT and multicultural mental health issues have almost universally felt both positive and negative feelings that affect their ability to learn about diversity issues. As you begin your journey to becoming a culturally competent or *culturally responsive* counselor/mental health professional, the road is often filled with obstacles to self-exploration, to understanding yourself as a racial/cultural being, and to understanding the *worldview* of those who differ from you in race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or identity, and other sociodemographic group characteristics.

We begin by sharing with you reactions by fellow classmates about their starting expectations for the course, and then their initial reactions to the content of *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE COURSE

White counselor trainee: *What are my expectations for this course? Well, I'm here to learn about multicultural counseling and therapy. I'd like information on how to work with Black and Latino clients. I'd also like to learn how to work with LGBTQ clients as well. I hope we can talk about these things calmly and not let our emotions get in the way. Too many times discussions on race become political, and I hope we don't wind up blaming everything on whites. I don't want to feel like I'm walking on eggshells. I don't want to have to be politically correct. Let's keep politics out of the classroom!*

Trainee of Color: *I'm not sure what to expect. The majority of these classes have been a disappointment. It's frustrating to always tip toe around topics of race and racism. As a Person of Color, I want people to be honest with one another. Many people are scared to death to talk about race, and they avoid it like a hot potato. I hear it all the time. Bring up a racial issue and they'll say "race had nothing to do with it." They'll say "you're playing the race card." They'll say "you are forcing me to be politically correct." I get angry and upset at times, but I can't say anything because they will think I'm just an "angry" Black man.*

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you explain the different expectations that these two trainees have about a course on multicultural counseling and therapy?
2. Part of becoming a multiculturally competent counselor or therapist is the ability to understand the worldview of clients. What in the lived experience of these two individuals might explain their outlooks?
3. How much does your own racial background affect your perception of these two narratives?
4. Both trainees approach the course with some unease. From analyzing the statements, can you determine what fears they have?
5. Take a few moments to reflect upon your own expectations for the course. What would you like to have covered? What apprehensions or concerns do you have about the course? Can you give voice to them?
6. Because of the changing demographics of the nation, no helping professional can escape from encountering diverse clients. Are you comfortable in talking about issues of differences, marginalization, racism, sexism, and heterosexism with them? If not, what does this mean for you as a helping professional?

Students are frequently asked at the beginning of a course on MCT, what expectations they have. One of the more common responses from White trainees is revealed in the quote above. Reading between the lines, the White trainee seems to be implying that (a) learning about race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation is purely a cognitive or intellectual exercise, (b) emotion is antagonistic to reason, (c) "politics" should be left outside of the classroom, and (d) as a White person, he/she may be blamed for all the racial/ethnic injustices of the world. As we shall see shortly, these expectations are setting up the White student for a very challenging experience in the course.

On the other hand, students of color also approach courses on race with great trepidation. Their concerns are different from that of their White counterparts. They silently ask, "Will my voice be heard or not?" Their experience is that (a) honesty and authenticity in discussing race issues are often absent or glossed over in classes, (b) that when discussed they are "sugar-coated," avoided, dismissed, or rationalized away, (c) that students of color are silenced from expressing their emotionality for fear of being labeled "angry or irrational," and (d) that they are caught in a double-bind in that they are asked to share their true thoughts and feelings, but are invalidated when they do.

**REACTIONS
TO THE COURSE**

Expectations oftentimes shape the reactions to the course content, especially those in the book. As the course evolves, emotional hot buttons become pushed, as exemplified in the following reactions.

White Student: *“How dare you and your fellow caustic co-authors express such vitriol against White Americans? You are all racists, but of a different color . . . What makes you think that racism comes just from Whites? Minorities are equally racist. I can’t believe you are counselors. Your book does nothing but to weaken our nationalism, our sense of unity and solidarity. If you don’t like it here, leave this country. You are all spoiled hate-mongers who take advantage of our educational system by convincing others to use such a propagandistic book! Shame on you. Your book doesn’t make me want to be more multicultural, but take ungrateful people like you and export them out of this great land of mine.”*

African American Student: *“When I first took this course (multicultural counseling) I did not have much hope that it would be different from all the others in our program, White and Eurocentric. I felt it would be the typical cosmetic and superficial coverage of minority issues. Boy was I wrong. I like that you did not ‘tip toe’ around the subject. Your book *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* was so forceful and honest that it made me feel liberated . . . I felt like I had a voice, and it allowed me to truly express my anger and frustration against racism, and to honestly talk about what we experience on a daily basis. White folks don’t seem to want to understand how we have been oppressed. Some of the white students were upset and I could see them squirming in their seats when the professor discussed the book. I felt like saying ‘good, it’s about time Whites suffer like we have. I have no sympathy for you. It’s about time they learned to listen.’ Thank you, thank you, and thank you all for having the courage to write such an honest book.”*

Many students approach courses on race, gender, sexual orientation and identity with a combination of excitement, curiosity, and ambivalence. They may have varying expectations about the course content, but are often unprepared to deal with the “hot emotional buttons” pushed in them. Understanding and being able to process feelings are the first steps to becoming a culturally competent counselor/therapist. Unless adequately understood and resolved, these nested or embedded feelings can serve as roadblocks to working effectively with clients who differ from you in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, etc. Let us turn our attention to the reactions of the last two students and distill their meanings.

First, the reactions by the White student reveal immense anger at the content of *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice (CCD)*, and especially at the authors whom are labeled “hate-mongers” and “racists.” It is obvious that the student feels the book is biased and propagandistic. The language used by the student seems to indicate defensiveness and the material covered in the book is easily dismissed as political indoctrination. More important, there is an implicit suggestion in the use of “people like you” and “land of mine” that conveys a perception that only certain groups can be considered “American” and that others are “foreigners.” This is similar to statements often made to People of Color: “If you don’t like it here, go back to China, Africa, or Latin America.” Likewise, the implication is that this land does not belong to Persons of Color who are U.S. Citizens, but only to White Americans. The emotive tone of the student is one of being angered, offended, and defensive.

What hot buttons are being pushed in the student? Where are the strong reactions coming from? Is the material in the book, biased and political rhetoric, or is the White student having his view of the world challenged? We will delve more deeply into these emotive reactions shortly, but it appears that the student feels unjustly accused of being bigoted. To feel less guilty, the student emphasizes that minorities are equally prejudiced against White Americans. Although it may be an accurate observation, it serves to make the student and other Whites less culpable by equating one form of bias with another. If the student can get other groups to admit they too are “racist,” then less guilt and responsibility for one’s own biased beliefs and actions will be experienced.

Second, note that the reaction from the student of color is diametrically opposite to that of the White trainee. This student reacts positively to the material, finds the content helpful in explaining his/her experiential reality, and feels validated and reaffirmed. In other words, the student finds the content of the book truthful, compelling and empathetic. The student of color describes how the content and tone of the book make him/her feel liberated, provide a voice to describe racial experiences, and tap into and allow him/her to express feelings like anger and frustration. The student

implies that most courses on multicultural psychology are taught from a EuroAmerican perspective, but the book content “tells it like it is.” Additionally, the student seems to take pleasure in observing the discomfort of White students, expresses little sympathy for their struggles in the class, and enjoys seeing them being placed on the defensive. (We will return to the meaning of this last point shortly.)

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that White students and students of color respond uniformly in one way. As we will explore in future chapters, many White students react positively to the book and some students of color report negative reactions. However, in general, there are major *worldview* differences and reactions to the material between the groups. For example, many socially marginalized group members find solace in the book; they describe a deep sense of validation, release, elation, joy, and even feelings of liberation as they read the text.

The important question to ask is, “Why do Students of Color react so differently from their White counterparts?” After all, the content of the book remains the same, but the perceptions appear worlds apart. The short answer is that racial realities differ between groups because of differences in lived experience, just like differences in realities between men and women, gays and straights, able-bodied and those with disabilities, Christians and Jews, and rich and poor. MCT is about being able to bridge these differences, to relate to the worldview of culturally diverse clients, to not silence their stories, to listen to their narratives without becoming defensive, but most importantly, to not impose your definitions of normality and abnormality upon them.

For practicing professionals and trainees in the helping professions, understanding the differing *worldviews* of our racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse clients is tantamount to effective multicultural counseling. But understanding our own reactions to issues of diversity, *multiculturalism*, oppression, race, gender, and sexual orientation is equally important to our development as counselors/therapists (Collins, Arthur, & Brown, 2013; Melasmed, 2021). As we will shortly see, that understanding can be quite anxiety-provoking, especially when we are asked to confront our own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes. The old adage “counselor or therapist, know thyself” is the basic building block to *cultural competence* and *cultural humility* in the helping professions.

BY THE NUMBERS

How often do well-intentioned helping professionals engage in implicit biases toward clients of color?

- 41–83% of clients of color report at least experiencing one racial microaggression in therapy.
- The most common forms of microaggressions were avoidance or minimization of cultural issues.
- 76% of the microaggressions experienced were never addressed in the sessions.
- <50% of therapists could even recognize microaggressions.
- Clients of color rated therapists who commit microaggressions or are unable to recognize them as less sensitive, less culturally competent, and less attuned to cultural issues.
- The unconscious bias of helping professionals prevents or ruptures *therapeutic alliances*.

Source: Owen, Tao, and Drinane (2019).

EMOTIONAL SELF-REVELATIONS AND FEARS: MAJORITY GROUP MEMBERS

As you will shortly see, the book’s subject matter (a) deals with prejudice, bias, stereotyping, discrimination, and bigotry; (b) makes a strong case that counseling and psychotherapy may serve as instruments of cultural oppression rather than therapeutic liberation (Sue, 2015; Wendt, Gone, & Nagata, 2015); (c) indicates that well-intentioned mental health professionals are not immune from inheriting the racial, gender, and other biases of the larger society (Owen, Tao, & Drinane, 2019); and (d) suggests therapists and trainees may be unconsciously biased toward clients from marginalized groups (Ratts & Pedersen, 2014).

Although supported by the research literature and by clinical observations and reports, these assertions can be quite disturbing to members of the majority group. If you are a majority group member and beginning the journey to developing *cultural competence* and *cultural humility*, you may share similar reactions to those of the students. Both White students, for example, are reacting with defensiveness, anger and resentment; they believe that the authors are unjustly accusing U.S.

society and White Americans of racism, and claim the authors are themselves “racist” but of a different color. They may become defensive and actively resist and reject the content of the book. If these feelings persist throughout the course unabated, they will act as barriers to learning and further self-exploration. However, what do these negative reactions mean to the students? Why are they so upset? Dr. Mark Kiselica (Sue & Sue, 2013, pp. 8–9), a White psychologist and former provost of a college in New York, writes about his own negative emotional reactions to reading the book during his graduate training. His personal and emotional reactions to the book provide us with some clues.

I was shaken to my core the first time I read Counseling the Culturally Different (now Counseling the Culturally Diverse) . . . At the time, I was a doctoral candidate at The Pennsylvania State University's counseling psychology program, and I had been reading Sue's book in preparation for my comprehensive examinations, which I was scheduled to take toward the end of the spring semester. . .

I wish I could tell you that I had acquired Sue's book because I was genuinely interested in learning about multicultural counseling . . . I am embarrassed to say, however, that that was not the case. I had purchased Sue's book purely out of necessity, figuring out that I had better read the book because I was likely to be asked a major question about cross-cultural counseling on the comps. During the early and middle 1980s, taking a course in multicultural counseling was not a requirement in many graduate counseling programs, including mine, and I had decided not to take my department's pertinent course as an elective. I saw myself as a culturally sensitive person, and I concluded that the course wouldn't have much to offer me. Nevertheless, I understood that . . . the professor, who taught the course, would likely submit a question to the pool of materials being used to construct the comps. So, I prudently went to the university bookstore and purchased a copy . . . because that was the text . . . used for his course.

I didn't get very far with my highlighting and note-taking before I started to react to Sue's book with great anger and disgust. Early on in the text, Sue blasted the mental health system for its historical mistreatment of people who were considered to be ethnic minorities in the United States. He especially took on White mental health professionals, charging them with a legacy of ethnocentric and racist beliefs and practices that had harmed people of color and made them leery of counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. It seemed that Sue didn't have a single good thing to say about White America. I was ticked off at him, and I resented that I had to read his book. However, I knew I had better complete his text and know the subject matter covered in it if I wanted to succeed on the examinations. So, out of necessity, I read on and struggled with the feelings that Sue's words stirred in me.

Cultural competence and humility in counseling/mental health practice demands that nested or embedded emotions associated with race, culture, gender, and other social identity differences be openly experienced and discussed. It is these intense feelings that often block our ability to hear the voices of those most oppressed and disempowered (Appiah, Eveland, Bullock, & Coduto, 2021). How we, as helping professionals, deal with these strong feelings can either enhance or impede a deeper understanding of ourselves as racial, ethnic, and cultural beings and our understanding of the *worldviews* of culturally diverse clients. Because Mark did not allow his defensiveness and anger to get the best of him, he was able to achieve insights into his own biases and false assumptions about People of Color. The following passage reveals the internal struggle that he courageously fought and the disturbing realization of his own racism.

I tried to make sense of my emotions—to ascertain why I was drawn back to Sue's book again and again in spite of my initial rejection of it. I know it may sound crazy, but I read certain sections of Sue's book repeatedly and then reflected on what was happening inside of me . . . I began to discover important lessons about myself, significant insights prompted by reading Sue's book that would shape the direction of my future . . . I now realized that Sue was right! The system had been destructive toward people of color, and although my ancestors and I had not directly been a part of that oppressive system, I had unknowingly contributed to it. I began to think about how I had viewed people of color throughout my life, and I had to admit to myself that I had unconsciously bought into the racist stereotypes about African Americans and Latinos. Yes, I had laughed at and told racist jokes. Yes, I had used the “N” word when referring to African Americans. Yes, I had been a racist. Sue's book forced me to remove my blinders. He helped me to see that I was both a product and an architect of a racist culture. (Sue & Sue, 2013, pp. 9–10)

Years after first reading the book, Mark Kiselica (1999) talks about his racial awakening and identifies some of the major fears many well-intentioned White Americans struggle with as they

begin studying racism, sexism, or heterosexism on a personal level. This passage, perhaps, identifies the major psychological obstacle that confronts many White Americans as they process the content and meaning of the book.

You see, the subjects I [White psychologist] am about to discuss—ethnocentrism and racism, including my own racism—are topics that most Whites tend to avoid. We shy away from discussing these issues for many reasons: We are racked with guilt over the way people of color have been treated in our nation; we fear that we will be accused of mistreating others; we particularly fear being called the “R” word—racist—so we grow uneasy whenever issues of race emerge; and we tend to back away, change the subject, respond defensively, assert our innocence and our “color blindness,” denying that we could possibly be ethnocentric or racist. (p. 14)

It is important to note Mark’s open admission to racist thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. As a White psychologist, he offers insights into the reasons why many White trainees fear open dialogues on race; they may ultimately reveal unpleasant secrets about themselves. In his own racial awakening, he realizes that discussing race and racism is so difficult for many White Americans because they are racked with guilt about how People of Color have been treated in the United States and are fearful that they will be accused of being a racist and be blamed for the oppression of others. Rejecting and avoiding racial topics are major strategies used to hold on to one’s self-image as a good, moral, and decent human being who is innocent of racial bias and discrimination.

Mark’s honesty in confronting his own racism is refreshing, and his insights are invaluable to those who wish to develop culturally competence and become allies in the struggle for equal rights (Chao, Wei, Spanierman, Longo, & Northart, 2015; Spanierman & Smith, 2017). He is a rarity in academic circles, even rarer because he was willing to put his words on paper for the whole world to read as a means to help others understand the meaning of racism on a human level. Mark’s courageous and open exploration of his initial reactions to *CCD* indicates what we have come to learn is a common, intensely emotional experience for many readers.

**EMOTIONAL
INVALIDATION
VERSUS AFFIR-
MATION: MAR-
GINALIZED
GROUP MEMBERS**

It is clear that the same subject matter in *CCD* often arouses a different emotional response from marginalized group members; for the two students of color, for example, they felt heard, liberated, and validated. They describe the book content as “honest” and “truthful,” indicating that their lived experiences had finally been validated rather than silenced or ignored. Many People of Color describe how their thoughts and feelings about race and racism are often ignored, dismissed, negated, or seen as having no basis in fact. They are told that they are misreading things, overly sensitive, unduly suspicious, or even paranoid when they bring up issues of bias and discrimination; in other words, they are “crazy” to think or feel that way.

As can be seen from the students of color, many marginalized group members react equally strongly as their White counterparts when issues of oppression are raised, especially when their stories of discrimination and pain are minimized or neglected. Their reality of racism, sexism, and homophobia, they contend, is relatively unknown or ignored by those in power because of the discomfort that pervades such topics. Worse yet, many well-intentioned majority persons seem disinclined to hear the personal stories of suffering, humiliation, and pain that accrue to Persons of Color and other marginalized groups in our society (Sue, 2015). The following quote gives some idea of what it is like for a Black man to live his life day in and day out in a society filled with both covert and overt racist acts that often are invisible to well-intentioned White Americans.

I don’t think white people, generally, understand the full meaning of racist discriminatory behaviors directed toward Americans of African descent. They seem to see each act of discrimination or any act of violence as an “isolated” event. As a result, most white Americans cannot understand the strong reaction manifested by blacks when such events occur . . . They forget that in most cases, we live lives of quiet desperation generated by a litany of daily large and small events that, whether or not by design, remind us of our “place” in American society. [Whites] ignore the personal context of the stimulus. That is, they deny the historical impact that a negative act may have on an individual. “Nigger” to a white may simply be an epithet that should be ignored. To most blacks, the term brings into sharp and current focus all kinds of acts of racism—murder, rape, torture, denial of constitutional rights, insults, limited opportunity

structure, economic problems, unequal justice under the law and a myriad of . . . other racist and discriminatory acts that occur daily in the lives of most Americans of African descent. (Feagin & Sikes, 1994, pp. 23–24)

The lived experience of People of Color is generally invisible to most White Americans, as this quotation portrays. As we will discuss in Chapter 4, racial, gender, and sexual orientation *microaggressions* are experienced frequently by People of Color, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons in their day-to-day interactions with well-intentioned members of the dominant society (Nadal, Griffin, Wong, Davidoff, & Davis, 2017; Sue & Spanierman, 2020). *Microaggressions* are the everyday slights, put-downs, invalidations, and insults directed to socially devalued group members by well-intentioned people who often are unaware that they have engaged in such biased and harmful behaviors. A lifetime of *microaggressions* can have a major harmful impact on the psychological well-being of victims. Note the following narratives provided by American Indians as they describe day-to-day experiences with *microaggressions* that serve to undermine their humanity through exposure to racial hostility and assumptions of inferiority.

I know my dad has a lot of white friends, and they get comfortable with him and they say really insulting things. They call us wagon burners, dirty Indians. And, it's, it's, it's when they get, when they start getting out of line 'cause my dad wouldn't say anything. I would, start saying stuff and then they'd come back to my dad and be like "oh, what's wrong with your son? Can't he take a joke?" Well it's not funny when, when someone insults you to your face and then they just expect you to laugh at it like they do. (name withheld)

. . .so I filled out the little form and I took it up to the girl behind the glass and said "I've got this thing for the parking permit" [at the local university] And she looked at it and looked at me, and she said "So are you delivering this for Dr. X?" and I said "No, actually I am Dr. X." And she got really red and embarrassed, you know, but I don't really know what was in her mind. You know, maybe I just don't look professorial or something like that. (Senter & Ling, 2017, pp. 266, 269)

Here, it is important to note the emotional toll of having to listen to racially hostile name calling among “so-called” friends or to have to continually prove your legitimacy as a professional. These narratives are part of a larger study on racial microaggressions against American Indians (Senter & Ling, 2017). People retold stories of being assumed to be poor, addicted to alcohol or drugs, lazy, and dirty. Narrators described costs associated with microaggressions including being followed, receiving poor service, and getting overcharged. Over time, these experiences left people with hurt and anger; some people coped by distancing themselves from non-Natives or trying to hide. But, People of Color are also strong. Like so many others who experience racial microaggressions, many used these moments as an opportunity to educate others.

Given the fact that the majority of People of Color have experienced microaggressions in their lifetime, covering these topics in class can serve to validate their lived realities (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). Dr. Le Ondra Clark, now an African American psychologist in California, describes her experiences of being one of the few Black students in a graduate program and the feeling of affirmation that flooded her when taking a multicultural counseling course and using *CCD* as the textbook.

I, a native of Southern California, arrived at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and was eager to learn. I remember the harsh reality I experienced as I confronted the Midwest culture. I felt like I stood out, and I learned quickly that I did. As I walked around the campus and surrounding area, I remember counting on one hand the number of racial and ethnic minorities I saw. I was not completely surprised about this, as I had done some research and was aware that there would be a lack of racial and ethnic diversity on and around campus. However, I was baffled by the paucity of exposure that the 25 members of my master's cohort had to racial and ethnic minority individuals. I assumed that because I was traveling across the country to attend this top-ranked program focused on social justice, everyone else must have been as well. I was wrong. . .

I did not begin to feel comfortable until I attended the Multicultural Counseling course later that week. Students were assigned a number of textbooks as part of this course, including CCD . . . I never imagined a textbook would bring me so much comfort. I vividly remember reading each chapter and vigorously taking notes in the margins. I also remember the energy I felt as I wrote about my reactions to the readings each week. I felt like the book legitimized the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities and helped me understand what I was encountering in my Midwest surroundings. It became a platform from which I could explain my own experience as a racial and ethnic minority from Southern California who was transplanted to the Midwest. The personal stories, concepts, and theories illustrated in CCD resonated with me and ultimately helped me overcome my feelings of isolation. CCD provided me with the language to engage in intellectual discourse about race, ethnicity, social class, privilege, and disparities. I remember the awareness that swept over the class as we progressed through the textbook . . . I felt that they were beginning to view things through my cultural lens, and I through theirs. We were gaining greater understanding of how our differing cultural realities had shaped us and would impact the work we conducted as therapists. (Sue & Sue, 2013, pp. 17–18)

Le Ondra's story voices a continuing saga of how Persons of Color and many marginalized individuals must function in an ethnocentric society that unintentionally invalidates their experiences and enforces silence upon them. She talks about how the text provided a language for her to explain her experiences and how she resonated with its content and meaning. To her, the content of the book tapped into her experiential reality and expressed a *worldview* that is too often ignored or not even discussed in graduate-level programs. Le Ondra found comfort and solace in the book, and she has been fortunate in finding significant others in her life that have validated her thoughts, feelings, and aspirations and allowed her to pursue a social justice direction in counseling. As a Person of Color, Le Ondra has been able to overcome great odds and to obtain her doctorate in the field and become Chief Executive Officer of the California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies and the Executive Director of the California Access Coalition without losing her sense of integrity or racial/cultural identity.

A WORD OF CAUTION

There is a word of caution that needs to be directed toward students of marginalized groups as they read *CCD* and find it affirming and validating. In teaching the course, we have often encountered students of color who become very contentious and highly outspoken toward White classmates. A good example is provided in the reaction of the African American student in the fourth scenario. It is clear that the student seems to take delight in seeing his White classmates “squirm” and be uncomfortable. In this respect, he may be taking out his own anger and frustration upon White classmates, and his concern has less to do with helping them understand than having them feel some of the pain and hurt he has felt over the years. It is important to express and understand one's anger (it can be healing), but becoming verbally abusive toward another is counterproductive to building rapport and mutual respect. As People of Color, for example, we must realize that our enemies are not White Americans, but White supremacy! Moreover, by extension, our enemy is not White Western society, but racism and ethnocentrism.

Second, because the book discusses multicultural issues, some students of color come to believe that multicultural training is only for White students; the implicit assumption is that they know the material already and are the experts on the subject. Since many students of color have not explored their beliefs about other groups, and sometimes their own, such a perspective prevents self-exploration and constitutes a form of resistance. As will be seen in Chapter 8, People of Color, for example, are not immune from prejudice, bias, and discrimination. Further, such a belief prevents the exploration of interracial and interethnic misunderstandings and biases. Multicultural training is more than White–African American, White–Latinx American, White–Asian American, White–Native American, and so on. It is also about African American–Asian American, Asian American–Native American, and Latinx–Native American relationships; and it includes multiple combinations of other social identity differences, like gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious orientation, and so forth. Race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation/identity are about everyone; it is not just a “minority thing.”

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As you continue reading the material in this text, you are likely to experience strong and powerful reactions and emotions. Being able to understand the meaning of your feelings is the first step to *cultural competence*. Ask yourself, why am I reacting this way? What does it say about my *worldview*, my experiential reality, and my ability to relate to people who differ from me in race, gender, and sexual orientation/identity?
2. Many marginalized group members find that their voices are silenced or unheard. Are their perceptions correct? If not, how do you explain their feelings? If so, what are factors prevent their voices from being heard?
3. What do you think “understanding yourself as a racial, ethnic, cultural being” means? Some questions to guide you in finding the answer are the following. What does it mean to be a Person of Color? What does it mean to be White? These questions are best answered in a group activity.
4. Do you think it is possible to “leave politics” outside of the classroom when discussing issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia? Is it possible not to consider the sociopolitical nature of counseling and psychotherapy when working with marginalized group members?

As a counselor or therapist working with clients, you will often encounter psychological resistance or, more accurately, client behaviors that obstruct the therapeutic process or sabotage positive change (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2018). Clients may change the topic when recalling unpleasant memories, externalize blame for their own failings, fail to acknowledge strong feelings of anger toward loved ones, or be chronically late for counseling appointments. All of these client behaviors are examples of resistance or avoidance of acknowledging and confronting unpleasant personal revelations. Oftentimes, these represent unconscious maneuvers to avoid fearful personal insights, to avoid personal responsibility, and to avoid painful feelings. In most cases, resistance masks deeper meanings outside the client’s awareness; tardiness for appointments is unacknowledged anger toward therapists, and changing topics in a session is an unconscious deflection of attention away from frightening personal revelations. In many respects, multicultural training can be likened to “therapy” in that trainees are analogous to clients, and trainers are comparable to therapists helping clients with insights about themselves and others.

As we shall see in Chapter 2, the goal of multicultural training is *cultural competence*. It requires trainees to become aware of their own *worldviews*, their assumptions of human behavior, their misinformation and lack of knowledge, and, most importantly, their biases and prejudices. Sometimes, this journey is a painful one, and trainees will resist moving forward. For trainers or instructors, the job is to help trainees in their self-exploration as racial/cultural beings, and the meaning this has for their future roles as multicultural counselors. For trainees, being able to recognize, understand, and overcome resistance to multicultural training is important in becoming a culturally competent counselor or therapist. In many respects, to be uncomfortable and to experience negative reactions to the material may be signs of potential growth. In the next few sections, we focus upon identifying how resistance manifests itself in training and propose reasons why many well-intentioned trainees find multicultural training disconcerting and difficult to undertake. By so doing, we are hopeful that trainees will attend to their own reactions when reading the text or when participating in classroom dialogues on the subject.

In work with resistance to diversity training, research reveals how it is likely to be manifested in three forms: *cognitive resistance*, *emotional resistance*, and *behavioral resistance* (Sue, 2015). Recognizing the manifestation and hidden meanings of resistance is one of the first priorities of multicultural training for both trainees and trainers. For trainees, it is finding the courage to confront their own fears and apprehensions, to work through the powerful emotions they are likely to

RECOGNIZING AND UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE TO MULTICULTURAL TRAINING

experience, to explore what these feelings mean for them as racial/cultural beings, to achieve new insights about themselves, and to develop multicultural skills and behaviors in their personal lives and as mental health professionals. For trainers, it means understanding the nature of trainee resistance, creating a safe but challenging environment for self-exploration, and using intervention strategies that facilitate difficult dialogues on race, gender, sexual orientation/identity, and other topics in the area of diversity.

COGNITIVE RESISTANCE—DENIAL

To date, my biggest discovery is that I didn't really believe that people were being discriminated against because of their race. I could hear them say it, but in my head, I kept running a parallel reason from the White perspective. A Chinese lady says that her party had to wait longer while Whites kept getting seated in front of them. I say, other people had made reservations. A black man says that the receptionist was rude, and made him wait longer because he's Black. I say she had a bad day, and the person he was there to see was busy. A Puerto Rican couple says that the second they drove into Modesto . . . a cop started tailing them, and continued to do so until they reached their hotel, which they opted to drive right on by because they didn't feel safe. I say, there's nothing to be afraid of in Modesto. It's a nice little town. And surely the cop wasn't following you because you're Puerto Rican. I bet your hotel was on his way to the station. I know that for every story in which something bad happens to someone because of their race, I can counter it with a White interpretation. Moreover, while I was listening with a sympathetic ear, I silently continued to offer up alternative explanations, benign explanations that kept my world in equilibrium. (Rabow, Venieris, & Dhillon, 2014, p. 189)

This student account reveals a pattern of entertaining alternative explanations to the stories told by Persons of Color about their experiences of prejudice and discrimination. Although the author describes “listening sympathetically,” it was clear that he or she silently did not believe that these were instances of racism; other more plausible and “benign” explanations could account for the events. This is not an atypical response for many White trainees when they listen to stories of discrimination from classmates of color (Sue, 2015; Young, 2003). Because of a strong belief that racism is a thing of the past, that we live in a post-racial society, and that equal access and opportunity are open to everyone, People of Color are seen as exaggerating or misperceiving situations. When stories of prejudice and discrimination are told, it directly challenges these cherished beliefs. The student’s quote indicates as much when he says that the “benign explanations” preserves his or her racial reality (“kept my world in equilibrium”).

The fact that the student chose not to voice his or her thoughts is actually an impediment to learning and understanding. In many classrooms, teachers have noted how silence is used by some White students to mask or conceal their true thoughts and feelings about multicultural issues (Appiah, Eveland, Bullock, & Coduto, 2021; Sue, Torino, Capodilupo, Rivera, & Lin, 2010). Denial through disbelief, unwillingness to consider alternative scenarios, distortion, fabrication, and rationalizations are all mechanisms frequently used by some trainees during racial conversations to prevent them from thinking about or discussing topics of race and racism in an honest manner (van Dijk, 1992; Sue, 2015; Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino, 2010). In our teaching in multicultural classes, we have observed many types of denials that work against honest diversity discussions. There are denials that students are prejudiced, that racism still exists, that they are responsible for the oppression of others, that White Americans occupy an advantaged and privileged position, that they hold power over People of Color, and even denial that they are White (Feagin & Vera, 2002; McIntosh, 2002; Sue & Spanierman, 2020; Tatum, 1992; Todd & Abrams, 2011). This latter point (Whiteness and White privilege) is an especially “hot topic” that will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 7. As a trainee in this course, you will be presented with opportunities to discuss these topics in detail, and explore what these denials may mean about you and your classmates. We hope you will actively participate in such discussions, rather than passively dealing with the material.

EMOTIONAL RESISTANCE

Emotional resistance is perhaps the major obstacle to multicultural understanding, because it blocks a trainee’s ability to acknowledge, understand, and make meaning out of strong and powerful feelings associated with multicultural or diversity topics. The manifestation and dynamics of

emotional resistance are aptly described by Sara Winter (1977, p. 24), a White female psychologist. Although the narrative was given decades ago, it remains relevant today. Winter provides some insights as to why this occurs: it serves to protect people from having to examine their own prejudices and biases.

*When someone pushes racism into my awareness, I feel **guilty** (that I could be doing so much more); **angry** (I don't like to feel like I'm wrong); **defensive** (I already have two Black friends . . . I worry more about racism than most whites do—isn't that enough); **turned off** (I have other priorities in my life with guilt about that thought); **helpless** (the problem is so big—what can I do?). I HATE TO FEEL THIS WAY. That is why I minimize race issues and let them fade from my awareness whenever possible.*

The Meaning of Anxiety and Fear

Anxiety is the primary subjective emotion encountered by White trainees exposed to multicultural content and its implications. In one study, it was found that when racial dialogues occurred, nearly all students described fears of verbal participation because they could be misunderstood, or be perceived as racist (Sue, Rivera, et al., 2010). Others went further in describing having to confront the realization that they held stereotypes, biases, and prejudices toward People of Color. This insight was very disturbing and anxiety-provoking to them because it directly challenged their self-image as good, moral, and decent human beings who did not discriminate. Facing this potential awareness creates high levels of anxiety, and often results in maneuvers among students to avoid confronting their meanings.

I have a fear of speaking as a member of the dominant group . . . My feelings of fear stem from not wanting to be labeled as being a racist. I think that fear also stems from the inner fear that I do not want to know what happens to people of color every day. I may not directly be a racist, but not reacting or speaking up to try to change things is a result of my guilt . . . This is a frightening prospect because I do not want to see the possibility that I have been a racist. Awareness is scary. (Rabow et al., 2014, p. 192)

In the preceding quote, the student talks about “fear” being a powerful force in preventing him or her from wanting to learn about the plight of People of Color. The strong emotions of guilt and fear, and possibly “being racist,” are too frightening to consider. For many students, these feelings block them from exploring and attempting to understand the life experience of People of Color. In one major study, for example, silence or not participating in diversity discussions, denials of personal and societal racism, and physically leaving the situation were notable avoidant ploys used by students. The apprehensions they felt affected them physically as well (Sue, Rivera, et al., 2010; Sue, Torino, et al., 2010). Some students described physiological reactions of anxiety like a pounding heart, dry mouth, tense muscles, and perspiration. One student stated, “I tried hard to say something thoughtful and it's hard for me to say, and my heart was pounding when I said it.” Others described feeling intimidated in the discussions, stammering when trying to say something, being overly concerned about offending others, experiencing a strong sense of confusion as to what was going on, censoring thoughts or statements that could be misunderstood, feeling reluctant in expressing their thoughts, being overwhelmed by the mix of emotions they felt, and hearing constriction in their own voices.

DID YOU KNOW?

Talking about race, gender, and sexual orientation with culturally diverse clients often result in extreme tension and anxiety. Discomfort in racial dialogues may make the helping professional's verbalizations tentative, obtuse, abstract, and filled with nonsensical utterances. In an attempt to avoid being seen as racist or sexist, the therapist may reveal difficulties in articulation, barely audible speech, voice constriction, trembling voice, stammering

and stuttering, and mispronunciation of common words. This phenomenon has been labeled *rhetorical incoherence*. Ironically, the attempt not to appear biased actually has the opposite effect: the counselor may appear more racist!

Source: Bolgatz (2005) and Bonilla-Silva (2006).

These thoughts, feelings, and concerns blocked participants from fully participating in learning and discussing diversity issues, because they became so concerned about themselves (turning inward) that they could not freely be open and listen to the messages being communicated by socially devalued group members. Indeed, their whole goal seemed to be to ward off the messages and meanings being communicated to them, which challenged their *worldviews*, and themselves as racial beings, and highlighted their potential roles as oppressors.

For those who are able to listen to stories about racial and other forms of oppression, some allow their anxiety and fear to immobilize them: “I think sometimes I’m afraid to say things because I don’t want to offend people, and so I just decide . . . to sit and be quiet” (Linder, 2015, p. 545). One’s fear of appearing racist or offensive thus undermines learning because one remains silent in discussion and allows others to do the difficult work of self-exploration; oftentimes, the brunt of the work is then unduly put on the shoulders of the People of Color or other marginalized group members in the class.

The Meaning of Defensiveness and Anger

Although defensiveness and anger are two different emotions, studies seem to indicate a high relationship between the two (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Sue, Torino, et al., 2010; Zou & Dickter, 2013). One represents a protective stance and the other an attempt to strike back at the perpetrator (in many cases, statements by People of Color). Note, for example, how one of the White students became angry with the authors and accused them of being racist and propagandistic. In absorbing diversity content, many White students describe feeling defensive (unfairly accused of being biased or racist, blamed for past racial injustices, and responsible for the current state of race relations). “I’m tired of hearing ‘White people this . . . White people that’ . . . why are we always blamed for everything?”

When the text discusses bias and bigotry, or when classmates of color bring up the issue, for example, some White students seem to interpret this as a personal accusation, and rather than reach out to understand the content, respond in a defensive and protective posture. In many cases, even statements of racial facts and statistics, such as definitions of racism, disparities in income and education, segregation of neighborhoods, hate crime figures, and so forth, arouse defensiveness in many White students. Their defense response to a racial dialogue is seen as protection against (a) criticism (“You just don’t get it!”), (b) revealing personal shortcomings (“You are racist!”), or (c) perceived threat to their self-image and ego (“I’m not a racist—I’m a good person.”). Because of this stance, we have observed that many White students who feel attacked may engage in behaviors or argumentative ploys that present denials and counterpoints because they view the racial dialogue as a win-lose proposition. Warding off the legitimacy of the points raised by People of Color and maintaining their tightly guarded color-blind racial perspective becomes the primary goals, rather than listening and attempting to understand the material or point of view.

When White students feel wrongly accused, they may respond with anger and engage in a counterattack when a racial topic arises. It appears that anger stems from three sources: (a) feeling unfairly accused, (b) being told the substance or stance they take is wrong, and (c) confronting information suggesting they have benefited from racial privilege. Many White students may feel offended and perceive the allegations as a provocation or an attack that requires retaliation. Anger may be aroused when students feel offended (“How dare you imply that about me?”), wronged (“I am deeply hurt you see me that way”), misunderstood (“You make it seem like I didn’t work hard for everything I have”), or that their good standing is denied (“Don’t associate me with racists!”). Defensiveness is designed to uphold one’s own stance. Sometimes, we see students in class searching the Internet for information to refute data documenting racial disparities or a story about someone’s experiences with discrimination.

Anger, on the other hand, turns its attention to attacking the threatening behavior of others. Given the choice of the fight-or-flight response, some White students’ anger turns to rage; they make a choice to take action in stopping the threatening accusations (Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). The strategy used is to discredit the substance of an argument and/or to derogate the communicator, often through a personal attack (“He or she is just an angry Black man or woman”). Sometimes, White rage lies beneath the surface as students seethe in silence, and sometimes it leads to hostile actions, like making official complaints about the teacher for covering the material in class. In many

respects, anger, rage, and defensiveness may become so aroused that one loses control of one's self-monitoring capacities and the ability to accurately assess the external environment. These latter two abilities are extremely important for effective multicultural counseling.

The Meaning of Guilt, Regret, and Remorse

When discussing diversity issues, many White trainees admit to feeling guilty, although most tend to say that they “are made to feel guilty” by People of Color, especially when unjustly accused (Sue & Spanierman, 2020). This statement actually suggests a distancing strategy in localizing guilt as external to oneself rather than as rightfully residing and being felt internally. Guilt as an emotion occurs when we believe we have violated an internal moral code, and have compromised our own standards of conduct. The question becomes, why should White trainees feel guilty when topics of race, racism, or Whiteness are discussed? If indeed they are not racist, not responsible for the racial sins of the past, and not responsible for current injustices, then why should they feel guilt and how could they be made to feel guilty?

Some have coined the term “White guilt” to refer to the individual and collective feelings of culpability experienced by some White Americans for the racist treatment of People of Color, both historically and currently (Goodman, 2001; Spanierman, Todd, & Anderson, 2009; Tatum, 1992). In diversity discussions, many White trainees find guilt extremely uncomfortable, because it means that they have violated a moral standard and are disinclined to acknowledge their violation. What is that moral standard? Being a good, moral, and decent human being who does not discriminate, being a *nonracist*, living a life that speaks to equality and justice, and being a humane person who treats everyone with respect and dignity are the positive standards that are being breached. Compromising these moral standards and beliefs and acting in ways that violate them bring on bad feelings of guilt and remorse.

BEHAVIORAL RESISTANCE

White racial guilt involves realizing one's potential culpability over past deeds; guilt is compounded by the knowledge that continued inaction on one's part allows for the perpetuation of racism in oneself and others. Thus, taking action is a means to alleviate feelings of guilt. The emotions of helplessness and hopelessness make themselves felt in two different arenas: one is internal (personal change) and the other is external (system change). In becoming aware of their racial/cultural identity, for example, White students at this juncture of development may begin to ask two primary questions.

First, “How does one change?” What needs to be changed? How does one become a *nonracist or an unbiased person*? How does one break the shackles of social conditioning that have taught one that some groups are more worthy than others, and that other groups are less worthy? Many trainees often make these comments: “I don't know where to begin.” “If I am not aware of my racism, how do I become aware of it?” “Tell me what I must do to rid myself of these prejudices.” “Should I attend more workshops?” “I feel so confused, helpless, impotent, and paralyzed.”

Second, “What must I do to eradicate racism in the broader society?” While self-change requires becoming a *nonracist* person, societal change requires becoming an *antiracist* one. Affecting an ethnocentric mental health delivery system falls into this category. This role means becoming an advocate and actively intervening when injustice makes its presence felt at the individual level (for example, objecting to a racist joke or confronting friends, neighbors, or colleagues about their prejudices) and at the institutional level (for example, opposing biased mental health practices, supporting civil rights issues, making sure a multicultural curriculum is being taught in schools, or openly supporting social justice groups).

The helplessness that is felt by White students in diversity studies, unless adequately deconstructed, can easily provide an excuse or rationalization for inaction. “What good would it do?” “I'm only one person, how can I make any difference?” “The problem is so big, whatever I do will only be a drop in the bucket.” Feeling helpless and hopeless is legitimate unless it is used as an excuse to escape responsibility for taking any form of action. Helplessness is modifiable when students are provided options and strategies that can be used to increase their awareness and personal growth, and when they are provided with the tools to dismantle racism in our society. Hopefully, this course and the readings will provide you with suggestions of where to begin, especially in mental health practice.

Hopelessness is a feeling of despair and of giving up, a self-belief that no action will matter and no solution will work. Helplessness and hopelessness associated with the need for change and action can be paralytic. The excuse for inaction, and thus the avoidance of racial exploration, resides not simply in not knowing what to do, but in some very basic fears eloquently expressed by Tatum (2002).

Fear is a powerful emotion, one that immobilizes, traps words in our throats, and stills our tongues. Like a deer on the highway, frozen in the panic induced by the lights of an oncoming car, when we are afraid it seems that we cannot think, we cannot speak, we cannot move . . . What do we fear? Isolation from friends and family, ostracism for speaking of things that generate discomfort, rejection by those who may be offended by what we have to say, the loss of privilege or status for speaking in support of those who have been marginalized by society, physical harm caused by the irrational wrath of those who disagree with your stance? (pp. 115–116)

In other words, helplessness and hopelessness are emotions that can provide cover for not taking action. They allow many of us to not change for fear that our actions will result in the negative consequences previously outlined. Becoming a multiculturally competent counselor or therapist requires change.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND EMOTIONS

There are many other powerful emotions often experienced by students during the journey to developing *cultural competence*. They include sadness, disappointment, humiliation, blame, invalidation, and so on. These feelings, along with those already discussed, can make their appearance in dialogues on *multiculturalism* or diversity.

The unpleasantness of some emotions and their potentially disturbing meanings makes for avoidance of honest multicultural dialogues and hence a blockage of the learning process. Rather than seeing emotions as a hindrance and barrier to mutual understanding, and rather than shutting them down, allowing them to bubble to the surface actually frees the mind and body to achieve understanding and insight. The cathartic relationship between memories, fears, stereotypic images, and the emotional release of feelings is captured in the following passage, which describes the racial awakening of Reese, a White male social justice advocate.

I remember when I was first introduced to [intergroup dialogue] . . . I thought it was the most bullshit pedagogy . . . And, I fought it so hard . . . I don't know why I would ever sign up for another course . . . I really thought it was stupid . . . [L]ike the taking in a circle with the whole dialogue pedagogy was a huge hang-up . . . [Later, reading about Friere] was a really important moment in my life when I think about development. (Ford, 2017, p. 124)

Years after his work as an intergroup dialogue facilitator, Reese reflected that the experience had a “big impact” on his development and influenced his “perspectives.” He also recognized that his journey was influenced by his varying levels of racial awareness as a White male along the way.

We are aware that the content of this chapter has probably already pushed hot emotional buttons in many of you. For trainees in the dominant group, we ask the following questions: Are you willing to look at yourself, to examine your assumptions, your attitudes, your conscious and unconscious behaviors, the privileges you enjoy as a dominant group member, and how you may have unintentionally treated others in less than a respectful manner? For socially marginalized group members, we ask whether you are willing to confront your own biases and prejudices toward dominant group members, be honest in acknowledging your own biases toward other socially devalued group members, and work to build bridges of mutual understanding and respect for all groups.

Trainees who bravely undertake the journey to developing *cultural competence* and *cultural humility* eventually realize that change is a lifelong process, and that it does not simply occur in a workshop, classroom, or singular event. It is a monumental task, but the rewards are many when we are successful. A whole body of literature supports the belief that encountering diverse points of view, being able to engage in honest diversity conversations, and successfully acknowledging and integrating differing perspectives lead to an expansion of critical consciousness (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Jayakumar, 2008). On a cognitive level, many have observed that cross-racial interactions and dialogues, for example, are necessary to increase racial literacy, expand the

ability to critically analyze racial ideologies, and dispel stereotypes and misinformation about other groups (Bolgatz, 2005; Ford, 2012; Pollock, 2004; Stevens, Plaut, & Sanchez-Burks, 2008). On an emotional level, trainees of successful diversity training report less intimidation and fear of differences, an increased compassion for others, a broadening of their horizons, appreciation of people of all colors and cultures, and a greater sense of belonging and connectedness with all groups (American Psychological Association, 2017; APA Presidential Task Force, 2012; Bell, 2002; President's Initiative on Race, 1999; Sue, 2003).

In closing, we implore you not to allow your initial negative feelings to interfere with your ultimate aim of learning from this text as you journey toward *cultural competence*. Sad to say, this empathic ability is blocked when readers react with defensiveness and anger upon hearing the life stories of those most disempowered in our society. We have always believed that our worth as human beings is derived from the collective relationships we hold with all people; that we are people of emotions, intuitions, and spirituality; and that the lifeblood of people can be understood only through lived realities. Although we believe strongly in the value of science and the importance psychology places on empiricism, *CCD* is based on the premise that a profession that fails to recognize the heart and soul of the human condition is a discipline that is spiritually and emotionally bankrupt. As such, this book not only touches on the theory and practice of multicultural counseling and psychotherapy, but also reveals the hearts and souls of our diverse clientele.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CLINICAL PRACTICE

1. Listen and be open to stories of those most disempowered in U.S. society. Counseling has always been about listening to our clients. Do not allow your emotional reactions to negate their voices because you become defensive.
2. Know that although you were not born wanting to be racist, sexist, or heterosexist, or to be prejudiced against any other group, your cultural conditioning has imbued certain biases and prejudices in you. No person or group is free from inheriting the biases of U.S. society.
3. Understand and acknowledge your intense emotions and what they mean for you. *CCD* speaks about unfairness, racism, sexism, and prejudice, making some feel accused and blamed. The “isms” of our society are not pleasant topics, and we often feel unfairly accused.
4. It is important that helping professionals understand how they may still benefit from the past actions of their predecessors and continue to reap the benefits of the present social/educational arrangements.
5. Understand that multicultural training requires more than book learning. In your journey to developing *cultural competence*, it is necessary to supplement your intellectual development with experiential reality.
6. Do not be afraid to explore yourself as a racial, ethnic, and cultural being. An overwhelming number of mental health practitioners believe they are good, decent, and moral people. Because most of us would not intentionally discriminate, we often find great difficulty in realizing that our belief systems and actions may have oppressed others.
7. Open dialogue—to discuss and work through differences in thoughts, beliefs, and values—is crucial to becoming culturally competent. It is healthy when we are allowed to engage in free dialogue with one another. To a large extent, unspoken thoughts and feelings serve as barriers to open and honest dialogue about the pain of discrimination and how each and every one of us perpetuates bias through our silence or obliviousness.
8. Finally, continue to use these suggestions in reading throughout the text. What emotions or feelings are you experiencing? Where are they coming from? Are they blocking your understanding of the material? What do these reactions mean for you personally and as a helping professional?

SUMMARY

Students who take a course on multicultural counseling and mental health issues have almost universally felt both positive and negative feelings that affect their ability to learn about diversity issues. Those from marginalized groups often feel validated by the content while majority group members often feel a range of emotions like defensiveness, anxiety, anger, and guilt. It is important not to allow these nested or embedded emotions to go unacknowledged, or to avoid exploring the psychological meanings they may have for trainees. The journey to becoming culturally competent therapists is filled with obstacles to self-exploration, to understanding oneself as a racial/cultural being, and to understanding the *worldview* of those who differ from others in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic dimensions. The subject matter in this book requires students to explore their biases and prejudices, a task that often evokes strong resistance from both majority and oppressed group members.

It is important to recognize personal resistance to the material, to explore its meaning, and to learn about yourself and others. Sometimes, what is revealed about you may prove disturbing, but having the courage to continue is necessary to becoming a culturally competent counselor or therapist. Recognizing the manifestation and hidden meanings of resistance is one of the first priorities of multicultural training for both trainees and trainers. For trainees, it is finding the courage to confront their own fears and apprehensions, to work through the powerful emotions they are likely to experience, to explore what these feelings mean for them as racial/cultural beings, to achieve new insights about themselves, and to develop multicultural skills and behaviors in their personal lives and as mental health professionals. For trainers, it means understanding the nature of trainee resistance, creating a safe but challenging environment for self-exploration, and using intervention strategies that facilitate difficult dialogues on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other sociodemographic dimensions. This chapter is specifically written to help readers understand and overcome their emotive reactions to the substance of the text and the course they are about to take.

GLOSSARY TERMS

Antiracist	Cognitive resistance (to multicultural education)	Culturally responsive	Multiculturalism
Behavioral resistance (to multicultural education)	Cultural competence	Emotional resistance (to multicultural education)	Nonracist
	Cultural humility	Microaggressions	Worldview

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