

Multicultural Counseling: Issues and Analysis

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ABSTRACT

In this working paper, I consider a case in multicultural counseling of “Sandra,” a Brazilian black female who emigrated to Portugal but who characterizes her experience there like that of Cinderella’s pumpkin, a heartbreak reversal of fortune. Invited to assess her case, I shall treat it as if a referral for counseling from a case worker, for that is nearly how I got involved. Given a sketchy set of notes from her file, I found that her case could be instructive for multicultural counseling, for which led to my present effort, an attempt through analysis to develop multicultural sensitivity, a recognized requirement for counselors. This case should also be of interest to other professionals in intercultural communication for similar reasons.

“Sandra” is a black Brazilian immigrant in Portugal who finds challenges in her quest for the European dream. We consider her case in the context of multicultural counseling for the purpose of developing multicultural sensitivity, a recognized requirement for counselors. This case came from a research field interview, not a counseling intake; so understandably it has a few bends in its flow. Also, Sandra presents a complex series of events that must be unraveled. These events are unified through the topic of racism, a topic thick in multicultural issues for both client and counselor alike.

I straddle this divide working from the particular of Sandra’s case toward the general for broad applications to counseling. As for the particular, I attempt to show how counseling would proceed and progress within the contours of the case, highlighting its significant features, such as the sociolinguistic (Sandra’s dialect), the psychosocial (her racial identity), and the political (immigration policy in Portugal). Racial discrimination is clarified, a concept necessary for considering Sandra’s legal rights. Lastly, intervention strategies for a sojourner like Sandra are discussed, as well as her motivations for being abroad, helpful for her long-term planning. Within this frame, discussion shifts to general practice of counseling, with such topics as multicultural blind spots, culture shock, perceptions of racism, pitfalls to avoid, and the importance of the counseling relationship. We begin with Sandra’s background, starting with her home country.

SANDRA'S HOME COUNTRY

Case workers considered the domestic conditions in Sandra's home country of Brazil as the "major keys" for understanding her transition. I spell those out here, hoping to flesh out the basis of Sandra's emigration. The added detail here should help in appreciating this woman's predicament in life. However, readers already familiar with Brazil may wish to jump ahead to the next section, Factors in Sandra's Portugal, to where she emigrated, the place of her transition abroad.

Sandra comes from Brazil, a huge country, the world's fifth largest by area and by population. As a developing country, Brazil has its share of social ills including violence and crime, political corruption, weak health care, high unemployment. Its more than 40,000 assassinations a year is an amount well beyond the UN's classifiable level for a state of war (Cerneka, 2002). Second only to South Africa for inequality of income distribution, nearly a fifth of its people live on less than two dollars a day (The World Bank, 2003) while the country boasts having as many billionaires as Europe (Black, 2002). Against this backdrop is Brazil's unemployed, the world's third largest (Zonalatina.com, 2001) and considerable malnutrition (13th in the world; Suzuki, 2006).

Social instability is further aggravated by a dual crisis in domestic violence and youth crime. Brazil is (or was until recently) the only country in "Latin America that does not have a specific law regarding domestic violence" (Brazilnetwork, 2006). Some Brazilians ironically say that women are safer on the street than at home (Brazilnetwork, 2006). Legal impunity also exists for youthful offenders because of lax laws governing juveniles. Another source of instability, racial tension is an everyday matter in this nation once known for "racial democracy" (Buckley, 2000). "Race affects everything, from education to employment to justice," and blacks register at the bottom of most social measures (Buckley, 2000, p. A12). Despite the rosy picture gleaned from tourism promotions of Carnival and the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, the bulk of Brazilians must contend with the thornier side of life. Black Brazilians likely have it tougher, being a minority with lower status in the larger society. An additional reason "race" has relevance in Sandra's case: "Only 6% of Brazilians" classify themselves as "black," (Jeter, 2003), although biracials (*pardo*) comprise 38% of the country's people (CIA World Factbook, n. d; GEsorce World Guide, n. d.), suggesting the marked status of blacks. The case lists Sandra as "black" although being of mixed heritage, so if she self-describes herself as black, then that has particular significance.

FACTORS IN SANDRA'S PORTUGAL

Two important factors related to Sandra's transition within Portugal are 1) the politics against immigration there; and 2) her linguistic and physical features, which mark her as an outsider. In the heightened tensions about immigration, she would likely be perceived as fitting the profile of a poor

immigrant.

Backlash in Portugal

Sandra, phenotypically black and uneducated, took an opportunity abroad with open arms. Her original condition was dire, coming from a poor, fatherless household of eleven. She went to Portugal, however, when important changes were taking place in immigration there. Portugal had long been liberal about immigration, but partly due to pressure from other EU states, Portugal enacted measures to restrict immigration. (Brazil has since negotiated to ease those measures somewhat.)

Steves (n.d.) reports a pervasive and rising anti-immigration sentiment in Europe while noting particularly that about blacks in Portugal from former colonies. This anti-immigration sentiment dovetails with a “down-scaling” of immigrant Portuguese, who were once predominantly from the middle strata of Brazilian society (Pellegrino, 2004). Recently unskilled, lower-class Brazilians have swelled the immigrant ranks to Portugal (Pellegrino, 2004). Backlash has come from the Portuguese public. “Studies about Brazilians in Portugal confirm the existence of some forms of daily and workplace discrimination (Padilla, 2005)” (Peixoto, 2005).

Badge of Brazilian Background

Sandra has socio-economic and racial attributes that may elicit discrimination from others. These attributes in the eyes of some people mark her as an undesirable outsider and are triggered in their minds almost anytime she speaks. Her speech easily reveals her national origin and likely her humble background as well. It is as if she wears a badge (or scarlet letter) that says she is a Brazilian immigrant. She lives in southern Portugal, which means that the strongest linguistic difference between European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese will arise.

The difference is not just certain vocabulary or individual sounds, common differences for dialects. Rather, these two varieties of Portuguese differ strongly in prosody or speech rhythm: European Portuguese, is stressed timed; Brazilian Portuguese, syllable timed. The effect is not isolated but found throughout speech. Although still intelligible, her speech will continually remind the local Portuguese that she is Brazilian and therefore a likely immigrant, the kind left to the hearer’s imagination. Through this process of social indexing, people will classify Sandra as having a certain socio-economic status by cues perceived in her speech, manners, and appearance. People need to know the other’s social status and affiliation to know how to converse—if and how to affiliate. So if an immigrant like Sandra reports feeling discriminated against, we can appreciate that this might be a very real experience.

Sandra’s case, as originally presented however, does not directly involve institutional racism—being victimized by an organization of society—but rather racial bigotry of one individual toward another within the sphere of private social relations. Two such events (or near-events) occur in Sandra’s case—a scene at her restaurant and rejection by her boyfriend’s mother. Both become a

necessary focus for the counselor given the contours of the case. At the same time, this case checks the reader's understanding of the difference between sympathy and empathy, a necessary counselor ability.

CLIENT COUNSELING STATUS

Sandra sums up her Portuguese experience as “the carriage turned into a pumpkin.” Her graphic metaphor expresses pain. For present purposes, I will assume that Sandra seeks therapeutic counseling (or could benefit from the same). I characterize my counseling approach broadly as eclectic, evolving from mainly three major approaches by training and by later practice. These approaches are Rogerian, cognitive-behavioral (Rational-Emotive Therapy), and Gestalt therapy. For me, Rogerian represents the absolute necessity of developing a counseling relationship built on acceptance, respect, empathy and congruence; RET, a recognition that people by nature engage in self-defeating behavior; and Gestalt, the attention to present-moment manifestations, often non-verbal, of the client that have expressive and insightful value. I mention my approach as a matter of course, but some traces of it will become apparent as we proceed. As we do, we will assume that Sandra is a referral and project what we might be able to expect about her counseling.

Presenting Concern

What would be Sandra's presenting concern (problem) in counseling? Coming from a fieldwork interview, this case will naturally depart from the expected information found in a counseling intake interview. This situation is not unlike that encountered by social workers or community counselors in agency work when they utilize documents from social services other than counseling per se. This case has whatever information is known about her, and we will use it as best we can.

Main Issue

Her main issue appears to be the suffering of racism as implied by the scene at her restaurant with a belligerent customer and her report about her failing relationship with her boyfriend (presumably white), son of the owner of the restaurant where she works as a waitress. She sums her life in Portugal by using a Cinderella metaphor, which is at heart a romantic story. She likely attributes some of this failing to her boyfriend's mother, who according to Sandra, has purposely tried to get her in trouble at work. Sandra, however, has not made direct accusations about being a target of racism. Perhaps out of politeness or powerlessness, she only hints about the matter. That might be precisely why Sandra could use some counseling. I would agree but with the caveats that follow.

RELEVANT COUNSELOR ISSUES

First and foremost, the client must be respected to make his or her own decisions. Although the counselor functions as a “change agent,” this would not be someone who thinks that the counselor “knows what’s best for the client.” Sandra’s social status lacks power, but this does not mean she needs someone to orchestrate her life. She ought to be helped to know her rights and resources available to her, but not in a way that would compromise her well being.

Some American newcomers in Japan, for example, wish to “liberate” Japanese women there. Besides the possibly ethnocentric intention of these newcomers, they seem to ignore that once becoming “liberated,” a woman might not have options to act on it. She might even make life worse for herself. What value is “enlightenment,” if the result is misery? If Sandra were actually wrong about accusations of racism and were incited to seek redress, she might end up losing a guarantor and being deported.

Without intending to endorse a counseling approach, let me point out the relevance here of a Rogerian perspective by its emphasis on respect and trust of the client. The associated attitude of the counselor will likely help ensure integrity of the immigrant client. Rogerian counseling can be “directive,” but not by usurping the client’s wishes and aims.

A second issue, in cases like Sandra’s, is that the counselor must be comfortable with interracial dating. If not, he or she is ethically bound to discuss this with the client and perhaps seek a referral. It might be worked around if the client wished to work on other issues. Third, the counselor should also be, of course, comfortable with immigration; if not, he or she should be aware of how it might adversely affect counseling and take proper courses of action accordingly.

Although immigration generally might be agreeable to the counselor, he or she may have a blind spot regarding the motivation of the immigrant—a fourth issue. Useful in understanding motivation is the distinction by type: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Integrative motivation—desire for the target culture—is generally assumed to be a powerful factor in second language acquisition—an enculturation of culture by itself. Integrative motivation is valorized in comparison to instrumental motivation—e. g., Americans are conditioned to think that immigrants in the U. S. came to become Americans. But economic and occupational reasons (instrumental motivation) bring many to emigrate with the hope of acquiring a nest egg or professional training for their eventual resettlement back in their homeland. Counselors, as a product of culture themselves, must be aware of possible influences of their own nationalism when dealing with immigrants or other sojourners.

A fifth issue concerns the perceiving of people of difference. An apt case follows. Recently, an American suburban high school took an ESL class, without consultation with the students or their parents, on a visit to a local trade school instead of a college recruiting event. Perhaps some students

would have made the same choice, but I have direct information that at least two Asian students were upset about it. They had their sights on entering college, which they happened to fulfill one year later in 2005. The local area was strongly Euro-centric (proud of its early American history) and without much experience with Asians or Latinos, who made up most of the class. The message by the school seemed to be, “you people belong in the trades, not college.” The trades offer fine careers but usually not the social esteem that accompanies college and the professions. The two Asian students were aware of this social matrix and felt resentful. This example shows clearly the gate keeper function in society played by English teachers and guidance counselors when they funnel students onto career tracks based on received opinion about non-standard Englishes. Non-standard Englishes represent not just language but also socio-cultural background—culture.

In absence of the consultation, this school operated on the idea that people of difference are best placed in the lower rungs of society. This happened in the year 2004 and at a suburban school, a time and place unthinkable. Why did it happen? Maybe because these children were immigrants — individuals without full legal rights. The consciousness-raising about racism over the past quarter century, therefore, might only apply when the victims are members of groups that hold some political power. If so, it is good to realize lest we become too complacent about the gains in racial relations made there.

ANALYSIS

Sandra has multiple concerns related to her work life and her social life. Any of these concerns could motivate her to seek counseling. Any of them could be a critical incident: the belligerent customer at the restaurant; her boyfriend’s mother; her lessened esteem for Portugal, backlash against immigration, and so on. What ties them together is racial prejudice or bigotry. To be clear, however, these events of Sandra’s are not racial discrimination, defined as that “involv[ing] behavior that excludes all members of a group from certain rights, opportunities, or privileges” (Schaefer, 1993, p. 39). Racial differentiation is not necessarily racial discrimination. She may have suffered abuse, but no evidence is given that she was denied rights, opportunities, or privileges due to race. This distinction of terms is important because if she were racially discriminated, then there may be some legal remedies. Even if not, other means of redress might be available. This scenario would likely invite an advocate, if not an activist, role by the counselor, leading to a different course of counseling and strategies.

Ultimately it would be important for Sandra to explore her view of the particular concern and how she came to it. It may or may not be true about the belligerent customer or the boyfriend’s mother being racially motivated. Factual details are still needed and by seeking those, the counselor will likely, and should, facilitate Sandra to vent her feelings, a primary goal of counseling at this point. A full

venting of her feelings can and only then make way for insight and eventual behavior change (if the goal).

Belligerent Customer at the Restaurant

With regard to the restaurant scene, the case suggests that Sandra's marked status as an immigrant accentuated by her blackness accounts for the man's behavior. The account depicts the man as a "pimp," who offends Sandra in at least two ways. First, he offers Sandra a job presumably as a prostitute. Second, he tries to cheat Sandra about his check. Both offenses apparently derive from the man's perception of Sandra as a poor immigrant, someone easily duped by being a naïve, needy newcomer. But should we be surprised that a criminal—a pimp—would be abusive with Sandra? Perhaps the most important principle for the sojourner in a foreign culture to learn is that there is a good and a bad to everything in life, including cultures. For Sandra, she needs to see that there are "no-good-nicks" (thieves, rapists, and racists) in every society. For racism, Sandra need look no further than her own country, Brazil, to know that racism exists in the world. This idea can greatly help sojourners find satisfaction in the foreign culture and receives further comment in the intervention section of this paper.

When reviewing such cases of racism, it would not be the time for the counselor to become sympathetic; empathic, yes, but not sympathetic. (See Donahue [1998a] for a conceptual model of empathy and distinguishing related terms). As much we abhor racism, not every claimed racial violation is valid. For example, a black basketball player was told angrily by a white opponent to "lay off the elbows," but the black later falsely claimed the white player had used the "N-word" when in fact neither racial epithet nor attitude had been expressed.¹ Counselors provide the important function of clarifying such perceptions but will be hampered by a sympathetic stance (not an empathic one). Even Sandra expressed doubt about the racialization of the restaurant scene. It may or may not have been racialized, but preordained judgments serve no one.

As uncomfortable this event may have been for Sandra, a silver lining shines in the background. Sandra's boss fully supported her, taking her side over that of a Portuguese citizen and customer. It could have easily gone the other way! A racist boss who would believe the worse stereotypes about blacks might easily take the word of a fellow white citizen. At least Sandra can take some comfort in knowing that her boss has some fair-mindedness. The issue therefore becomes: How frequent does Sandra encounter racism on her job? A great deal would be unlikely because it would be too disruptive for the business. Also, there are other immigrants, including Africans, working at the same restaurant. Is this happening to all of them?! Doubtless Sandra encounters racism in her daily life, but the issue is frequency and circumstance. As strong as the backlash against immigration, Portuguese still benefit a great deal from immigrant labor. Surely there must be some fair-minded people living in Portugal. I am confident that Sandra would agree—Portuguese money has made her a landowner in Brazil! —and so I

would think that she now has grander visions for Portugal than with those she first began. Thus, while still following the trail of racism in her case, I turn now to consider what probably is the most serious matter for her—the failing of the relationship with her boyfriend, the son of the boss at her restaurant.

The Boyfriend's Mother

According to the case, the parents of her boyfriend do not approve of her. But it is the mother who “puts difficulties in her daily life,” which I assume includes the restaurant. If true about the mother, then why doesn't the father seem a party to it? If he were so against the relationship, he probably would not need his wife to sabotage Sandra's job. As owner he could probably find a way to let her go. Perhaps the father is not against Sandra dating his son, which would greatly change the situation in her favor. Another possibility is that Sandra is mistaken about the mother being a saboteur though Sandra is probably correct that the mother is against her. (Sandra is probably picking up some negative vibes from the mom; otherwise, she would have to be rather neurotic in making such an elaborate scenario.) These questions, of course, are internal to the counselor and must follow the dictates of the counseling relationship. They have their own timing.

Unrealistic Expectations

Another dimension to this case is possibly Sandra's own unrealistic expectations. She came to Portugal with the idea of living the European dream. Her boyfriend could help her satisfy much of this dream, as well as her immediate problem of having only a temporary visa status. How wonderful it is that her boyfriend also happens to be Portuguese and from the middle-class or higher. Living alone and precariously, she might more easily succumb to wishful thinking without the usual coping mechanisms she had in her own culture. Why should it be that her dreams are dashed with this one relationship? Even: is this really the man for her?

Deeper Issues

If gotten this far, then we would make a common discovery: Sandra's presenting problem is not the real issue but lies deeper. Immigrants often do not come with a clean slate: they have emotional baggage. Their past can interfere with their new life abroad. Unresolved conflicts with their parents, partner, siblings, old boyfriend(s) or girlfriend(s) can come to the fore when least expected. In childhood, the parent's sudden absence, whether by death or not, could have left him or her feeling abandoned and worthless. Such unresolved feelings get buried in the psyche but can re-emerge in traumatic moments.

Culture Shock as Trigger

Culture shock can trigger these unresolved matters and overwhelm an individual trying to

cope in a new, unfamiliar land abroad. Intensity is brought on by unexpected difficulties socially and occupationally. An immigrant might find him or herself isolated even from fellow compatriots. For those from collectivist cultures, such as Sandra, this isolation is felt all the more intensely. Occupationally, the unskilled immigrant may have taken on more than what was bargained for. The job itself is likely that which few in the host culture will do. So it is probably arduous, or made more so by an employer taking advantage of him or her. The immigrant could even have been a doctor back home, but language or licensing barriers prevent practicing medicine. Then too, the immigrant could be someone who had been duped into doing unscrupulous work, which is known, for example, to happen in the sex industry.

Close to the Edge

Fear may grip the person to the extent that he or she cannot cope. They may find, even if only momentarily, that it is, indeed, a fine line separating sanity from insanity. Their fear is likely worsened by their own self-messages of worthlessness and hopelessness. Here repressed memories intensify the emotional pain. (“Nobody loves me.” Etc.) Once the immediate upset is treated, often aided by the realization that options do exist as well as help in the community etc., the person might see how past unresolved matters have complicated the situation and wish to pursue it.

Cultural Fatigue

Sandra’s case does not involve culture shock because she has likely learned to deal with culture shock, having been abroad for five years or more. Her biggest cultural problem is more likely cultural fatigue, which occurs from continually having to do foreign cultural practices or socially “being on stage.” Her foreignness is easily detected and may elicit prejudices in others, including racial ones. It is not all the time that she experiences prejudice in Portugal. The opposite also occurs: Portuguese who admire Brazilian culture will likely treat her very positively. But surely, she is often reminded by others of her outsider status. These constant reminders need not be directly in words. Besides verbal innuendos, there will often be nonverbal cues — facial and vocal — in response to her perceived socio-cultural difference. Constantly cast as an outsider may grate on her nerves, fueling cultural fatigue. This discomfort is exacerbated by unrealistic expectations — “Aren’t the Portuguese supposed to be opened armed in welcoming us?” or “We’re of the same stock of people, aren’t we?” — as well as, past unresolved emotional conflicts. The former is a matter likely dealt with by the counselor when exploring her relationship with her boyfriend’s mother.

Unresolved Personal Matters

So for Sandra, the suggestion here is that she likely has some unresolved personal matters. What would they be? First, she largely grew up fatherless. Surely that affected her in some way. Could that interfere in her relations with men? Has she had any difficulty with long-term relationships? If so, that

could be a factor as much as the racial, cultural ones in her life in Portugal. In intercultural matters, it is important to realize that not all causes are cultural. Personal factors count as much as the cultural.

A second personal issue is that Sandra was probably unappreciated back home. We can surmise that from the original case information. Sandra's first experience abroad was exhilarating being in the limelight as a dancer while on a Brazilian dance tour in Europe. Apparently, she had not experienced being appreciated like that in Brazil. It seems she wanted to return to Europe to relive those good feelings. She had to have been a talented dancer already, but it seems she really wasn't appreciated for it until going to Europe. Wasn't she appreciated for this in her own family and community back home? This thread, of course, is not just about dance but herself as a person. If her special talent went unappreciated, then probably her other personal attributes were ignored as well.

A third issue is Sandra's racially mixed origin. If "black," then she is phenotypically so. To what degree is unknown. Either she had the appearance of being black to the case workers or she expressed such self-identity to them. "Race," being a social phenomenon rather than a biological one, will always have some significance in social contexts. Sandra expresses consternation and resentment about racism, but she also seems a bit ambivalent about it by wondering if it could be her own imagination ("her different way of coping" as said in the case). This ambivalence could be her acting polite with a new (white?) acquaintance (the case worker), or her own open-mindedness about others. Either way would not sidetrack the experienced counselor, who would surely key into her feelings of hurt and resentment.

Because Sandra has a white Portuguese lover, she is likely not a separatist and has had positive interracial experiences. Or could this relationship be merely for her own convenience? Probably not but one never really knows until examining it. After learning more about Sandra, the counselor will know how much race has been an issue for her. My sense is that Sandra, by virtue of her love relationship and her European dream, wants very much to be accepted into the white Portuguese society. Given the backlash against immigrants, especially blacks at the time, she has probably experienced much hurt. The more "black" one would be, the more likely he or she would become a target of white racism. The less black, the more likely factors other than race would inhere. From the case description, however, we can be sure that some racialized events have occurred at one time or other.

Our physical appearance greatly determines perceptions of our racial characteristics, and those perceptions by others feed into the making of our own racial identity, as with a looking glass self (Cooley, 1902). Amerasians in Japan, for example, who look Japanese tend to have much less trouble about racial or national identity than those who appear white or black—appearances clearly non-Japanese. These Amerasians, even if Japan-born and native in the language, are nearly always treated by Japanese acquaintances as *gaijin* (foreign), which makes them want to live in a place like Hawaii, known for its ethnic diversity. If they are able to do so, it likely solves a basic identity crisis for them. Thus we see how strongly the environment can impact on the client, an awareness resisted in the

individualist American thought. In collectivist cultures people would have little qualms about giving the environment such a large role in human behavior.

Sandra potentially has the same kind of racial identity conflict. Recall what was pointed out earlier: Blacks must have a marked status in Brazil because only 6% of the population classify themselves as so, despite the large proportion of biracials (*prado*). It may be that Sandra's skin color appears particularly dark, which would lead others in Brazil, as well as the original case workers, to describe her as black. Yet, she likely grew up as an "Indian" having lived nearly exclusively with her Indian mother. Being treated as "black" would likely make her sensitive about racial matters. Sandra wonders if she were a modern-day slave, perhaps in reference to the history of slavery in Brazil. Because the case workers know that her ancestry includes black slaves, this fact must have particular meaning for her. Moreover, if she self-described herself as black, despite being biracial, it must mean she has a strong identity of being black. Thus, she could be highly sensitive about Portugal's slave history, which would likely impact her relations with the people there. If true, it would be an important issue to explore. Her prejudices against the Portuguese would likely interfere with her having optimal experiences there and help activate the racism in others that she has perceived.

Blaming the Victim?

Probing this matter, however, is doubly difficult because the counselor must avoid being misconstrued as "blaming the victim." Blaming the victim is a mechanism by majority culture bearers to rationalize racial abuse. For example, I overheard an educated Texan explain the infamous hate crime murder of James Byrd, an African American, in Texas in 1998 in this way: (paraphrased) "What do you expect? Those ole boys [the murderers] were all tattooed in Aryan hate messages." In other words, it was Byrd's fault for having accepted contact with his murderers shortly before his gruesome death. I was struck by the fact that the speaker was regarded as intelligent and a respected educator. Blaming the victim is all too familiar to people of color. Sensitive about this issue, clients might misconstrue a counselor's probing questions as skepticism of their complaint — a prelude to blaming the victim.

This pitfall demands that the counselor achieves at least minimal multicultural sensitivity. The counselor needs a quiet confidence by having become aware of one's own racism and having effectively dealt with it. Two conditions make that difficult. One is the tendency by people to conceive of racism as an extreme aberration, such as the stereotype of the southern white sheriff, thus excluding themselves from possessing it (Donahue, 1998b; Lichtenberg, 1992). The second condition is the illusion of positive racial attitudes created by self-censorship in the era of political correctness. The absence of racialized discourse does not mean that related negative attitudes do not exist. Consider the two American college students in Japan, who freely voiced racial epithets about blacks and Jews because they were "no longer living under the constrictions of American political correctness."² Presumably

these two students exercise self-restraint when in the United States but harbor serious racial hatred. High civility of social relations does not necessarily mean an absence of racism.

Once multiculturally aware and mindful of such pitfalls as blaming the victim, the counselor can concentrate on establishing trust and rapport with the client, through which we are able to probe sensitive issues of the client.

Intervention Strategies

Intervention strategies I would recommend include instructing clients several points of insight and two behavioral techniques. These consider that Sandra has a dual problem as a person of difference: 1) physically standing out; and 2) encountering prejudice. Sandra will feel “on stage” when out in public in Portugal: on the street, in elevators, on escalators, in shops, offices, and theatres—nearly everywhere. Some people will stare at her; some might even gossip about her. These strategies, if followed, are usually sufficient in helping sojourners manage racial conflicts and are written here as though speaking to the client:

1 The Good and the Bad. Every population will have a certain percentage that departs from the norm. A portion of saints, a portion of sinners, and many in-between. A situation much like our own culture. When abroad we cannot expect open-armed welcomes everywhere. Of course, but our enthusiasm and wishful thinking might make us think otherwise. So a series of meeting some “no-good-nicks” is usually the luck of the draw. It means we simply need to enlarge our sampling. By focusing on our successes and increasing our social contacts, we are likely to develop very satisfying social relationships with people of the host culture.

2 You vs. The Whole Nation. You as an individual cannot reform an entire society; so don’t even try. The impulse is to return the rude glance or slur back in kind, hoping that that will reform him or her. In most cases, it will not; their racial attitude is ingrained. You might get momentary relief but if you have a conscience, then you will likely feel that you acted in poor taste. Moreover, the other person may have been given more reason to dislike people like you. And more tragically, you might have been mistaken about their glance or “slur,” which in fact was not what you had thought.

3 Being the Object of Stares. Wonderful! It validates your existence. With the opposite—the absence of stares—you are unnoticed and perhaps unimportant. Return the stares with a smile and you are likely to find very positive results. Maybe a new friend!

4 The Ultra-Racist. It is almost axiomatic that if human, then it must contain some racism. At root of racism is favoritism for one’s own cultural/ethnic/national group (Donahue, 1998b). Given that we are all products of culture, it would be unrealistic to think that anyone would be completely absent of even a shred of prejudice. What sets ultra-racists apart is their lack of social intelligence. They simply are ignorant. If they were intelligent, they would understand that some modicum of racism is natural, and they would work to try to control, if not cleanse themselves of it. In short, those who act with bigotry

are dumb and can be pitied for their ignorance.

5 The Shroud of Mirrors.³ Whenever in the midst of bigotry, imagine you are shrouded in mirrors that deflect any mean stares or epithets back to the senders. As you walk through crowds, imagine the blinding light that is given forth upon the (unpleasant) onlookers. Now, you have a clear path wherever you go!

6 The Shaving Cream Machine. An option I made for The Shroud of Mirrors: Streams of shaving cream replace the blinding light of the shroud to engulf the offenders. These individuals are visualized as being completely covered by the cream and therefore immobilized to cause any offense.

MOTIVATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRANSITION

Motivation for international transition was previously mentioned as a potential blind spot for counselors. Discussion of Sandra's motivation was delayed until now because the client's presenting problem was more pressing an issue. Moreover, motivations are often a very personal matter, and so require that much more a trusting relationship with the counselor or therapist. One reason to consider motivation in Sandra's case is that she appears to be conflicted about how long she will stay in Portugal. Another reason is that a point of no return back to the homeland exists for immigrants, largely due to economic and age factors. Once into middle age, the immigrant increasingly finds it more difficult to restart a life back home. Clarifying their motivations, especially early on, can do the immigrant well.

Sandra's choice of Portugal was likely practical: Portugal is a rich industrialized country, as well as Portuguese-speaking. Brazil and Portugal share much linguistically and culturally. Immigrants are likely to be motivated by either instrumental or integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation seeks material reward; integrative, intrinsic reward, usually social membership in the target culture. Although Sandra shows signs of integrative motivation, she also is motivated equally, if not more so, by instrumental motivation. One or the other is usually stronger, and its determination will give insight into the client. If instrumentally motivated, then an immigrant like Sandra might be more likely to feel negative about a former colonizing power. Whatever attraction this rich country has for her, apparently she cannot be totally satisfied with it because she says that if she starts a family she wants to do so in Brazil. Also, she has already bought land there. What makes evident that she may be more instrumentally motivated is the fact her mother sold off possessions for her. This is a family near starvation according to the case. Sandra's main reason for being in Portugal must be to help support her family back home. This co-dependency, so prevalent in collectivist society, is harder for those in individualistic cultures to appreciate. The counselor's values will be tested in two ways: Sandra's reason for immigration and her co-dependency with her mother/family. These points are signposts to look for in the counseling sessions. At the very least, helping a client to clarify their motivations will greatly aid them in planning their sojourn abroad and beyond.

COUNSELING OUTLOOK

To sum up this case, the counselor would need to appreciate how Sandra feels to suffer racial bigotry and the high likelihood that she meets prejudice daily, intensified by the politics of immigration. Her European dream seems at hand were it not for her boyfriend's mother. What is to say, however, that this love relationship is the one for her, or that this is the end of her dream? Moreover, her relationship with both people could be complicated by cultural fatigue, unresolved conflicts in her past, or both. However dim her situation appears to her, she has tremendous spirit and resourcefulness by which to overcome these difficulties. She obviously is hardworking and courageous for having "made it" despite her undesirable status in a foreign land. If not her European dream, she at least has achieved a Brazilian dream by becoming a landowner there after just a few years working, a great accomplishment.

Realizing these facts alone would make counseling worthwhile for her. With increased self-confidence and dignity, she would be able to see her situation in new light, as well as clarifying for herself, her present life situation and future plans. She might wish to confront her boyfriend about his intentions and his mother's negativity, if not racism. She is not locked into the relationship nor does she really need it. Being a conscientious worker, she could very likely find other employment. By removing the economic dependency she has on this family, she could gain even more control of her life. And changing jobs should not at all jeopardize the relationship with the boyfriend. At the same time, it would clarify her true motivations toward the Portuguese family. Such would be the areas for immediate or short-term counseling.

CONCLUSION

Counselors, by appreciating the multicultural overtones in a case like Sandra's, will attain a necessary and deeper understanding of their clients. For, multicultural sensitivity "is the essential foundation of counseling competence" (Pederson, 2002). Multicultural sensitivity is necessary to learn because in an individualistic culture, among other things, American academic psychology has traditionally ignored social context (culture) in theories of thinking and learning (see Donahue, 1998a). Also, Americans remain highly segregated in their neighborhoods, bounded along lines of class, "race" and ethnicity. Because of our culturally-narrow collective lenses, it takes dramatic events like the O. J. Simpson trial and Hurricane Katrina to show how greatly racial perspectives differ and how mainstream Americans have little appreciation of the prejudice and racism that minority group members encounter nearly everyday. I hasten to add that this is not a patented American phenomenon; the same dynamic occurs in nearly every major society in the world. These dramatic events are often described as "wake up calls" for society. They call for greater multicultural sensitivity—the ability

to understand the perspective of the other. I personally know after many years of teaching American college students that each generation needs to learn about perception and prejudice and that no one is immune from ethnocentrism or racism. Because the unconscious is beyond control, one cannot sufficiently make tests to validate his or her presumed purity (see Donahue, 1998b). By raising these points, I hope that this paper in a small way contributes to the field by having indicated potential value clashes or blind spots a counselor may encounter in multicultural counseling and how multicultural sensitivity is so necessary for competent counseling.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Bruce Abrams and Jeff Blair for their comments in helping to improve the presentation of this article. I am also grateful to the NGU University Research Center for support received in completing this project.

NOTES

- 1 This was a faculty-student game at a senior high school in Pennsylvania where the accuser was the school's star player, who therefore received credibility. However, his account was denied by a witness in the game, who happened to be a black teacher. I happened to be the other player in this story and a student teacher, who was later told about the accusation and denial by the student's basketball coach, also a player in the same game. This incident was ironic because not long after, I was invited and played basketball for the Afro American Association at "state university" in Pennsylvania (hereafter "SU"), and in so doing became a target of white racism myself. At the time, I was probably one of the very few nationally—if not the only one—to cross racial boundaries in this manner, representing a black organization in such a prideful sport at a time of the black power movement and black separatism. SU was not unique for having racial tensions, and the backlash to my participation came largely from a white social fraternity, whose dominance of campus athletics had become threatened by AAA. An undergraduate, I was also a tutor-counselor at SU for black students and socially became a part of the campus's black community (though not an official member of AAA, of course). So the charge against me by the high school student was especially ironic and taught me the perilousness of perceptions.
- 2 I was informed about the behavior of these two students, whose identity was kept anonymous, by two of my American students in Japan on separate occasions. The behavior was fairly frequent and in association between the two students being reported about.
- 3 This is my title but otherwise this technique comes from an associate, Bess Morgan of Wilmington, DE. I thank her for having shared it.

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