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## Introduction to Multicultural School Competencies

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### Developing Multicultural Competencies

Perhaps the fact that it is no longer necessary to explain why multiculturalism is an important concept in psychology and education demonstrates its lengthy and dusty trail to success. It is evident that the study of culture is not a novel idea. In the professions of counseling psychology, mental health, and education, culture and its relationship to sound practice in these fields have been studied for decades. School counseling services have been in effect since the mid-1960s and the need for multicultural competent counselors was recognized even then. Some fifteen years later, a position paper from the Education and Training Committee of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division 17 (Counseling Psychology) produced various definitions of multiculturalism (Sue, Bernier, et al., 1982). The 1990s brought about the concept of counselor self-bias and the recognition that self-bias was a basic constituent of efficacious counseling. A larger concern is that psychology has been described as "Eurocentric" due to its historical and educational development. Multiculturalism in psychological practice has not been adopted easily within the teaching establishment.

Many researchers and practitioners have stressed the need for cross-cultural training (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992; Plummer, 1998). Until recently, with the exception of a few researchers, school psychology was not as productive as it

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might have been in this cross-cultural undertaking and appears to have initiated a drive to “catch up” within the last decade or so, with numerous publications focusing on culture-based suggestions and guidelines (Ingraham & Meyers, 2000; Rogers et al., 1999; Rogers, 2000; Sheridan, 2000; Martens, 1993). It is now deemed vital for school psychologists to adhere to “culturally sensitive” ethical and professional responsibilities. Recommendations have been made for school psychologists to service racial/ethnic and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children and their families based on the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Division 16 Taskforce on Cross-Cultural School Psychology Competencies and by guidelines established by APA’s Division 17 for multicultural counseling proficiency for psychologists in the year 2000 (Rogers et al., 1999).

Most importantly, a recognized major challenge for the field of school psychology is the ethnic minority underrepresentation among the ranks of CLD school psychologists (Merrell, Ervin, & Gimpel, 2006). In order to meet the needs of the youths serviced in schools, changes in the field are recommended that will bring about an increase in the number of ethnic CLD school psychologists. One suggested way of tackling this issue is to ensure efforts are made to recruit and retain CLD school psychologists at all levels, from practitioners to administrators, as well as university trainers (Merrell et al., 2006; Sheridan & Gutkin, 2000). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) also considers an increase in the proportion of CLD school psychologists to be pivotal to the profession of school psychology in order to progress cultural and linguistic services in schools (Merrell et al., 2006). A positive response to this need will enhance the practices that are already in place in schools regarding culturally responsive service delivery (Curtis, Hunley, Walker, & Baker, 1999).

Racial/ethnic identity development, acculturation, and cultural psychology are major constructs that demonstrate how the profession has advanced in the last few decades. These constructs have been identified as differentially applicable to the diversity of the various racial and ethnic groups in the United States. The research on acculturation and racial/ethnic identity views the acculturative and racial/ethnic identity process as different for each racial/ethnic person (see Carter, 2005; Helms, 1994; Phinney, 1996; Sodowsky & Maestas, 2000). As a result of these distinctions, it is important for school psychologists to be aware that there are individual differences within racial/ethnic groups and that similar groups can be culturally and linguistically diverse.

As underscored in the various chapters of this book, school psychologists working with diverse groups of children in the United States will encounter children who are recently arrived, first-generation immigrants, and second- or

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third-generation settlers. Consequently, each child will have a specific family, educational, and language history. Some racial/ethnic and culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the United States have been citizens for centuries, while others have been here for only decades. In addition, it is important to note that the commonly used term “minority group” is associated with those individuals from lower socioeconomic status, education, and political power. This term is used interchangeably with various racial/ethnic groups which, because of their physical or cultural background, have been marked by the dominant culture/society as undesirable, and thus have been treated unjustly. Accordingly, Native Americans (including American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts), African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are considered minority groups, as well as other racial/ethnic groups which have at some time immigrated to the United States and experienced unfair treatment.

In the multicultural literature, the term “ethnicity” is used to refer to a specific group of people who have the same social and cultural beliefs. Contrary to common belief, race is not a biological category that divides and labels different groups as a result of distinctive innate biological traits (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). However, race has also been defined as having both biological and hereditary components (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991). The following explanation aids to clarify further the issue of race as a biological grouping:

The visible physical traits associated with race, such as hair and skin color, are defined by a tiny fraction of our genes, and they do not reliably differentiate between the social categories of race. As more is learned about the 30,000 genes of the human genome, variations between groups are being identified, such as in genes that code for the enzymes active in drug metabolism. While such information may prove to have clinical utility, it is important to note that these variations cannot be used to distinguish groups from one another as they are outweighed by overwhelming genetic similarities across so-called racial groups. (Paabo, 2001, cited in U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, p. 7)

It is helpful to remember that the genetic analysis of different ethnic groups has resulted in compelling evidence that there are greater genetic variations within than there are across racial groups (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). With reference to culture, Helms and Tallyrand (1997) explain culture as “race, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic conditions of socializations.” Different cultures “classify people into racial groups according to a set of characteristics that are socially significant” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001, p. 9).

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In actual practice, the knowledge of these different terms assists the practitioner to better understand important variables that must be considered when servicing children from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, whether settled in the United States for a decade or for a century or more. Hence the term “culturally and linguistically diverse,” or CLD, can encompass children from various racial, ethnic, and cultural groups, all of whom may speak different native languages and/or may have acquired bilingual proficiency or remained monolingual. For the purposes of this guidebook, the term CLD is employed to identify children and youth from all racial/ethnic, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups in the United States. From this perspective, the term should therefore prompt school psychologists to be alert to the racial and ethnic identity, cultural history, and language acquisition of the particular students they service.

With these cultural perspectives and responsibilities in view, this guidebook is a compilation of straightforward references to some of the most compelling multicultural issues (and practice-based techniques) in school psychology practice. It is addressed to the questioning practitioner, the student in training, the university trainer, and other education and mental health professionals. The intent for school practitioners is to augment their awareness and knowledge of what is currently obligatory for culturally ethical and professional practice in schools. Subsequent chapters will address the majority of the multicultural issues noted in depth here. The ensuing review of multicultural issues and competencies is provided as groundwork for the more extensive discussions in the rest of this book. Suggested readings are listed at the end of each chapter in annotated bibliographies. Where feasible, checklists and instruments have been reproduced and/or information for obtaining them has been included in the reference sections. Lastly, an additional special ambition of this guidebook is to act as a proactive vehicle for increasing the numbers of racial/ethnic CLD school psychologists in our schools.

### **Brief Historical Review of Multiculturalism**

This concise review of critical multicultural issues is aimed at increasing school psychologists’ historical awareness of the “multicultural movement” in education and psychology, as well as providing a foundation for multicultural school psychology competencies.

### **Definition of Multiculturalism**

Over the last few decades, various researchers have defined multicultural competency (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1998; Pedersen, 1987, 1985; Sue

et al., 1992; Sue et al., 1999; Sue, 1998). Recently, Sue and colleagues (1999) defined multiculturalism as including a broad *melange* of differences among people that ultimately tends to hinder communication and comprehension. These differences are: race, gender, sexual orientation, competence, incapacity, religion, and rank. To these we can add: age, language, ethnic educational/vocational viewpoints, disciplinary norms, ethnic-perceived normal and abnormal behaviors, family constellation, and extended family members. Reynolds (2000) gives another definition: "Multiculturalism is about understanding ourselves and others who are different from us . . . at its core [it is] about people and relationships. And all relationships are about discovering our commonalities, our cultural differences, and our personal uniqueness" (p. 111).

These definitions can be applied to both sociological and psychological contexts, and serve as a stepping stone toward the understanding and recognition of various cultural groups. For school psychologists, multiculturalism is now a professional quest leading to more advanced standards and competencies for best practice.

## Multicultural Education

Another important issue that is automatically connected to multiculturalism is education. Educators began using the expression "multicultural education" in the 1970s. Marshall (2002) defines multicultural education as "a vision of schooling based on the democratic ideas of justice and equality." Marshall points out that scholars from Canada, England, France, Australia, and South Africa are studying what multicultural education means for the teaching-learning process. In the United States, scholars studying multicultural education agree that traditional schooling is a thing of the past, advocating restructuring within the areas of teaching styles, techniques, curriculum, and interpersonal interactions (Marshall, 2002).

As the ethnic composition of the United States continued to diversify, the prospect that more educators needed to work with diverse student populations quickly became a reality in the classroom. To date, researchers have observed a continuing need for multicultural educators in the United States (Banks, 2002; Kim & Atkinson, 2002; Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, & Hong, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Ramos-Sanchez, Atkinson, & Fraga, 1999; Sue et al., 1999). Multicultural education is now assumed to be an essential component of an educator's repertoire (Banks, 2002; Gollnick & Chinn, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Some university training programs have incorporated multicultural education courses in their curricula. Furthermore, numerous texts have been published on multicultural instructional strategies for teachers that serve to increase teachers' cultural awareness, their culturally

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sensitive knowledge, and the development of adequate skills for servicing diverse ethnic groups. Additionally, knowledge of teaching strategies for racial/ethnic CLD students is considered an integral part of teachers' necessary skills as a result of multicultural education advocacy and the influx of literature available in this instructional area (Banks, 2002; Nieto, 1999; Gay, 2000). School psychologists are encouraged to acquire knowledge in multicultural education instructional techniques so as to be prepared to offer classroom assistance to teachers through collaborative school-based consultation (see Chapter 8 on consultation).

### Cross-Cultural Psychology

At the same time, it is anticipated that school psychologists-in-training will be trained to observe, discern, and discuss racial/ethnic CLD students' problems with the required cultural sensibilities and expertise essential for making placement decisions (see NASP standards on multicultural competencies—[www.nasp.org](http://www.nasp.org)). When did this all start? Historically, the more demographic changes occurred in the United States, the more it was noted that teachers, children, parents, and even patients could not be treated exactly alike—that is, utilizing the same Eurocentric methods in counseling, psychotherapy, education, and even vocational training (Canino & Spurlock, 2000).

Psychotherapists, psychiatrists, social workers, and psychologists began to notice the lack of response to treatment and the high drop out rate of their diverse ethnic clients (Atkinson, Bui, & Mori, 2001; Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Sue, 1999). Thus the continued efficacy of psychotherapy was a growing concern that in turn impacted on interventions and resulted in the establishment of the APA Division 12 Task Force (Promotion and Dissemination of Psychological Procedures), which authorized the investigation of Empirically Supported Treatments (ESTs). A succession of reports from the Task Force concerning psychotherapy emerged by the mid-1990s. These have been criticized from both theoretical and experimental standpoints. Most importantly, it has been suggested that EST criteria ignore client, therapist, and relationship variables. Atkinson et al. (2000), Doyle (1998), and Sue (1999) have also proposed that ESTs fall short of checking for ethnic/cultural factors. Furthermore, Sue (1999) has recapitulated the “Eurocentric” quandary, pointing out that multiculturalists have to defend their stance. Most likely, accentuation on EST will have a harmful outcome on school psychology training if this force is left unconstrained.

Gopaul-McNicol and Brice-Baker (1998) point out that cross-cultural psychology has a lengthy history that should not be considered specific to the culture of the United States. These practitioners highlight that as long

as people are “racially, linguistically, culturally, religiously, and politically different” throughout the world, there will be challenges for any practicing clinician. Educators, mental health practitioners, and school psychologists must appreciate these differences, and also be aware that prejudicial sentiments are prevalent—especially when a leading culture perceives the values, traditions, belief systems, and religions of other ethnic groups to be inferior to their own. Moreover, immigrant groups have been known to assimilate better when their culture was similar to that of the dominant majority population of the United States (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995).

In spite of the fact that as far back as the 1950s there were therapists advocating culturally sensitive therapy, it was not until the early 1980s that Sue (1981) and Pedersen (1985) were nationally recognized as cross-cultural counseling promoters. Both Sue and Pedersen appealed to the counseling profession to improve clinical effectiveness with culturally diverse clients by providing the counseling profession with guidelines on how to attain multicultural competencies (see their landmark work in Sue, 1981; and Pedersen, 1985). Pedersen addressed the need for counseling practitioners to develop cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills for servicing diverse ethnic groups. Thus the counseling profession convinced the fields of psychiatry and educational, vocational, and school psychology to adopt a multicultural perspective in psycho-educational assessment, treatment, and intervention practices. Correspondingly, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (DSM-IV) and the DSM-IV-TR, a psychiatric diagnostic tool, now include culture and gender cautions—a big step forward from the more instituted psychiatric approach to treatment (American Psychological Association, 1994). However, the precautionary notations do not include suggestions for diagnosis.

Fortunately, there have been encouraging developments in the field of mental health. Recently, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of the Surgeon General (2001) released a report, *Mental Health: Culture, Race and Ethnicity*, that underlines four important themes:

- Culture is important in mental health. This includes emotional anguish, manifestation of symptoms, various stressors, the specific utilization of services and the particular response to treatment.
- There needs to be consideration of the inequalities that subsist in the welfare of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans which may place these ethnic groups at risk of mental health problems. However, these should not ignore the fact that these inequalities are mainly due to the lack of available services and/or the economic difficulties that impede affordability of services.
- Culturally focused treatment is now considered helpful.

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- It is recognized that there is insufficient research regarding mental health issues, on the effects of prejudice, and in the analysis of the results of cultural competency in servicing various ethnic groups (U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Interestingly, when studied in aggregate, the major racial/ethnic groups are made up of long-standing U.S. citizens, and each is included as having specific racial/ethnic special mental health needs.

It can be said with confidence that school psychologists servicing the schools of this century and the next will be confronted with children and youth that manifest clusters of symptoms associated with mental illness. Today, schools are no longer solely educational institutions through which children learn: they are increasingly legally responsible for assessing, diagnosing, and treating children and youth with emotional disturbances that can range from mild behavioral disruptions to more severe antisocial, oppositional, and aggressive behavior disorders. In addition, schools are responsible for monitoring children and adolescents with depressive symptoms. The multicultural school psychologist is responsible for acquiring knowledge of the different *idioms of distress* by which different cultures express, experience, and cope with feelings of distress, in addition to knowledge of the different *culture-bound* syndromes which are more commonly manifested in certain cultures (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

### Obstacles to Multiculturalism

In the 1990s and the twenty-first century, multiculturalism—which currently delineates all cultures residing in the United States—is known as the “fourth force in counseling” psychology (Pedersen, 1991, 1992). The concept of “multiculturalism,” and the equally used and similar term “diversity,” have been linked to “such labels as affirmative action, quotas, civil rights, discrimination, reverse discrimination, racism, sexism, anti-White, political correctness, and many other emotion-arousing terms” (Sue et al., 1998, p. 2). Unfortunately, this varied mix of conceptualizations pertaining to multiculturalism has often resulted in dire political actions and interpersonal confrontations that led to counterproductive outcomes (see Sue et al., 1998 for a detailed explanation of multiculturalism and its effects on U.S. society).

Clearly, there have been repeated obstacles to multiculturalism that block any intended progress. Ramirez (1991) describes three major impediments to a healthy multicultural environment: the urgency to assimilate; racial prejudice;



and oppression/persecution. Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker (1998) give a detailed explanation for each of these barriers:

*Assimilation*—Numerous ethnic groups experience the pressure to adopt the values and beliefs of the dominant culture. Noncompliance results in punishable and implicit consequences—such as the blockage of access to programs that are beneficial for growth in the community.

*Prejudice*—The dominant group impedes the progress of different ethnic groups via economic, social, and political structures that isolate and reject various ethnic groups' legal rights and opposing equal opportunity (Aponte & Van Deusen, 1981).

*Oppression*—Power misused against minority ethnic groups to impede their collaboration in the pursuits of the dominant culture.

Regrettably, these barriers tend to form an endless cycle, experienced worldwide and devastating to immigrant racial/ethnic groups, including those groups which have assimilated over the centuries. Furthermore, the barriers may continue to obstruct, as observed by several researchers of cross-cultural psychology. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2050, the Anglo ancestry population will *not* be the numerical majority. School psychologists will find that more than half of their clients come from backgrounds that are racial/ethnic culturally and linguistically diverse. Knowledge of ethnic group difficulties in dealing with assimilation, oppression, and prejudice are competencies that a school psychologist should make it a point to learn. Chapter 12 provides a detailed review of the issues in prejudice and suggestions for best school psychology practice.

## Cross-Cultural Training

As a result of these obstructions to multiculturalism, and in an effort to encourage appropriate interventions for diverse populations, guidelines for cross-cultural competency training in counseling and mental health are now available—in particular, through the works of Bernal and Padilla (1982), Rogers, Close Conoley, Ponterotto, and Wiese (1992), Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), and Barona, Santos de Barona, Flores, and Gutierrez (1990). A culturally competent psychologist should adhere to the recommended guidelines and recognize that their own beliefs, attitudes, and values may influence their service to racial/ethnic CLD children and parents. Likewise, “training should allow them to recognize the limits of their skills and refer the client to receive more appropriate resources” (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998, p. 143). With respect to training, psychologists should

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also be able to identify the basis of any distress frequently observed in cultural differences and understand how such differences can be perceived or brought out in therapy (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998).

Although much has been accomplished, at some point in the future it is hoped that university training programs will move toward a stronger approach to multicultural school psychology competency training (Bernal & Padilla, 1982). Only a few multicultural courses are offered in most university training programs at present, and this is even less the case for future school psychologists (Banks, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Reynolds, 1995). Multicultural diagnostic approaches such as bilingual and informal/alternative assessments, culturally appropriate interventions, and consultation are beginning to surface—not without inevitable disinclination—in school psychology training programs, but these are left to the discretion of the university trainer and are often not perceived as part of core requirements (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998). Frequently, as Gopaul-McNicol and Brice-Baker (1998) point out, universities have failed to successfully hire trainers qualified to teach multicultural competencies and practical interventions. Chapter 6 provides suggestions for university-level training in multicultural school-based consultation.

### Why the Need for Multicultural Competent School Psychologists?

Obviously, there is abundant literature emphasizing the need for cross-cultural training for psychotherapists, counselors (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Sue, Arrendondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue et al., 1998) and for multicultural teacher education (Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & Lopez-Torres, 2000; Banks, 2002). Some literature has reviewed the need for cross-cultural considerations in consultation (Ingraham & Meyers, 2000; Sheridan, 2000; Henning-Stout & Meyers, 2000). However, as already mentioned, the literature has been rather scarce regarding the practical training of competent multicultural school psychologists. School psychologists working in schools, agencies, clinics, and hospitals will inevitably be asked to provide services to educators, parents, administrators, and even medical professionals from diverse backgrounds. Training at the graduate school level has mainly focused on the acquisition of skills in assessment, consultation, and interventions. In this regard, school psychologists-in-training are educated in consultation methods and techniques that accentuate suitable communication, interactive skills, and interventions; however, these programs fail to incorporate culturally appropriate competencies that would result in

more constructive consultation. Disappointingly, it is this lack of awareness of and knowledge about cultural issues that frequently limits the school psychologist from providing effective services to teachers, students, and parents. This is further exacerbated by the fact that, despite more than two decades of counselor educators advocating multicultural training at the university level, only one or two courses are offered in most universities—let alone in a school psychology curriculum (Banks & McGee-Banks, 1995; Rosenfield & Gravois, 1998).

Consequently, a graduate student taking a specific school psychology core course may not have prior multicultural knowledge, much less skills. If this suspected deficit is not addressed, the varied training and practicum experience will continue to focus on assessment, consultation, and interventions from a traditional perspective, leaving the graduate student with little knowledge of and competence in working with cross-culturally diverse consultee-teachers and racial/ethnic CLD children and their families. Given these issues, it is the ambition of this text to provide a practical reference aid for certain competency areas that may have been overlooked.

## Developing Multicultural School Competencies

It is therefore important that trainers of prospective school psychologists adopt methods of teaching assessment, consultation, and school-based interventions that will increase students' cultural sensitivity as well as their culture-specific knowledge and skills (Behring, Cabello, Kushida, & Murguia, 2000; Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Ingraham & Meyers, 2000; Martines, 2003; Rogers, 2000; Rogers & Lopez, 2002; Sue, Arrendondo & McDavis, 1992). Consequently, practicing school psychologists are ethically responsible for developing professional multicultural expertise (see NASP Multicultural Competency Standards online; APA Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists, 2003).

Given the professional guidelines and the prolific literature produced by researchers and practitioners on multicultural training, it would seem that if multicultural training is not offered in school psychology programs, prospective school psychologists-in-training should insist on this training and seek advice from the directors and instructors in their programs. The current and projected demographics on the increase of culturally diverse populations are sufficient evidence and reason to petition for this need. It can be considered the school psychologist's role to demand proper training. Of its own accord, this is a form of advocacy.

## Recommended Multicultural Competencies

Regardless of whether or not school practitioners devote the majority of their time to assessment or consultation, Sue et al. (1992) propose a methodical schema that lists three major multicultural counseling competencies:

- *awareness*—the ability to have an awareness of one’s own biases, assumptions, and values;
- *knowledge* (on a higher scale of competency)—possessing an understanding of the worldview of the culturally and linguistically diverse client; and
- *skills*—the competencies required to implement appropriate intervention and strategies.

In 1981, Sue outlined instructional goals for cross-cultural competencies for psychologists. Although not precisely intended for school psychologists *per se*, they exemplify a core competency groundwork that can be modified for the multicultural school psychologist and for this text’s unique purpose. Moreover, other researchers and practitioners have endorsed these principles (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998). The following describes each of the guidelines.

*Attitudinal competencies*—This relates to the psychologist’s knowledge about his/her ethnic heritage. It implies being knowledgeable about one’s ethnic norms, values, and traditions as well as other relevant practices. In many cases, a psychologist may be bicultural—such as a psychologist with roots in Europe or Asia as well as the United States. Such a bicultural background should be acknowledged and appreciated. Any significant differences in practices between the two cultures should be noted as well as any evolved attitudinal/traditional changes.

*Biases*—A psychologist should be self-introspective of his/her own biases. The recognition of such will aid in establishing a “comfort zone” with ethnic differences. This involves overcoming prejudice and stereotyping, and recognizing that clients will have substantially different cultural values and beliefs that may be in conflict with the psychologist’s own. In particular cases, a psychologist may have to refer her/his client to another practitioner of more appropriate ethnicity as a result of insufficient knowledge or failure to reach a comfort zone (Midgett & Meggert, 1991).

*Knowledge competencies*—Knowledge at the school level would have a comprehensive level of competency that requires the psychologist to have a thorough comprehension of various cultures as well as of the various racial ethnic identity models—an understanding of the society of minority groups—such as how societal structures relate to various ethnic groups (i.e., institutional barriers that force the out-numbered ethnic client by court-ordered school desegregation, affirmative-action

policies, gender-regulated organizational regulations, or federal documentation procedures that clash with a particular culture's norms and practices).

*Skills competencies*—The ability to apply culture-based knowledge to solve ethnic-specific cases and select effective culturally sensitive interventions and consultation services. Skill competencies refers to the capability of the psychologist to put into operation the professional knowledge learned to resolve clinical cases, mainly by selecting successful intervention strategies.

When discussing multicultural school psychology competencies, it is best to focus on the daily school-based responsibilities of the profession. Some of the daily activities are conducting psychological and educational assessments, engaging in consultations with teachers, developing interventions for students' behavioral problems, attending placement decision multidisciplinary conferences, and formulating legal documents that ensure appropriate special education placement. Although these are the most common duties of the practitioner, there are numerous others (e.g., working with interpreters, identifying acculturative stressors in immigrant children and youth, implementing appropriate interventions, and involvement in community-based interventions for parental training in assessed domains of needs). Obviously, all of these varied professional duties cannot be serviced optimally without the compulsory multicultural competencies for best practices in school psychology.

Below are listed those domains of school psychology competency which are presented in this guidebook and which cover most of the daily responsibilities of the practitioner, all of which are aimed at developing multicultural competencies within each critical domain listed.

- multicultural assessment (of diverse racial/ethnic CLD children and youth);
- alternative/informal assessment methods;
- acculturation and cultural identity/racial/ethnic identity development);
- English language learners (ELL) (assessment of second language);
- school-based consultation (from a multicultural perspective);
- multiple intelligences (emotional and multiple types of intelligence);
- academic assessment for racial/ethnic CLD children and youth;
- clinical assessment within a multicultural context (DSM-IV diagnosis in the schools/therapeutic interventions);
- personality and behavioral assessment from a multicultural perspective;
- prejudice reduction;
- gifted racial/ethnic CLD children (assessment and interventions);
- acculturation/cultural identity/racial/ethnic identity development;
- personality and behavioral assessment;
- writing psychological reports for racial/ethnic CLD children and youth.

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The chapters in this book present reviews of and practical suggestions for best practices in these major competency domains. As discussed above, professional associations in school psychology have placed accountability on the shoulders of the practicing professional to develop multicultural competency skills.

### Ethical and Professional Accountability

Whatever the present multicultural limitations are in the field of school psychology, much has been achieved. School psychologists now have explicit accountability responsibilities in this domain. Ethical and professional responsibilities cover various areas of professional self-scrutiny in order to promote suitable treatment for racial/ethnic CLD populations. As discussed earlier, Rogers et al. (1999) summarized the recommendations made by the American Psychological Association's (APA) Division 16 Taskforce on Cross-Cultural School Psychology Competencies, and the specifications instituted by APA's Division 17 for multicultural counseling mastery for psychologists (2000) in an excellent article that compiled these principles for school psychologists to review. Moreover, D'Andrea et al. (2001) also describe the National Institute for Multicultural Competence (NIMC) actions in this domain. The ethical standards are briefly reviewed below.

1. *Conduct*—Psychologists should adhere to the highest ethical standards, and be aware of any changes in them that may occur. This means keeping abreast of the latest standards of one's profession.
2. *Conflict of interest*—If a conflict of interest should arise between a client, or client group, and the psychologist's institution, the psychologist must assert and satisfy the needs of the client first. This is vital for the school psychologist, who will no doubt have to advocate for the child against the decisions or implied advice of administrators and educators and even the "system."
3. *Confidentiality*—Psychologists must carefully balance disclosure of sensitive or confidential information obtained about clients to other parties against potential gain or harm to the client.
4. *Short-cutting*—Psychologists should never undertake to assist in any case without adequate training, materials, or interpreters, if required. If a particular case is too difficult for the psychologist, then assistance should be sought.
5. *Bias*—As mentioned previously, a personal awareness of one's own cultural biases is crucial for healthy interpersonal interactions. If a bias seems to be in danger of becoming a potential obstacle to a particular case, the psychologist is obliged to refer the client to a more appropriate psychologist.

6. *Upholding the law*—the acquisition of knowledge of pertinent immigration laws, civil rights legislation, and other legal issues that might concern a client is a must. Psychologists must support those conditions that are intended to protect clients.
7. *Commitment*—Psychologists must promise to acquire cultural expertise and culture-focused practice, in addition to learning new techniques that might provide the means to enhanced practice in the profession.
8. *Research*—Needless to say, psychologists conducting research must strictly adhere to ethical standards. Most particularly, an awareness of past Eurocentric-oriented research in the field should help in future research designs since past investigations have proved harmful to certain ethnic groups.

## Introduction to Cultural Identity and Acculturation

The first step in attaining multicultural competencies is to have an understanding of some of the construct terminology utilized, as well as certain issues discussed in the literature when discussing racial/ethnic CLD populations. This section presents an overview of these main areas.

To begin with, definitions of cultural identity, acculturation, and other culture-centered descriptions are required to increase multicultural awareness and knowledge. The following definitions provide a basis for this acquisition.

### Culture

According to the current APA Guidelines (2003), there has been substantial debate and overlap in the use of terms to signify race, culture, and ethnicity (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997; Phinney, 1996).

The Guidelines state that *culture* is defined as:

the belief systems and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes (language, caretaking practices, media, educational systems) and organizations (media, educational systems. . .). Inherent in this definition is the acknowledgment that all individuals are cultural beings and have a cultural, ethnic, and racial heritage. Culture has been described as the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces on a group. These definitions suggest that culture is fluid and dynamic and that there are both cultural universal phenomena and culturally specific or relative constructs.

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Rudiments of culture are food, language, and music; beliefs about good and evil; perceptions of time and space; natural and supernatural phenomena; and beliefs about the fundamental nature of humans (Marshall, 2002).

### Cultural Identity

Also called *ethnic identity*, cultural identity is very concisely defined by Bernal and Knight (1993) as “how one sees oneself within the context of one’s ethnic group.” The following provides further descriptions of cultural/ethnic identity:

Cultural or ethnic identity refers to the degree to which the individual is committed to cultural views and practices, and the outcome of integrating these views into the overall sense of self. (Aponte & Barnes, 1995, cited in Suzuki, Ponterotto, & Meller, 2001, p. 52)

Two types of ethnic identity have been suggested: external and internal. External identity is that part of discernible behaviors which is social or cultural in nature. Internal cultural identity is more in depth, pertaining to cognitive, moral, and emotional characteristics (Isajaw, 1990, cited in Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998, p. 47).

### Ethnicity

This term is included because it is important to differentiate it from culture; however, it does not have an agreed upon definition and is mainly identified as “the acceptance of the group mores and practices of one’s culture of origin and the concomitant sense of belonging.” Furthermore, one can have varied ethnicities that function with disparate significance at various points in time (APA Guidelines, 2003).

### Racial/Ethnic Identity Developmental Models

Basically, the concept of cultural/ethnic identity has been studied through various racial/ethnic identity developmental models that focus on the empirical study of the development of one’s racial identity. This developmental growth has been observed to occur in stages in which the individual evolves into different racial self-concepts that range from self-denial to self-acceptance of race and ethnicity. The most renowned ethnicity model—and the one that continues to be investigated for modifications and interpretation revisions—is the Black Racial Identity Development Model (Cross, Parham, & Helms,



1991; Cross, 1971, 1995); others are the Asian American Identity Development Model (Atkinson, Morton, & Sue, 1998; Kim, 1981; Lee, 1991); and the Latino(a)/Hispanic American Identity Development Model (Ruiz, 1990).

Researchers and practitioners of multicultural counseling suggest that the “culturally skilled psychologist . . . has knowledge of models of minority and majority identity, and understands how these models relate to the counseling relationship and counseling process in diverse cultures.” (Sue et al., 1998, p. 78). Moreover, they suggest that culturally skilled psychologists adapt interpersonal relationship techniques, intervention plans, and any deliberations regarding referrals to the specific stage of identity development of the client—not forgetting their own level of cultural identity development (see Sue et al., 1998). Chapter 12 discusses these models and the central issues important for school psychology practice.

## Acculturation

In 1967, Graves described the phenomenon of acculturation as changes in behaviors and values adopted by the immigrating individual in order to facilitate accommodation to the host culture (country of immigration). According to Kim and Abreu (2001), acculturation involves knowledge and cultural identity that also extends over to ethnic identity.

Interestingly, Kim, Atkinson, and Yang (1999) found that the acculturation process diverges significantly from one ethnic group to another. For example, within consecutive generations of Asian Americans, no significant differences were found regarding “values enculturation.” Utilizing the Asian Values Scale (AVS), Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, and Hong (2001) found that Filipino Americans were less prone to the Asian value dimension of the scale than were the Chinese, Japanese, or Korean Americans. Such disparities tend to support what researchers such as Sue and Sue (1999) strongly stress: the need to focus on within-group ethnic differences when providing clinical services. In certain situations, a school psychologist may not have complete awareness of the distinct subtle differences that can occur within ethnic groups. However, sensitivity to these issues is an important part of cultural competency.

### *Acculturation Stressors*

*Acculturation stressors* are difficulties encountered by immigrant students or entire families when the process of acculturation causes stress in various areas of assimilation to the host culture. These stressors can range from sec-

ond language acquisition difficulties to socioeconomic and environmental problems, fear of not assimilating into the host country, educational background and outlook, and school and learning problems; they can also cause mental health problems (i.e., emotional distress, anxiety, lack of motivation, and withdrawal) (see Canino & Spurlock, 2000).

It is important to note that there are numerous acculturation scales for specific ethnic groups that aid in estimating the level or degree of acculturation an individual has attained. When conducting evaluations or engaged in counseling services for newly arrived immigrants and/or immigrants of longer standing—depending on the particular case and need—it is recommended that school psychologists utilize acculturation scales to establish the level of acculturation of their client. Some of the academic or behavioral problems that may give rise to school-based evaluations and counseling services are a result of acculturation stressors (see Chapter 10 on acculturation).

Obviously, multicultural skills will not be perfected unless students or practitioners are conscious of their own cultural awareness, biases, and knowledge. With this in mind, researchers have insisted on self-evaluation for the practitioner.

### Self-Assessment of Multicultural Awareness, Knowledge, and Skills

Multicultural self-assessment is vital to the healthy cultural identity of any mental health professional. There is copious literature (Canino & Spurlock, 2000; Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Ponterotto & Potere, 2003; Sue et al., 1982) providing access to such measures. Rodriquez (2000) stresses that the assessor is the most important “instrument” in the evaluation process and states several reasons for this need—one of them being that assessors must be aware of their cultural competencies, strengths, and weaknesses in addition to having knowledge of their level of ease in the use of various “expressions” that are dissimilar from their individual forms of expression (Rodriquez, 2000, cited in Canino & Spurlock, 2000, p. 85). In brief, all mental health professionals are encouraged to self-assess their own cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker, 1998; Ponterotto, Rieger, Barrett, & Sparks, 1994; Sue et al., 1998). In fact, from an ethical perspective, multicultural self-assessment is a personal evaluative process that every mental health practitioner should abide by as an introspective journey to self-improvement and awareness.

## Instruments to Assess Cross-Cultural Competencies

Gopaul-McNicol & Brice-Baker (1998) recommend “A Comprehensive Instrument to Assess Cross-Cultural Competencies” as a self-assessment instrument. This instrument is based on the research of experts in the field and incorporates a review of a variety of competency self-assessment instruments (D’Andrea, Daniels, & Heck, 1991; Gopaul-McNicol, 1997; Ponterotto et al., 1994). In addition, the final report of the Cultural Competency Workgroup (Grantham, 1996), along with recommendations from the National Council of School Psychologists were also consulted. The latter is largely responsible for the recommendation of professional core competency domains for school psychologists. The instrument is reproduced in Figure 1.1.

Moreover, NASP has developed a *Cultural Diversity and Cultural Competency Self-assessment Checklist* for personnel providing services and support to children and their families. The checklist is intended to deepen the awareness of personnel on the significance of cultural competence and can be downloaded online.

There are numerous instruments/scales to consider for self-assessment. The main advice is to be aware of one’s multicultural status in order to promote self-introspection in addition to a healthy attitude toward change.

In summary, it is strongly recommended that practicing school psychologists and school psychologists-in-training self-administer the scale in Figure 1.1 or any other of their choosing.

**Instructions:** The following cross-cultural competency instrument is designed to provide students/trainers with information to determine their effectiveness as cross-cultural mental health workers. It is not a test, and no grade will be given. Please rate the competencies using the three-point scale. Feel free to elaborate as necessary.

	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>
<b>Theoretical Perspectives</b>			
Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. Different or deficit theories	1	2	3
2. The degree to which major theoretical paradigms in psychology emphasize a Eurocentric ideology	1	2	3

Figure 1.1 (Continued)

## 22 Multicultural School Competencies

	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>
<b>Therapist's Own Values</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. Own worldview, assumptions, values, beliefs, and priorities, and own cultural heritage	1	2	3
2. How their own cultural background and experiences, attitudes, values, and biases influence delivery of psychological services	1	2	3
3. Limits of their own competencies, including the limits of their own language competencies if working with bilingual clients	1	2	3
<b>Cross-Cultural Awareness</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The specific cultural groups they work with	1	2	3
2. The cultural context, belief system, heritage, history of oppression of the client	1	2	3
<b>Cross-Cultural Ethics</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. Ethical issues when working with interpreters (e.g., confidentiality)	1	2	3
2. Laws and regulations that apply to culturally diverse families	1	2	3
<b>Assessment</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. Sources of test bias	1	2	3
2. Nonbiased assessment and the process of adapting available instruments to assess culturally diverse families	1	2	3
3. Judging the appropriateness of instruments selected on the basis of linguistic, psychometric, and cultural criteria	1	2	3
4. Adapting measures created for nonminority children for use with culturally diverse families	1	2	3

Figure 1.1 (Continued)

## Introduction to Multicultural School Competencies 23

	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>
<b>Report Writing</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The importance of integrating cultural background information and language background of the family and child	1	2	3
2. Reporting deviations from standardization during administration of standardized tests	1	2	3
<b>Counseling</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The importance of perceiving the problem within the client's cultural and social context	1	2	3
2. Incorporating knowledge about the stresses of being a minority into the counseling approach	1	2	3
3. Designing and delivering culturally appropriate prevention and counseling strategies	1	2	3
<b>Race Issues</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The interrelationship between the client's racial identity development and the effect on the client's coping behaviors	1	2	3
<b>Language</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The influence of second language acquisition on children's performances	1	2	3
<b>Working With Interpreters</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The problems involved in translating test items from one language to another	1	2	3
2. The effects of translation on validity, reliability, and test interpretation during assessment	1	2	3
3. The competencies needed by interpreters, translation techniques, professional conduct, relevant knowledge	1	2	3

Figure 1.1 (Continued)

## 24 Multicultural School Competencies

	<i>Important</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>
<b>Consultation</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. Actively learning about other cultures through inservice training, continuing education, working with individuals from other cultures	1	2	3
2. Seeking consultation and supervision from other professionals skilled in delivering services to culturally diverse clients	1	2	3
3. Consultation theory and how it can be applied to culturally diverse populations	1	2	3
<b>Research</b> Cross-culturally skilled psychologists should have knowledge about:			
1. The ethical implications of conducting research with culturally diverse populations			
2. Creating research projects that are ethically valid	1	2	3

**Figure 1.1** Self-Assessment of Cross-Cultural Competencies

SOURCE: Gopaul-McNicol, S. & Brice-Baker, J. (1998). *Cross-cultural practice: Assessment, treatment, and training*. New York: John Wiley & Sons Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

NOTE: See Quintana, Troyano, and Taylor (2001); and Ponterotto et al.'s (2001) meta-review of similar instruments used in cultural identity and information on self-assessment measures and practices.

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## Websites

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