



# Culture and Mental Illness

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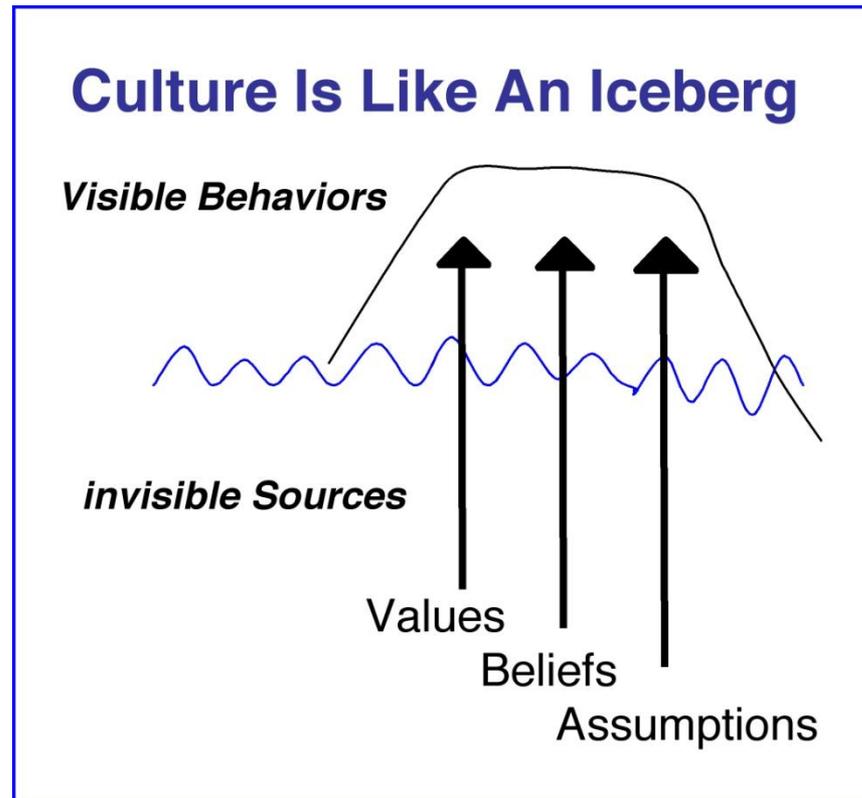
# Learning Objectives

- ▶ Develop an understanding of the interaction between culture and mental health
- ▶ Explore the difference between cultural sensitivity, competence, and relevance
- ▶ Discover the interaction between provider and consumer group memberships



# What is culture?

- ▶ Beliefs, norms, values, and language



# What contributes to a person's culture?

- ▶ Race/ethnicity
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Socioeconomic status
- ▶ Ability/disability
- ▶ National origin and immigration status
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Sexual orientation and gender identity
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Life Experiences
  - Addiction
  - Criminal justice involvement
  - Level of education
  - Homelessness
  - *Veteran/Military*

*We can not be reduced to a single definition, to one word, one vision, one spirit.*

(Leong, *California Sociologist*, 1991, v. 14, no. 102, pp. 7-10)



# Why talk about culture?

To effectively serve diverse populations, mental health systems need to understand and respect cultural differences.



# Becoming a Culturally Skilled Counselor

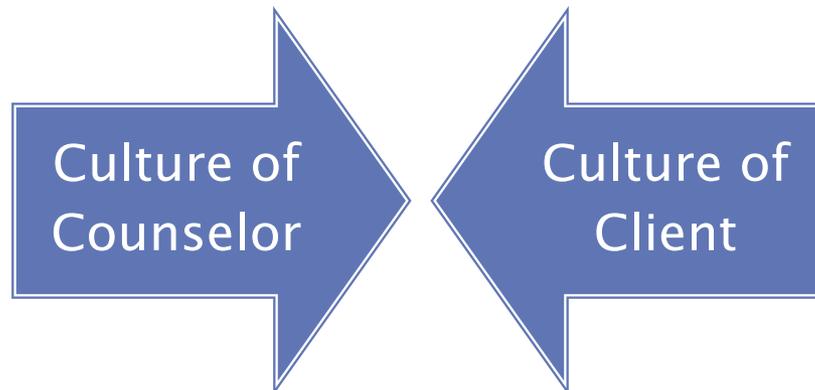
- ▶ Actively becoming aware of their own assumptions about human behavior, values, biases, preconceived notions, and personal limitations.
- ▶ Active and intentional in their attempts to understand the worldview of their culturally different clients without judgment or bias.
- ▶ Actively developing and practicing appropriate, relevant, sensitive intervention strategies and skills in working with culturally different clients.

Sue D.W., and Sue, D. (2003). Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice (4<sup>th</sup> edition). New York: John Wiley & Sons.



# Self-Assessment

- ▶ What are my cultural group memberships, both visible and invisible?
- ▶ What are my beliefs, values, and biases?
- ▶ What have I internalized about my own group memberships?
- ▶ How do these affect the clients I work with?



# Exploration and Pursuit of Understanding

## ▶ Cultural sensitivity

- Awareness of differences between one's culture and another person's, and that these differences could affect their relationship and the way they communicate with each other
- Understanding of others' traditions and ways of life, or an attempt to learn and apply new understandings.
- An attempt to be free from prejudices and preconceptions about other cultures.



# Exploration and Pursuit of Understanding

## ▶ Cultural Competence

- A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enables effective interactions in a cultural context.
- The capacity to function effectively within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented.

(Office of Minority Health, 2012.)

<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=11>)



# Practice

## ▶ Cultural Relevance

- A term used to describe how well a given idea, or the presentation of such an idea, speaks to a given group of people.
- An idea or a presentation that is cultural relevant will be better received and understood than one that is not.



# Practice– Principles of Cultural Relevance

- ▶ **Validating and Affirming:** acknowledges the strengths of diverse heritages
- ▶ **Comprehensive:** uses "cultural resources towards healing.
- ▶ **Multidimensional:** applies multicultural theory to the counseling environment and interventions
- ▶ **Liberating:** Culturally relevant counselors liberate consumers.
- ▶ **Empowering:** empower consumers, giving them opportunities to achieve recovery and beyond. "Empowerment translates into competence, confidence, courage, and the will to act."
- ▶ **Transformative:** Counselors and their clients must often defy counseling traditions and the status quo.



# What does culture influence?

- ▶ Culture plays a key role in how people
  - perceive and experience mental illness,
  - whether or not they seek help,
  - what type of help they seek,
  - what coping styles and supports they have,
  - what treatments might work, and more.

(NAMI, 2012.

[http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find\\_Support/Multicultural\\_Support/Cultural\\_Competence/Cultural\\_Competence.htm](http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Find_Support/Multicultural_Support/Cultural_Competence/Cultural_Competence.htm))



# Culture may also influence

- ▶ Health, healing, and wellness belief systems
- ▶ Consumer and counselor perception of symptoms, illness, and their causes
- ▶ Behaviors of consumers who are seeking services and their attitudes toward health care providers
- ▶ Delivery of services by the provider who looks at the world through his or her own cultural lens

(Office of Minority Health, 2012.)

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# Questions?

