

**Benchmark Social Justice Plan Assignment**

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As a counselor/counselor educator, I am responsible for ensuring my clients/students are not harmed by myself and my lack of knowledge regarding multicultural competencies. We must advocate for our clients, students, and professionals through the American Counseling Association (ACA). Ethically counselor/counselor educators are to consider multicultural issues and advocate for social justice for these minorities to ensure they are equally treated and can receive treatment for mental health issues and be given the same chances to become counselors. The ACA provides the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) to help guide counselors/counselor educators (Hays & Erford, 2018). I will explore self-awareness of my multicultural competencies, then look at my white privilege, my possible oppression of minorities, how I may become more multiculturally literate, and develop a personal social justice action plan.

#### **Explore Life Meaning and Commitment**

As a leader in the counseling profession, I need to maintain a sense of equity and strive for a just society where all people are equally treated; where this is not, I must advocate for these changes (Chang & Barrio Minton, 2022). I advocate for my clients and others who do not know how to do so for themselves. I will advocate for those with less knowledge and understanding of their rights. I do not believe that any person or group is better than another. We are all equal in God's eyes. Advocating for my clients may be like advocating for them with their teachers, families, and sometimes the law. For my students, when needed, it will look the same way, other than advocating on their behalf with the administration for better treatment of their minority. I will also advocate for my profession when needed as I worked with the ACA and other professional organizations to be permitted to treat those on Medicare.

I believe my clients/students have value and need help sometimes advocating on their behalf. As a counselor/counselor educator/leader, if you do not have influence, you do not have power; with my influence, which has come from earning trust from others and partially from my white privilege, I can advocate for others through my influential power (Maxwell, 2002). I genuinely believe that my efforts will bring about change for the betterment of my clients, students, and profession by continuing to educate and submerge myself into the cultures I am less familiar with. I am committed to a servitude leadership mentality that will foster and support those in society who are less privileged than myself by advocating for changing the social norms to bring about equality and diversity for all.

### **Explore Personal Privilege**

I enter as a white, middle-aged, heterosexual, divorced, middle-class male who has been experiencing the benefits of privilege my whole life and never knew it. As I read about white privilege, I have been enjoying the privileges associated with being born white, a male, and in a middle-class family (Hays & Erford, 2018). I felt embarrassed and guilty to think that possibly every job I had was given to me out of this privilege made me sick. However, I have never lived any other way or understood the oppression that so many people of color and different nationalities have experienced because I have not seen it. Through the internet, Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media, the world has been more exposed, and our eyes have been opened to these previously unnoticed injustices. This is where influence comes into play. I can use my privileges to get the attention of lawmakers and other officials, which the oppressed cannot do, to advocate for social justice to prevail and bring about real change. My advocacy can be seen by those less fortunate, and I can influence their beliefs that change is possible and get them to support me and my efforts to bring about the changes needed.

### **Explore the Nature of Oppression**

Oppression is brought about by the misuse of one's authority or power that prevents a particular group from sharing equality concerning good jobs, education, and everyday life (Chang & Barrio Minton, 2022). As a white middle-class male, I have not been a victim of oppression per se, that I am aware of, but my mother's grandparents were Italian immigrants and were oppressed for being Italian. My grandfather was denied jobs in the mills because of the "o" in his last name Rocco. However, for most of my life, I never really noticed the white privilege I had and how so many of my African American and other culturally different friends were being oppressed by society. I Met an African American woman while shopping one day, and she required some groceries for her children; I bought them for her and brought them to her home. I invited her to church, and she said she would love to come, but had no ride, so I offered to bring her. I would pick her, her children, and her grandchildren up to attend church. I wanted to buy the kids some new clothes for Christmas, so we all went to Walmart. This was my first experience of how African Americans are treated in the store. Although I was with them, they were followed and watched by people working in the store, and when they approached someone with a question, they were ignored; I asked them, and they answered me. This immensely angered me. They said this happens all the time.

As I think about the possibility of my adding to oppression, I can say I am not standing up for the underprivileged. I am part of the problem. When other whites began to complain about the protests for social justice by minorities, I should have stood up and said something to defend them, but I did not. In my defense, I was not aware of my white privilege then, and now I look back and see they were wrong. I have never used my authority or privilege to oppress anyone unjustly.

**Work to Become Multiculturally Literate**

I am working on being more committed to living a culturally diverse life. When developing my leadership/counselor identity, I will focus more on immersing myself in the cultures I am trying to understand better (Lee, 2007). To continue this growth, I must be willing to take the time to get continued education and delve into research on issues and how diverse populations are being oppressed. Attending multicultural continued education classes and immersing myself in the cultures I am trying to understand better will help develop my culturally competent identity. I am interested in learning Spanish to help the ever-increasing Hispanic population. Many are not fluent in English and cannot receive treatment or may have trouble in a class where I can interpret something for them to become counselors. The ACA code of ethics wants us to be more multiculturally competent and learn another language to help with this and protect the client/student as I learn not just the language but the culture as well (Chang & Barrio Minton, 2022).

**Establish a Personal Social Justice Compass**

I will work to develop my plan to promote and seek out social justice for my clients/students who are oppressed and to promote a greater understanding of their cultures and why they are essential to our country. The United Nations gave us the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). In this document, the ideation of social justice is developed, and I can use some of these for my plan to promote and advocate for my clients and students who are culturally diverse. The United Nations offers these rights to all human beings; the following rights are all from United Nations (1948); unless otherwise stated. We are born free and equal in our rights and dignity. All are born with reason and conscience and should act equally with brotherly love toward one another. Everyone is equal before the law, and there should be

no discrimination. Everyone has a right to freedom of belief in religion, including the freedom to change this religion or beliefs without any repercussions against them. Everyone is entitled to the freedom to express their opinions without being maliciously attacked and has the right to share these opinions on all media platforms regardless of their beliefs (United Nations, 1948).

These will be integrated into the development of my multicultural competencies. The following competencies come from Ratts, et al. (2015) unless otherwise stated. One competency I will be integrating is the developing self-awareness of these freedoms and what my clients/ students may be suffering from infringements upon these freedoms. Understanding the client's worldview will be integrated into my understanding of what freedoms have been taken from them and have affected their cultural beliefs. Integrating into the counseling relationship/ student relationship a more comprehensive understanding of their culture and how, if any, of the freedoms are being oppressed by either myself or some outside force. Finally, the use of advocacy for the client/student when it comes to counseling services, within the school or outside the world, all forms of oppression can be advocated, as well as increasing the awareness of others of these oppressions using all forms of social media sources (Ratts, et al., 2015).

Multicultural competence is a process that does not develop overnight. It is an intentional process, and one must work hard to be a formidable leader/counselor educator that defends the less fortunate and oppressed diverse cultures. I can only hope that I will become the culturally competent counselor/counselor educator that I desire to be through advocacy, continued education, and immersing myself into the cultures around me to develop a better understanding of the oppression and issues that they have experienced and fight for their rights.

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