Introduction
This Leader Guide serves as an educational supplement and teaching tool to accompany the videotape entitled, Counseling the Multiracial Population: Couples, Individuals, and Families (Kenney & Kenney, 2002). The video features Dr. Kelley R. Kenney and Mr. Mark E. Kenney, M.Ed, LPC, both have led the counseling profession in its efforts to address the counseling needs and concerns of the multiracial population.

The video begins with us introducing ourselves and sharing information regarding our personal journey as an interracial couple and parents of multiracial children, as well as information about the professional work that we have done related to this population. The video is designed to provide graduate students and professionals with awareness and knowledge regarding the multiracial population, and demonstrations of what competent and effective counseling of this population may look like. The video includes the definitions of who is included under the terminology - multiracial population, the myths and stereotypes that society has held and still associate with members of this population, the salient issues and concerns of this population, and the multicultural counseling competencies that are necessary for counseling this population. Finally, the video includes six vignette demonstrations of counseling sessions dealing with issues and concerns of interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families.

Important Demographic Information and Trends
Since the multiracial population encompasses several groups we have divided this section accordingly.

Interracial Couples

In discussing the demographic information regarding interracial couples, it is important to note that the information made available by the U.S. Census Bureau pertains only to interracial marriages and does therefore does not reflect the total number of couples in the United States. There are more couples (non-married heterosexual/LGBT couples) in our society than are recognized by our government. In 1960, there were 160,000 marriages while in 1990, there were slightly more than 1.4 million. The number of interracial marriages has hovered over the one million figure throughout most of the 1990’s.

Demographic trends suggest that Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are the most likely to intermarry while Blacks and Whites are least likely to intermarry. While Native Americans have the highest rate of intermarriage, the most common interracial marriages are between Whites and Asians. The least likely interracial marriages are between Black and Asian and “Other” (Asian Indian, Native American, and Pacific Islander).

In examining the trends from the standpoint of gender, Latinas, Asian American women, and Native American women are more likely to be involved in interracial marriages, whereas Black and White men have a higher interracial marriage rate. The highest rate of interracial marriages occurs between White men and Asian women, while the lowest rate is between White men and Black women.
From a U.S. geographical perspective, the South and Midwest have the lowest percentages of marriages in contrast to the Northeast and West that have the highest rate. In states that actually record marriages, Mississippi and West Virginia have the lowest rate while Hawaii has the highest rate of interracial marriages.

U.S. Census web site resources regarding interracial marriages:  
www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hh-fam/tabMS-3.txt

**Multiracial Individuals and Families**

Multiracial individuals and families are a continuously increasing segment of the U.S. population. The 2000 census marked the first time that people in the U.S. could describe themselves by selecting more than one racial category. Data from the 2000 Census revealed that 2.4% (6.8 million) of the country’s 281.4 million individuals described themselves as multiracial. Of these, 93% reported being of two racial backgrounds. The most common combinations were White and some other race; White and American Indian and Alaska Native; White and Asian; and White and Black or African American, while 7% reported being of two or more racial backgrounds. With the continuing increase in the rates of interracial marriages in the U.S., the numbers of individuals claiming more than one racial heritage are expected to grow.

Families that have become multiracial through cross-racial and transracial adoption are also on the rise. This group includes U.S. individuals and families that have adopted children who are citizens of foreign countries. Stolley (1993) indicated that one million children in the U.S. live with adoptive parents of which 8% were children who were transracially adopted. Due to suspension of data collection with this population, this is the most recent and available population figure.

U.S. Census web site resources regarding Multiracial Individuals: The Two or More Races Population:  www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-6.pdf  

**Immigrants**

According to the 2000 Census, 10% of the nation’s population was foreign-born, with one-third of this population coming from Mexico and Central America and one-fourth coming from Asia. Some of these immigrants come from countries where individuals may already consider themselves multiracial and have little understanding of the history of monoracial identity in the U.S.

The Latino experience of racial identity is one whereby individuals are separated by “social” categories as opposed to the legal concepts that separate Whites from non-Whites in the United States. Within the Asian community, Filipinos have considered themselves a mixed-race people. In addition, Vietnamese Amerasians have difficulty in finding acceptance by the Vietnamese or White American society.
The above demographic trends have been predicted to continue into this new century. Hence, as the multiracial population continues to grow in our society, it is important that counselors and other professionals increase their knowledge about this population in order to deliver professionally competent and effective services. The following sections are included in the video and should be discussed separately.


**Definitions of Population**

**Interracial Couples:** These are couples with partners from two or more different socially designated racial groups. This includes heterosexuals and gay and lesbian couples.

**Multiracial Individuals:** These include persons whose parents are of two or more different racial backgrounds.

**Multiracial Families:** These are families composed of interracial couples and their multiracial offspring; single parents, including gay and lesbian individuals with biological offspring who are multiracial; families in which a cross-racial or transracial adoption or foster care arrangement has occurred; and gay and lesbian couples or single individuals who have adopted transracially, are providing foster care, or have gone through a surrogate pregnancy process or artificial insemination process which results in the birth of a multiracial child.
(Source: Kenney, 2000)

**Points for discussion**

1. When people think of interracial couples they often think only about Black/White, as the above demographics indicate, Black/White unions, and specifically those between Black women and White men represent the smallest percentage of interracial relationships. In addition, people seldom consider the fact that there are gay and lesbian interracial couples as well as heterosexual interracial couples.

2. Multiracial individuals are not just Black/White. We do not use the term biracial, because often we find that people have more than two racial identities. Individuals who are of multiple racial ancestries may also be referred to as multiracial.

3. Many families can be referred to as multiracial: biological, adoptive, surrogate pregnancy and foster care. It is critical that the family’s identity not be assumed based upon the physical appearance of only one family member. For example, the Asian heritage appearance of an individual family member should not immediately result in the assumption of the
family of origin being solely of Asian heritage. This would be relevant to all socially defined racial groups: Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Pacific Islanders, and European Americans. Furthermore, with the increasing number of transracially adoptive or blended (children from their previous heterosexual marriages) Gay/Lesbian families, it cannot be assumed that all families of origin are heterosexual.

Myths and Stereotypes
The following are some of the common myths and stereotypes regarding interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families. THESE ARE NOT FACTS!!!

***We purposely did not include graphics or pictures with this section of the video. We want the audience to listen as Mark is saying them. Leaders should stop the tape at the end of this section and have their group members or students explore and discuss the myths and stereotypes that they have heard, as well as their reactions.

Interracial Couples:

-People who marry interracially are rebelling against family.
-Men of color marry White women because they represent ideal female beauty.
-People of color marry Whites for status.
-Whites marry people of color because they are sexually exotic.
-Whites marry people of color because they feel guilty about White racism, and want to get back at a racist society.
-Men of color marry White women because they can assert more control over them.
-Women of color marry White men because men of color are sexist and chauvinistic.
-Only people of color support interracial unions.

Multiracial Individuals:

-Multiracial individuals are doomed to a life of conflicting cultures and unfulfilled desires to be one or the other.
-Multiracial children are messed up and confused.
-Given a choice multiracial children choose a minority identity.
-Multiracial individuals are sexually immoral and out of control.
-Multiracial people are beautiful, handsome, and exotic.

Cross-racial or Transracial Adoptive or Foster Care Multiracial Families:

-Only well-meaning White people adopt cross-racially.
-Whites adopt cross-racially in an attempt to resolve guilt about White racism.
-Children who are adopted cross-racially loose their racial identity.
-People of color who were adopted by Whites are confused about their racial heritage and background.
(Source: Adapted from Wardle, 1999; Wehrly, Kenney, & Kenney, 1999; Frankenburg, 1995)
Points for Discussion

1. Many people have the perception that the problems or difficulties experienced by interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families are based upon race and ethnicity and the fact that the individuals concerned are of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

2. The above myths and stereotypes have a historical and legal context within the U.S. The problems or difficulties experienced by the multiracial population are a manifestation of the continued societal oppression that is based upon these myths and stereotypes.

3. One can not assumed that simply because a person is in an interracial relationship, is multiracial, or is part of a multiracial family that this is the sum total of how they define themselves. Similarly, all interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families are not the same in their beliefs and philosophies.

Salient Issues and Concerns

A concern that cuts across all three groups within the multiracial population is the level of societal, community, and familial respect, acceptance, and understanding that is experienced.

A major concern for couples is the development of a positive identity as a couple.

The major issues or concerns for families are the development of a healthy family structure and the development of a positive identity as a family.

Finally, the salient issue or concern for multiracial individuals, as well as for cross-racial adoptive individuals is the development of a positive racial/ethnic identity and self-concept.

Points for Discussion

1. The above issues and concerns can be compounded by numerous factors: family of origin, family history and experiences, level of individual/family acculturation, geographic location, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, age, and community.

2. It is important to understand the role that identity development plays in all aspects of life, including relationships.

3. According to Root (1994) six general themes are significant to
understanding the existence of multiracial individuals. These themes are: uniqueness, acceptance and belonging, physical appearance, sexuality, self-esteem, and identity.

Multiracial Identity Development Models

**Poston (1990) Biracial Identity Development Model**

5 stage model
Stage One – Personal Identity – The child’s sense of self is independent of racial/ethnic identity.

Stage Two – Choice of Group Categorization – The biracial child feels pressure to choose one racial orientation. This choice may be influenced by: status factors, social support factors, or personal factors.

Stage Three – Enmeshment/Denial – The biracial individual experiences confusion and guilt as a result of pressures to choose one identity and deny the other. The individual’s movement to the next stage is dependent upon their ability to resolve negative feelings experienced during this stage.

Stage Four – Appreciation – The biracial individual has moved toward learning about and valuing both racial/ethnic heritages, although they may still solely identify with the group chosen in stage two.

Stage Five – Integration – The individual values and appreciates their multiple identities and has developed a sense of security and wholeness, along with an integrated identity.

**Root (1990) Schematic Metamodel for Resolution of Biracial Identity**

Four possible ways of resolving “other” status
1. Accept the identity that society assigns
2. Identification with both racial groups
3. Identification with a single racial group
4. Identification with a new (multiracial) group


Based upon Root’s 1990 model of resolving biracial identity
1. Identify with one aspect – assigned by society
2. Identify with one aspect – self selected
3. Identification with multiple aspects of self in a segmented fashion
4. Identification with combined aspects of self
Kich (1992) Model of Biracial Identity Development

Based upon study of 15 Japanese/White individuals aged 17 to 50.
Stage 1-Awareness and Dissonance (ages 3-10): individuals experience a sense of being different and are influenced by experiences that occur outside the home with peers and reference group. Parental involvement is essential at this stage in order to foster the development of a positive self-concept and multiracial identity.

Stage 2-Struggle for Acceptance (age 8-late adolescence): individuals experience increased perceptions that they and their families are seen as being different based upon their interactions and involvement with peers, friends, and the larger community. At this stage conflicts around identification with one parent more than the other are common.

Stage 3-Self-Acceptance and Assertion of an Interracial Identity (post-adolescence): individuals learn to self-define rather than be defined by the beliefs and stereotypes of others. Individuals seek information regarding their multiple heritages and are open to questions regarding their multiple racial identities.

Phinney (1993) Three Stage Model of Adolescent Ethnic Identity Development

1. Unexamined ethnic identity – Individuals may be: a) Diffused – showing no interest in ethnic identity; or b) Foreclosed – allowing the perceptions of others to influence their views on ethnicity.
2. Ethnic identity search/moratorium – Individuals are actively exploring various aspects of their ethnicity and are attempting to discover the meaning and significance that ethnicity has to them.
3. Achieved ethnic identity – Individuals at this stage are secure and confident with all aspects of their ethnic identity.

Root (1998) Ecological Identity Model

Designed to examine all possible variables that influence the identity of multiracial Asians, however the model has application to other multiracial individuals.

The Ecological Identity model is a systemic model that encompasses the wide variety of variables that influence multiracial identity including: gender; regional history of race relations; inherited influences, which includes languages at home, parent’s identity, nativity, extended family, names, home values, sexual orientation, and phenotype; traits, which includes temperament, social skills, talents, and coping skills; social interaction with community, which includes home, school/work, community, friends, outside the community; and identity, which includes race and ethnicity (Root, 1998).
Multicultural Counseling Competence
Multicultural counseling competence requires that counselors and helping professionals be aware of their own cultural values and biases, be aware of their clients’ worldview, and develop culturally appropriate intervention strategies.

In working with the multiracial population, it is important that counselors and helping professionals examine their values, attitudes, and beliefs about interracial couples, multiracial individuals, multiracial families, and cross-racial adoption.

Counselors and helping professionals must also be open to becoming fully aware of the worldview and experiences of interracial couples, multiracial individuals, multiracial families, and cross-racial adoptees and their families.

Finally, strategies utilized in working with interracial couples, multiracial individuals, multiracial families, and cross-racial adoptees and their families must take into account their different worldviews and experiences.

The following are general processing questions to be considered while viewing each of the vignette demonstrations. These are provided in a multicultural counseling competency context.

Awareness:

1. What are your views and perceptions of interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families?
2. Where did these views come from?
3. What are these views based on?
4. How might these views and perceptions impact on your ability to really attend to the counseling issues and concerns of members of this population?
5. How did the counselors in the vignettes demonstrate awareness?

Knowledge:

1. What knowledge have you acquired regarding the worldview experiences of interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families?
2. How was this knowledge acquired?
3. How might your lack of knowledge impact upon your effectiveness in counseling this population?
4. What resources might you utilize to acquire the additional knowledge that may be needed?

5. How did the counselors in the vignettes demonstrate knowledge?

Skills:

1. What counseling intervention skills might you utilize in counseling this population?

2. What counseling intervention skills did the counselors in each of the vignettes demonstrate?

**Vignette Demonstrations**

**Transcriptions**

***These vignette demonstrations have been designed to show typical counseling issues and concerns for members of the multiracial population. The ACTORS are individuals who are professionals in their own fields. They have been selected because of their familiarity with the issues and concerns of members of the multiracial population. The issues and concerns that they are each ROLE-PLAYING are not issues and concerns for them as individuals.***

**Vignette 1 - Multiracial Individual**

Laura is 23 years old and a professional meeting planner. Her mother is Native American and her dad is of Italian heritage. Her parents raised her by allowing her to identify with all of her backgrounds. She also has a system of supportive extended family and friends. She had initiated counseling due to current difficulties in her work/life experience with people who are struggling with her identity. She travels to many different places in the United States and the world. People have been making assumptions about her identity based upon their worldview, and not inquiring about her identity. She is feeling frustrated with this situation. This is Laura’s third counseling session. She has discussed family background and personal history. She has already informed us about her life growing up as a multiracial/ethnic person. At the end of the last session, Laura shared her work experience with us. Now we will start the third session.

Mark: Hi Laura. We spent the first two sessions getting to know each other. But it seemed at the end of the second session you really wanted to discuss this work life experience and difficulty you are having in your work life. Where would you like to start with that?

Laura: Recently at work, it seems that some of my coworkers are having trouble identifying my ethnicity, and then dealing with it. Um, as you know, I’m a
meeting convention planner and I travel all over the world and stay at different places for short periods of time. While I’m there, there are people that question me, or assume I’m the same ethnicity as them, or they’ll come out and ask me, and then almost disagree with me. It just kind of gets a little frustrating.

Mark: Um-hum. I hear some agitation in your voice as you begin to talk about this experience. I’m wondering if you could share with me one specific incident, maybe a recent one, so I have a better understanding of what you’re going through.

Laura: Lately I’ve been in Miami, Florida, and as I was setting up a registration table for a conference, I was speaking with a woman from another town, and she had asked me if I was Latino. And I said, “No, I’m not—I’m Native American and Italian.” And she said, “Well are you sure? Because you really look like my cousin.” And I said, “No, I’m sure. This is what I’ve been, this is what I’ve always been.” She really kept questioning me if that what I was, and I just was amazed that she didn’t believe me.

Mark: Um-hmm. Yeah, your show of amusement, I also get a sense of the frustration and aggravation with having to defend yourself, and I’m just wondering if that really goes at the core of your being.

Laura: Yeah, it’s hard to believe that they’re not going to believe me when I say I’m something. My parents raised me to know both of my backgrounds, you know, very well and be very open with them, and I wouldn’t think that someone would lie to you and tell you their something they’re not.

Mark: Um-hmm. Well, why don’t you share with me about how did your parents raise and present this multiracial identity to you as you were growing up.

Laura: From the time I was little we always went to cultural events, had family gatherings where we always had little cultural events at. The topic was always open for conversation. We traveled, ‘cause half my family is in the West this year, so we went back and forth and went to different things there, and spent time with my different families. It’s just been very open.

Mark: Okay. Well, now, I’m wondering if there is any experience that you can draw on from your family of origin, or maybe some other past related experiences that can help you in this current situation?

Laura: Well, I’m not really sure. I just know that I work in a very small town and everybody knew who we were, everybody knew what we were, and no one ever had a problem with it—no one questioned it, no one said anything. And now, people are starting to question me, and its just kind of different, and I think it’s because it’s not what I’m used to.
Mark: Ahhh, okay. So what I’m hearing from you is that this is all sort of a new experience—people questioning your identity, coming out openly and questioning your identity, and that’s because you’ve come from a very supportive environment and community where it was really a non-issue and just totally accepted. And it sounds like in the one case that it was a person of color who was questioning your identity, so I’m wondering if part of the frustration is being in an environment where people may have different views about racial identity?

Laura: Umm, well, this past incident—yes—it was a person of color, but over the years it’s been anybody. I’ve been approached by different types of people—it’s not just one group of people that has the issue with it—it could be anybody.

Mark: Um-hmm, so again, it’s sort of you’re running into a new environment, and running into this issue about racial identity that really didn’t exist prior to you stepping out of that community. Now that you’re done with your undergraduate studies and in your first career position, this is really placed you in an environment where maybe you need some additional knowledge about racial identity and it’s meaning in our society. I’m wondering if you would be interested in looking at any books or articles, possibly even some websites, that provide information on sort of the history or understanding about racial identity in our society?

Laura: Yeah, that would be good. It would probably help, because I don’t think this is gonna change over time.

Mark: Well…. I think you’re correct in your observation. This is a very difficult topic for our society and, as you might know, this last census you were able to check off as many identities as you would like, which was a first-time-ever experience. And so it does present difficulty for other people, and for your self. So I’m wondering also if we could provide maybe some websites that involve interaction between people with multiracial identities and backgrounds in discussing this topic, ‘cause sometimes it helps not to feel so alone? I wonder if you’d be interested in seeing if anything resonates with one of those websites for you?

Laura: Yeah—that would be great.

Mark: Okay. Well, what I’ll do is put together this resource list for you for next week, and have you take a look at it. And again, choosing things that resonate for you, that you feel might be beneficial, considering your knowledge level. But that’s a whole week away, and I know you’re going to run into this situation again, possibly within our next meeting. So what do you think you can do right now, to handle this situation?
Laura: I think the best way is, if I’m approached, explain what I am, and it’s almost leaving it up to them—I can only do so much. And if they question it or have a problem with it, that’s up to them.

Mark: Okay. So what I hear you doing is sort of putting the onus on the other person, and only taking control over what you have over your self, and your healthy sense of yourself.

Laura: Um-hmm.

Mark: And that sounds like the best that you can do right now. Before we end today though, I’d like to find out from you—what is it you’re walking away with from our meeting today? What are you taking with you today?

Laura: Being here makes me realize that I know who I am—that’s the right thing, and that I don’t have a problem with my identity. It’s… other people do, and I need to learn more about that, I think, so I can deal with *them* better, because they’re the ones that have the issue, not me.

Mark: Okay. Well it sounds like you’re taking some good points with you to build a good foundation to increase your knowledge, and down the road we can also maybe help you develop some alternative skills to handle these situations in the future. Great work—we’ll see you next week at the same time.

Laura: Okay. Thanks.

**Discussion Questions:**

**Multiracial Individual**

1. What are the salient issues and concerns for this client?

2. How did the counselor address Laura’s salient issues and concerns?

3. What resources does she have in dealing with her current concerns?

4. How did the counselor show awareness of the client’s worldview?

5. How did the counselor assist the client in identifying her strengths?

6. What was the significance of identifying potential resources?

7. How should the counselor proceed in future sessions?
Vignette 2 - Interracial Couple with Child

Our next vignette is a married interracial couple with a nine-year-old child. Don is 42-years-old and white, Irish and Italian. He is looking to advance his career. He is also a devoted husband and father. He feels that this is the time to make the move, before his marketability begins to decrease. He works in the computer field. He is very focused on making this move, but feels resentful that his spouse is not totally supporting him. The most recent interview offer is from an out-of-state company which is far from family, and is not a very diverse community. Roberta is 42-years-old and Black, African heritage. She is a professional in the financial world. She is also a devoted wife and mother. She understands her husband’s career goals, but sees a very different outcome for her self and her daughter. She has concerns regarding this move, due to the loss of closeness to family, lack of diversity in this other community, and the impact on her daughter.

Mark: Hi Roberta and Don. At the end of our last session, we began to talk about the possibility of a career opportunity and the interview, and I guess I’m wondering if that’s where you want to start today’s conversation.

Don: Yeah. I mean I have a great opportunity with a top company; wonderful money, great position, and where it would put us there would be a fabulous school system for Jasmine.

Mark: Don, you sound really excited about this opportunity.

Don: Yeah—I can’t wait to get out there. I wanna, like, get there for the interview and start getting some things set up…

Roberta: (Interrupting) Listen… honey… I know that you’re very excited about this position, and I know that you’re really interested in it. But you know what? We haven’t even really talked about it. I mean, I have a lot of concerns. You know, you haven’t given me a chance to talk about it.

Mark: It sounds like this is another example of a communication difficulty that we’ve been working on in the previous five sessions, so let me give Roberta a chance to express her concerns. What are your concerns?

Roberta: Well, he’s talking about moving us across the country to an area where there are hardly any people of color. I mean, he’s taking us away from our family, family and friends, you know, all around us to support us right now—it’s really great for Jasmine. And I guess really I think that he’s not really thinking about me, and thinking about Jasmine.

Don: Excuse me… I mean I am thinking about you. We’re talking about financial security. We’re talking about having an opportunity to get out there and get set. And there will be like job opportunities out there with your skills—a company
would snatch you up in a minute. And I just…you know, for the record—I’m just tired of hearing how I don’t think about you and Jasmine. Okay?

Mark: Okay. It sounds like two things are going on here. First of all, we really haven’t communicated very well about this, and there are apparently some very serious disagreements about what are the important factors in making this decision. So, I’m wondering if you’d be willing to try an alternative approach to look at this issue. And that is to look at our cultural worldview, and how that impacts in our decision-making process. Would that be something that you’d both be willing to try to do today?

Don: All right.

Roberta: Okay.

Mark: Okay. Roberta, let’s start with you. It seems that you’re very concerned about diversity and community. How does your worldview influence the importance of those two elements in your life?

Roberta: Well, I am very, very concerned about family. Family is the most important thing. I mean, career opportunities are great, but family has to come first. And diversity is important, too.

Mark: Okay. And Don—how does your cultural background and worldview influence your decision about the importance of career advancement and financial security?

Don: Well, I don’t think it’s a cultural thing. I mean, as far as my family, I mean…it’s about getting a good job and being a provider for the family. That’s what it is.

Mark: Umm…. I don’t know if you’re really understanding what I’m saying about cultural worldview. What if I would use the term “ethnicity?” Because I’m not so sure that you see any cultural influence. So how about we try “ethnicity” as a term. What comes to mind when I say that?

Don: Well, I’m half Irish, half Italian.

Mark: And how do you think that has influenced, again, your beliefs about career, money, and family?

Don: Well, for career, I mean the idea was, you know, that you get a good education, get a career and become financially solvent—you’re making money. And for the family aspect of it, you are then the provider. I mean, that’s what the message was.
Mark: Okay. Roberta, let me hear from you, and how are your, you know, family messages—what were they about regarding the same three issues—career, money, and family?

Roberta: Well, again, family comes first. Family is central. I mean, you know, we believe that careers are important. You have to make money to support the family, but that’s secondary. Everything revolves around the family. And it’s also been really important to us to have a connection to the black community—to keep a connection, and to participate, and be a part of that community.

Mark: Um-hmm. So what I’m hearing here is that there’re real differences in the priority of these three values—career, money, and family and their importance, and as we shared early in the session, you really haven’t discussed that and taken into account that maybe that there’s a cultural worldview influencing that decision-making process. I’m wondering if you’re willing to continue this conversation in preparation for our next session in order to think about what are the important values that are of interest to you and of interest to your family.

Don: Yeah, all right… but I still just don’t get, I mean, the big issue about diversity of the community and diversity of a school for Jasmine.

Roberta: Of course you don’t get it, Don. You know why? Because you’ve never been the only one, the only one in your class, you know, the only one in your company. I mean, Jasmine has had an opportunity to interact with all kinds of kids where we live now. We have family all around us. But can you imagine—no—you can’t imagine what it’s like for her if she ends up being the only child of color in that class. And you know what else? What I have found out is people will feel very free to let their racism fly. And I don’t want that to happen to my daughter. Is that what you want for her?

Don: No, that’s not what I want for her. I mean, it’s… the racism thing… all right; it hasn’t been on the forefront of my mind. I mean, I haven’t thought about a lot of the discussions we’ve had about racism. But, I mean, that’s…. not been at the forefront of my mind.

Mark: Okay. Well, we’re coming to the end of our time, but I think we’ve found some mutual common ground here, a mutual interest. And that is the impact on Jasmine—what is this going to mean for her? And I’m wondering if that’s a starting point for your conversation about what’s important to your family in making this decision, before accepting the interview. And continue to talk about the importance of your family and Jasmine and the impact, and begin to sort your values out, and begin to work on a mutual agreement about some common interest with these three values. Would you both be willing to try to work on that for next time?

Don: Yeah, sure.

Roberta: Yeah, okay.
Mark: Okay. I know it might be a difficult thing, but I think it’s worthwhile and, again, to focus on that mutual interest of what’s in the best interest of your daughter. Thanks for coming in, and we’ll see you next week at the same time.

Discussion Questions:
Interracial Couple with Child

1. What are the salient issues and concerns for each partner? The couple?

2. How did the counselor address each partner’s (the couple’s) salient issues and concerns?

3. What was meant by the term cultural worldview?

4. What was Don’s struggle with understanding this concept?

5. How effective was the counselor in reframing the question of ethnic identity to a focus upon family-of-origin messages?

6. How did the discussion regarding cultural worldview help the couple to identify their core values of money, career and family and begin to prioritize these values?

7. How did focusing on cultural worldview assist this couple in discussing the concept of racism and Roberta’s concerns regarding their daughter’s potential experiences of racism?

8. How would focusing on the needs of their daughter potentially assist this couple with their communication skills regarding this career decision?

9. What role did gender identity play in each partner’s personal worldviews regarding family, career, and money?

10. What issues should be addressed in future sessions with this couple?

Vignette 3 - Multiracial (Cross-racial Adoptive) Family

This is a session with Deb, Monica, and Terry. Deb is a 45-year-old white female, who adopted Monica at the age of 2. Monica is now 12 years old. Terry is Deb’s 47-year-old live-in partner of five years. They live in a rural community that lacks cultural diversity. Counseling began with Deb and Monica, and after three sessions it was decided that Terry should join in the family sessions as well. Since then, all three have been meeting with the counselor, and this is the seventh session. During the last two sessions, much time was spent focusing on Monica feelings of depression, loneliness, and isolation. Monica notices herself more and more as a Black person now, and has seen the fact that she is different from her mom, her adopted family, and the people that she has grown up
with as a negative thing. During this session, the counselor will explore what has been
done to address the issue of Monica’s racial/cultural heritage as a way of helping her to
understand experiences that she might have as a person of African heritage, and as a way
of helping her to feel good about herself.

***The parents of the child ACTOR in this next vignette demonstration have
reviewed the transcript and the video and given approval for all the material herein.

Kelley: During our last session, we talked about how you, Monica, are beginning to
experience yourself more and more as a black person. And how at times you
experience a little bit of discomfort around that. Is that correct?

Monica: Yes.

Kelley: Okay. We also talked about the possibility of maybe spending this session
talking about some possible ideas for how you can become better acquainted
with the African American heritage that you have, and how we could also help
you get a little bit more understanding of what that all means. Do you
remember that as well?

Monica: Yeah.

Kelley: Okay, all right. So, what if during this session we begin to strategize,
brainstorm, come up with some ideas for how we can assist Monica in better
understanding herself in such a way that she begins to feel good about herself.
Does that sound good?

Terry: I think that’s a good idea.

Deb: Yes.

Kelley: All right. I recall in a previous session you talked about an Aunt Betty, was it?

Deb: Monica lived with her Aunt Betty until I adopted her when she was two, and
while I was still living in Pittsburgh—when we were living together—I took
her to visit her and then we moved here. And I found out later that Betty
became quite ill and then she died just before Monica’s third birthday.

Kelley: Hmmm. Okay… so you never really got to know her at all.

Monica: No.

Kelley: Do you remember much about her?

Monica: Not really.
Kelley: Okay. All right. When you adopted Monica, did the agency that you were involved with talk to you at all about the importance of racial identity, and how to help her become a little bit more accustomed and familiar with her racial identity?

Deb: No, they really didn’t talk to me much about anything in that regard.

Kelley: Hmm. Hmm. Okay. I do recall, though, it’s probably right before agencies began to focus on the issues of racial identity development with transracial adoptive families, so, okay. Well, what experiences have you had related to culture and race, individually and as a family?

Terry: Well I think individually our experiences are quite different, because I lived in New York City and took advantage of a lot of culture, arts... different things.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Terry: Plus, the population is just so much more diverse than it is here. I have a lot of friends of different backgrounds.

Kelley: Um-hmm… okay. What about you, Deb? Do you have any friends of other backgrounds, other heritages?

Deb: I knew a few African American women when I lived in Pittsburgh, but then I moved here, I mean, and as Terry said, and there’s not much diversity in this area, so… I don’t have the same kind of experiences that she had in New York with regard to culture and arts.

Kelley: Um-hmm… okay. What have you done to familiarize yourself with the African American experience in order to promote/help Monica become familiar with the African American experience? Have you done much of anything related to that?

Deb: Well, Terry’s been purchasing some books when she goes back to New York and has been ordering some books as well that she’s brought home. I haven’t looked at them that much myself, but I think Monica has taken a look at some of those. If there’s something on television, we watch that. And… we watched Roots… and, umm…


Deb: Some music—not a whole lot.

Kelley: So you’ve attempted to provide some exposure. What about taking her to cultural events, museums... things of that nature. Have you done any of that?
Terry: No.

Deb: We’ve talked about it, since we live pretty close to Pittsburgh—try to get some more information about what’s happening there… get involved with that.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm. Okay. What about your hair—who does your hair, Monica?

Monica: This lady at, um, she has her own hair salon—Joanne.

Kelley: Okay…

Terry: Joanne… Joanne has a hair salon in Pittsburgh, and I’ve taken Monica there for the last several months to get her hair done.

Kelley: Okay. All right. How did you find her?

Terry: I think it was a friend of mine… it was through a friend who knew somebody, who knew somebody, and we connected that way.

Kelley: Okay. And I assume you’ve gotten to know her since you’ve been going….

Terry: Yeah, definitely. I think Monica really enjoys spending time there.

Kelley: Um-hmm. Is that true Monica?

Monica: Yeah, she’s really cool.

Kelley: Okay.

Terry: And she’s with a large group of black women.

Kelley: Hmmm. Okay…. interesting. I’m wondering if you might utilize her, perhaps, as a resource—a resource for community events, getting in contact with the community. Have you thought about that at all?

Deb: I didn’t think about it, but it might be a good idea.


Deb: I’ve not met the woman, but Terry’s talked a lot about her, and Monica’s always been real happy to talk about her as well.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Terry: I think she could be a very good resource.
Kelley: Um-hmm. Monica, tell me a little bit more about school. What’s your school like? Is there any diversity at all in the school? I know you’re in a rural community—is there any diversity at all in the school?

Monica: No, not really at all.

Kelley: Okay. And what’s that like for you? How are you treated?

Monica: After a while, I sort of got used to it, so now it’s not a big deal anymore.

Kelley: Um-hmm. Can you say more about that—what’s not a big deal?

Monica: It’s not a big deal that maybe I’m the only black person in my school, but I sort of got used to it after a while, so I don’t think about it a lot anymore.

Kelley: Hmm… okay. Let me ask you this—you’re the only black child. Are there other children of color in the school that you’re aware of?

Terry: Well, I think there’s one Hispanic family.

Kelley: Okay…. all right. So… very, very little diversity. Okay. How open do you perceive the school to be? How interested in being inclusive do you perceive the school to be?

Deb: I don’t believe that they’re particularly interested in that concept. I’ve gone to PTA meetings—things like that. They treat Monica like they treat all the other kids—I don’t think they view her as different in any way.

Kelley: Um-hmm. Um-hmm. Okay. I’d like to come back to that. You know, we’ve talked about a few different things, and it sounds as though you’re recognizing the importance of all of the different kinds of things that were mentioned today: beginning to get involved in some events, some programs—things of that nature; going out and discovering the community a little bit more; discovering what’s in the community a little bit more; finding out literature, etc. that might be available to help you all understand a little bit more. I guess I’m wondering how invested are you in perhaps helping to educate the school, and helping to educate the school district perhaps about what they need to do to make students feel more comfortable. Because, as we know, things are changing. And perhaps it’s not as diverse a community now, you know, but who’s to say that in years to come, you don’t begin to see more families of color, etc., moving into the community. So, in a way, I guess I’m suggesting is that you all might become sort of pioneers, if you will, in terms, you know, of kind introducing some of these concepts to the school.

Terry: Do you have a list of those websites you could give us?
Kelley: I certainly do, and I can certainly give you that. I also have a book list that I can share with you, and I also have access to someone who I know had some information about a support group at one time, so I’ll check into that as well.

Terry: Okay… great.

Kelley: Monica, how does all this sound to you?

Monica: It sounds fine to me… I’m looking forward to it.

Kelley: Okay.

**Discussion Questions:**

**Multiracial (Cross-racial Adoptive) Family**

1. What are the salient issues and concerns being presented by this family?

2. How did the counselor address the family’s salient issues and concerns?

3. As long as the adoptive family is providing the love and support that the child needs, should the child’s racial/ethnic identity and background matter?

4. What might the significance be in raising questions about the child’s connection to her biological relatives?

5. What might the significance be in raising questions about the child and her adoptive parent’s connection and access to diversity, and specifically to the African American community?

6. What purpose does the child and her adoptive parent’s access to and relationship with an African American community serve?

7. What was the value of suggesting that the adoptive parents be more involved with and possibly serve as resources to the school district and specifically to the child’s school and teachers?

8. What are the potential benefits of this family having access to a cross-racial adoptive support network, literature, and websites that address cross-racial adoptive individuals and their families?

9. Would you address the issue of the adoptive parent’s sexual orientation at all during your work with this family? How? When?

10. How would you proceed in future sessions with this family?
Vignette 4 - Interracial Dating Individual

This is Amy’s sixth session. Amy is a 25-year-old White female in an interracial relationship of two years with Michael, a 26-year-old Black male. Their relationship has now reached a serious level. Amy has decided that it is now important to share this with her family, who know about their friendship, but nothing more. She was planning a trip home for the weekend, at which point she would be breaking the news to her parents and two brothers.

Kelley:  Hi Amy—how are you doing today?

Amy:  I’m doing all right.

Kelley:  Good, good. I know you went home for the weekend. How did things go?

Amy:  Not really well… kind of got my thoughts together, and knew exactly what I wanted to say to mom and dad. And we sat down. I started to present the whole topic of my relationship with Michael. And as soon as mom and dad understood what I was trying to get across and the whole relationship that I share with Michael, they just closed down—they didn’t want to hear about it any more. They told me that my relationship with him was completely unacceptable, and they told me that basically I had to make a choice between either being with my family or being with Michael.

Kelley:  Hmm. Well, Amy, that sounds pretty extreme.

Amy:  It is. You know, I love my family, and I guess I never expected them to respond the way that they did. Like I thought that they… I knew that they didn’t really like the topic and they weren’t fond of it by, you know, experiences that we had before, and so I thought, “You know, this is different. If I present it to them correctly, and they love me so much, and, you know, they’re going to totally understand and they’re going to work through this with me.” And that’s not what happened. And you know, I sit there and I was thinking, “I just… I love Michael and I made this choice to be in a relationship with him—you know, this is what I want.”

Kelley:  Um-hmm. So you’re clear in what you want.

Amy:  Um-hmm.

Kelley:  So where does this leave you?

Amy:  I don’t know. You know, Michael and I both said that this is what we want for the rest of our lives—that we want to be in this relationship together, that we love each other, you know, but my family is so important to me and they have been there for me through everything—they were my support system. And I
just love them to death, and it scares me, and it makes me so incredibly sad to know that they’re not willing to be there anymore.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm. So it’s the whole issue of the support and not having their support, and not knowing what to do in terms of how to get them to come around to the fact that you’re happy…

Amy: Yeah.

Kelley: And that this is good for you.

Amy: Yeah, yeah.

Kelley: Yeah. Um-hmm. Okay. Tell me, how has Michael reacted to all of this? What was his reaction to what you told him about going home?

Amy: He was destroyed. I mean, he was so disappointed and so upset and so sad that… You know, he basically said to me, “It was like they’re making a judgment on my background, and they’re making a judgment on what I am and not who I am. And they’re not accepting me for who I am. They don’t even know me… they don’t even know anything about me.”

Kelley: Right.

Amy: You know, which devastates him, and it devastates me. And then he started saying these ridiculous things about how he’s to blame, and he’s to blame for the way my family’s treating me, and the fact that I’m having problems. And, you know…. And I said to him, “That… that’s so unfair, because we’re in this together. This is a relationship that we chose to be in together.”

Kelley: Right.

Amy: You know, which devastates him, and it devastates me. And then he started saying these ridiculous things about how he’s to blame, and he’s to blame for the way my family’s treating me, and the fact that I’m having problems. And, you know…. And I said to him, “That… that’s so unfair, because we’re in this together. This is a relationship that we chose to be in together.”

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Amy: And, you know, I chose to be in it freely, and I chose to fall in love with him freely. And I’m not going to sit here and point fingers at anyone and he’s not going to be the person to take the blame for how my family’s reacting to us being together, so…

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm… okay. All right. I guess I’m wondering about support systems—other support systems that the two of you have had, in terms of friends, his family… do you have support systems that are helpful?

Amy: You know, it’s like…I kind of wish that I had this silly crystal ball that I could look into and be like, “Help me and show me what the choices are that I’m supposed to make, and how I deal with this, and what’s the best thing that I can do”… and “How do I not offend anyone, and how do I love everyone and have them love me?” Like, just what can I do, basically, and so, I guess, you know, that’s not realistic, so… I don’t know… I wish there was something or someone
we that could turn to, to be able to help us out in a sense, and maybe guide us a little bit—give us a little bit of direction, you know.

Kelley: Um-hmm… okay. I do have some thoughts related to that, and I’ll come back to them in a minute. But I first want to throw out a question or a comment about the security that you and Michael have within yourselves individually and within the relationship. Do you feel that the two of you are secure individually, and secure in the relationship? Does that feel…

Amy: Yeah, I mean, I do. But I think that this is really trying our relationship.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm.

Amy: I think that it’s, you know, it’s making me question big time like, I have to make a choice, and I’m going to give up everything that I had in the past, and everything that I know…

Kelley: Right.

Amy: …so, is this…. you know, not to make it sound… because I know it is worth it, but is it worth it? Are we going to be able to do this together? Are we going to be able to work together and stay in a strong relationship like we have?

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Amy: … because, you know, some people… it’s just… I guess you could say it’s hard because it’s really a lot of pressure on us.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Amy: You know?

Kelley: Um-hmm. And society doesn’t make it easy.

Amy: Right.

Kelley: Society will challenge you.

Amy: Especially where I come from.

Kelley: Yes, yes… absolutely.

Amy: It’s not okay to be in a relationship like Michael and I have at all.

Kelley: Um-hmm.
Amy: It’s frowned upon, so it makes it very hard.

Kelley: Um-hmm… sure…. okay. All right, talking about how other people experience this, and you mentioned wishing that you had a crystal ball to know how all of this is going to turn out, etc.

Amy: It would make it so much easier.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm. Well, you know I happen to know, because of the work that I’ve done, that there are numerous interracial couples who have shared your experience, and have shared your story at some point. And I also have some materials—some books, articles. I also have some access to websites, support groups, etc. All of these things, I think, could provide information, can provide support for you, can help you to realize that you’re not alone in this, and that people have come out on the other side of this situation, and that things do work out, and can be worked out.

Amy: That would be so wonderful.

Kelley: Okay. I can certainly provide those to you. What about Michael—do you think he might be willing to take a look at some of these resources as well? And perhaps even come in to one or a few of our sessions even.

Amy: You know what—I can definitely say yes to that. Just because he’s been so supportive in me coming here and working through my, you know, issues with it, my feelings and he’s a wonderful person. He just… I think he would really benefit from the resources and I think he would benefit from coming in here, and kind of talking with us and maybe being able to talk about how he’s feeling about the situation, so… yeah.

Kelley: Great, great. What we’ll do then, is I’ll pull together as we’re leaving today… I’ll pull together some of the resources. I’ll pull together a book list, a list of the websites and the support groups and… Give me some time, however—I have a particular couple in mind, but I need to call them, just to make sure that they’re amenable to talking with you and Michael. And once I’ve done that, then what I’ll do is I’ll get in touch with the two of you and we can establish another time, perhaps maybe in two weeks, where all of us can get together. I want to give you both some time to go over some of the resources that I’m going to give you today.

Amy: Yeah… I think that would be good. Then we could work together on it. It would give us some time—some time to absorb the information and that’s good. I like that—I feel comfortable with that.
Kelley: Okay… all right, okay. Why don’t we stop here? Again, I’ll give you the resource listings, and I’ll call you in a day or so with the address and phone number of the couple. Okay.

Amy: Okay. Thank you.

Kelley: All right.

Discussion Questions:
Interracial Dating Individual

1. What are the salient issues and concerns being presented by the client?
2. How did the counselor address Amy’s salient issues and concerns?
3. What might the significance be in raising the question about the client and her partner’s individual self-security and the security of their relationship?
4. What issues might you address in meeting with the client and her partner?
5. Discuss the value of utilizing resources including books, articles, websites, and other interracial couples in working with this client?
6. What other issues might the counselor need to address in future sessions?

Vignette 5 – Interracial Couple

This is the second session with Miguel, a 29-year-old Mexican American man born in Mexico, who came to the U.S. with his family at the age of 5. He has been married to Connie for a year and a half. Connie is a 25-year-old first generation American woman of Vietnamese heritage. The two have been struggling with gender role differences since the beginning of their marriage.

Kelley: Okay, so Miguel, you are a computer technician, is that correct?

Miguel: That’s correct.

Kelley: All right. And… I think I have this right, that you and Connie have been struggling with this issue of Connie wanting to start a business outside of the home, and work outside of the home. That’s correct?

Connie: Um-hmm.

Miguel: That’s correct.

Kelley: Okay. Can the two of you tell me a little bit more about what the struggle has been about for both of you around this issue?
Miguel: Well, I think that when we got married, it was understood that I will be the major breadwinner. And that perhaps within a year, year and a half span, that we wanted to venture off and start a family. So her wanting to go ahead and work, it kind of threw me off, because as I said, we understood—I would be the major breadwinner. I recently got a promotion and make good enough money to hold us over.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Miguel: And I think that if she was to go ahead and work, perhaps maybe it would stumble our plans of starting a family.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm… okay… all right. Connie?

Connie: I disagree with that. Um, I didn’t realize that it was known that he’s going to be the breadwinner…


Connie: … you know. I just… I’m very independent—and he’s always known that… you know? I like to do things by myself…

Miguel: Sometimes too independent.

Connie: Well I like to do things for myself. I don’t like to rely too much on other people for anything. You know, it’s like you can’t wait around, so…

Kelley: Um-hmm. Okay… all right. I’m hearing here as well that there were some expectations, perhaps on both of your parts, when you went into the marriage. Is that correct?

Connie: Yes.

Miguel: That is correct.

Kelley: All right. Why don’t we spend some time first talking about those expectations? I’m also going to want to talk a little bit about how the expectations work in terms of you know, what you expected from her, in view of the fact that she is of Vietnamese heritage, and what your expectations were perhaps of him, as a man of Mexican heritage. So, talk to me a little bit about what those expectations were.

Miguel: Well, I expected a wife—a loving wife, a loving home.

Kelley: Okay… Um-hmm.
Miguel: Meals to be provided when I come home from work. Everything nice and tidy. I didn’t expect your stereotypical stay-at-home, and be pregnant and barefooted—that’s not what I’m asking.

Kelley: Um-hmm… okay.

Miguel: I’m comfortable with how our marriage is working out. Growing up, my mother was the stay-at-home parent. She provided the meals, she raised eight kids. My dad had a full-time job.

Kelley: Okay.

Miguel: So, that’s… that worked. And I hope that it continues to work, even in our marriage now.

Kelley: Okay… all right. Connie?

Connie: I think that works for his family, but that certainly didn’t work for mine.


Connie: ‘Cause my mother was miserable. My father was going to provide for the family, and she stayed home and she took care of my brothers and sisters and I—she was miserable! He dictated everything and expected everything, because he thought he made the money so he can rule the house. And, you know, I do not agree with that, and I vowed that I would not have that happen to me when I got married.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Connie: I intentionally choose to be independent in the way that I am because I don’t want to rely on… I don’t want anyone thinking that they can dictate to me because they feel that they, you know, are making the money. Like not to say he’s doing that, but I will not even give the chance for that to happen, so…

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Miguel: I’m not taking her freedom away…. I think there comes certain boundaries and limitations, so as a wife, I expect her to be a submissive and yet loving wife, to meet my needs as well as I meet her needs.

Kelley: Let me ask a little question here. Again, you’re both of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and certainly what I’m hearing is that culture does play a part, as we would expect that it would play a part. I don’t know a whole lot about roles and expectations, gender roles and expectations within either one of your cultures, and I’m a little bit concerned about how much information the
two of you have with regard to each other’s culture and the norms and expectations around gender. So if I can maybe have you both talk a little bit about your knowledge of, and your information about the worldview of Vietnamese individuals, and your worldview about Mexican individuals and how gender roles are seen, how the gender roles are viewed. You know, perhaps you can maybe give me some information about messages that you heard in your families about gender roles and expectations.

Connie: Well, my mother said that she hated the lifestyle that she had with my father. It was very… they didn’t have a lot of communication between them.

Kelley: Okay.

Connie: And, she told me that they came to the United States to start a family because she wanted her children to have a better life, and to have choices that she didn’t have. And that’s obviously what I’m doing—I’m doing what… you know, I’m taking after what had she wanted for me. She wanted me to have the choices she didn’t have growing up.

Kelley: Okay, because part of her gender worldview was that she didn’t have choices as a woman—there were expectations that she would be submissive, perhaps, and stay at home and provide for the family. That was it. Is that correct?

Connie: Yes. They were bred that way. She said that was the way it was. And in our country, men were allowed to have more than one wife.

Kelley: Ummm.

Connie: And it was supposed to be okay.

Kelley: Um-hmm. I see.

Connie: You know, it’s not the same in United…. you know, I refuse to be that way—that’s not the way that I am.

Kelley: I see. I hear that. Miguel. What about your family? What were some of the messages that you heard about gender and gender roles?

Miguel: Well, for one, education—let’s just say for example—education, it was not a given that beyond high school females were to pursue that.

Kelley: Um-hmm.

Miguel: And she’s a very intelligent female, you know, who I admire, but at this point, it was a given again, and similar to her culture, that the man is the head of the household. Females were to be submissive and provide. So, it’s a little bit of an old school that I struggle with but yet, I think it has always worked in my
family, and I try to instill in our marriage the same morals and religions, and things like that, that had worked with my mother and father.

Kelley: Um-hmm. You just mentioned your mother, and I know in our first session you indicated being very close, very attached to your mother and I think that, too, might have perhaps played a part in terms of your expectations. Is that correct as well?

Miguel: That is correct. Again, even the fact that I didn’t marry someone of Mexican background. So, I’m very close to my mother now. So she, she’s not used to this whole liberation, freedom, “hear me out,” so this is all new to her. So, it’s very difficult for me to sometimes try to educate her as well.

Kelley: Um-hmm, um-hmm. Okay…. all right. Okay…. so, a lot of things going on again, with regard to culture and expectations that you had, Connie, for the type of person that you would marry who would be totally different from your dad. And for you, Miguel, it sounds like, you know, again, you had these expectations that whoever you married, whether it be Mexican or a woman of another cultural background that you know, still, she would maintain a particular stance, a particular role and that would just be how things would be. I’m wondering in view of now what we know about the role that culture plays in this whole struggle, whether or not we can perhaps work together to come to some type of resolution, and come to some compromise so that the two of you… you know, you’re starting your own family. You’re going to be starting your own practices, your own way of doing things that is perhaps going to be very different from what you both grew up with—from what your parents did. Do you think it’s possible for us to work on some compromise?

Miguel: I still think we have a lot to work out.

Connie: Yeah, we have a lot of issues.

Miguel: And it’s going… I’ll be honest with you—it’s going to be very difficult. I’m used to my way, and so I’m… I don’t know. I don’t know where this is going to lead us, or…

Kelley: Okay… okay. Does having a better understanding of where each one of you is coming from, from a cultural standpoint help clear the air a little bit? Does it help you to understand each other a little bit better? ‘Cause that’s really, I think, the first thing that we need to focus on. Once the two of you have a better understanding from where each other is coming from on this issue, then I think we can begin to work on the compromise. Do you at least have a better understanding, somewhat of a better understanding?

Miguel: A little bit.
Connie: Yeah, I would say a little bit, but, I don’t know… I just don’t know how we’re going to be able to work it out, being that he wants things his way, so…

Kelley: Um-hmm. Well, I guess I’m wondering is that what I’m hearing—that you expect that things are going to be your way, and there’s no room for compromise here, Miguel?

Miguel: Let’s just say it’s going to be a struggle.

Kelley: Okay. A struggle to let go of…

Miguel: Of my way—mentality, or attitude. But I love my wife, and I know that… we’ll need to make things work out, so somehow I’m going to compromise some ideas.

Kelley: Okay… all right.

**Discussion Questions:**

**Interracial Couple**

1. What are the salient issues and concerns for each partner? The couple?

2. How did the counselor address each partner’s (the couple’s) salient issues and concerns?

3. What was the significance of exploring and discussing each partner’s expectations of the other and of the relationship?

4. What role does the difference in cultural worldview play in this couple’s difficulties?

5. What was the significance of examining the gender roles and expectations of each partner’s cultural group for the counselor and for the couple?

6. How might the expectations of each partner be related to their own individual cultural worldview and be related to their biases about each other’s cultural worldview?

7. What was the significance of exploring and discussing the cultural worldview differences of each partner for the counselor and for the couple?

8. What other factors may be contributing to Miguel’s difficulty with the concept of a compromise?

9. How might you proceed in future sessions with this couple?
Vignette 6 – Cross-racial Adopted Individual

This session is with Josh. He is a 20-year-old first-year college student at a large and diverse university. He was adopted at the age of 10 from Vietnam by parents of European culture. He grew up in a community in which he did not have any exposure to people of Vietnamese heritage. He recently had two experiences on campus regarding the questioning of his identity, by both non-Asian and Asian students. This caused great distress for him. He comes to counseling to begin to sort out his identity concerns and reactions to these recent experiences. This is our first session.

Mark: Hi Josh. I’m Mark Kenney, one of the counselors here at the counseling center, and I see that you’ve completed all the paperwork that you need in regards to confidentiality. I also have a message here from our intake counselor that explains that you came in today to talk about two distressing events that occurred on our campus. So, I’d like to start there, and I’m wondering which one you’d like to start with.

Josh: How about with the one at the library?

Mark: Okay.

Josh: One night I had to stay up late to study for my math exam and on the way back to my dorm, there was a group of drinkers, and one of them stepped out and made some kind of a kung fu move, and I just… I just confused, and I ask him “Why doing that? What’s up with that?”

Mark: Uh-huh.

Josh: And he ask me, “What’s wrong—don’t you know kung fu?” and “Don’t all Chinese know kung fu?” And I was just confused, and…

Mark: It’s kind of a shocking experience—very surprising. First of all, to just come out of nowhere—to be, you know, in a sense verbally attacked that way. And then, adding to your confusion about who you were, and making assumptions, and…. Maybe help me understand your sense of your Asian identity.

Josh: Well, I knew that I was adopted from Vietnam and… but my parents never teach me anything about my culture, my country, umm…they…

Mark: So what I’m hearing… I’m sorry… no, go ahead.

Josh: They thought that as long as they love me as their child that it doesn’t matter where I came from.

Mark: Okay.

Josh: That’s their point of view.
Mark: Um-hmm.... okay. So in a sense, you really don’t have a sense of an Asian identity, much less a Vietnamese identity and now you’ve been confronted in this new environment with that. Tell me more about the home community in regards to identity, to help me better understand what happened that night. What’s it like at home growing up?

Josh: Um… I was grown up in a small town upstate and everybody knows everybody. All the town thought I was white…. which was… nobody say that stuff to me before. We just hang out together… just like normal kids.

Mark: Um-hmm. McDonalds, and ….

Josh: Yeah… that kind of stuff.

Mark: Uh-huh, uh-huh. So I hear you saying is that that’s sort of how you see yourself on the inside, and this confrontation really brought up an issue for you about how you’re perceived on the outside. How does that make you feel, that this has been sort of pointed out to you, that you feel one way inside, but people are treating you different on the outside? How does that make you feel right now?

Josh: I was okay before, but now that people see me as Asian, as Chinese people… I don’t know—what am I supposed to be?

Mark: Um-hmm. So this is one of the distressors that has surfaced for you that brought you in to see us today. I’m wondering, being the first session, I’m also interested in the second situation, too, so I can… it helps me formulate maybe some goals we can set later on. What is the second event that occurred—around the same issue it seemed like?

Josh: Well, since that first incident happened, two weeks ago I was attending the Vietnamese New Year on campus. I was fascinated with the singers and dancers.

Mark: Um-hmm.

Josh: So I decided to stay after the party—to hang around. There was one Vietnamese student who came up to me and asked me something with his language, and I couldn’t understand it… and get mad.

Mark: Um-hmm. He spoke to you in Vietnamese, did he?

Josh: Yes.

Mark: Oh… okay.
Josh: But then, I was embarrassed because I wouldn’t understand what he is saying. He was using his language, which is my own language…

Mark: Um-hmm.

Josh: … But lucky me, he was… can speak some English.

Mark: Oh… okay.

Josh: So, he invited me to join the rest of his group.

Mark: Um-hmm, um-hmm. And what did that make you feel—how did you feel about that?

Josh: Well, first it’s like, I feel, “Wow! This guy…at least somebody can speak English!” But then I feel “Why is this happening? This shouldn’t be an exception.” I feel like he have to make some kind of an exception for me. This shouldn’t be this way.

Mark: How should it be?

Josh: Well, he speaking his language—my language. I supposed to understand it. I should be one of them—I should fit in with them.

Mark: Um-hmm. Hmm. What do you mean by fitting in?

Josh: Well, I should not exactly them… I do look like them, but I want to act like them, and talk like them.

Mark: Um-hmm. And how have you tried to address this issue since that event took place?

Josh: Well, since that I just kept find myself try to focus on learning how they act and how they joke around. I even follow them around campus.

Mark: Hmm.

Josh: I even change my style and my fashion. Why? I don’t know.

Mark: Okay. So that’s what sort of brings you in today—it’s sort of this question about identity. And I’m hearing two struggles here. On one level, you’re kind of struggling with what the majority of college students struggle with at this point. And that’s the idea of basic identity, you know—“Who am I?” You know, “I’ve come from another place, I’ve spent 18 years or so there,” and now this is an opportunity to kind of sort that out. So, to try on, you know, different suits, and see what fits or doesn’t fit. So, I’m hearing that on one level, but on a second layer I’m hearing more about culture identity. These two incidences
have kind of raised the issue about being Asian. The one group being non-
Asian, sort of stereotyping you, and misidentifying your heritage, and then in
the second, you know, event, you’re not feeling you fit in with people who are
Vietnamese, and this has really created confusion for you. Is that… I’m
wondering. Is that a good summation of what I’ve heard so far today?

Josh: Yes, exactly.

Mark: Um-hmm… okay. Well, I think the first I can assist you with, and that is, we
can take time together during the semester and look at, you know—how did
you construct the identity that you have right now—from home, family,
community, past friends—you know—how that’s constructed. And at the same
time, we’ll take a look at examining the Vietnamese side of yourself, and try to
develop meaning and understanding for yourself. I’m wondering if you have
any ideas of a way or ways that maybe we can start doing that for yourself.

Josh: Remember that student who ask me in his language? He seems to really
understand the situation, so I guess I can start from him, and I can ask for him
to help me.

Mark: Okay. So he’s someone you feel comfortable with and safe with, to try that?

Josh: Yes.

Mark: And that might be a better idea than trying to do a whole group. Sometimes it’s
easier to start in a smaller piece like that—with one individual. I’m thinking,
too, that I believe that the advisor for that Vietnamese student group is a
sociology professor. I believe she’s also Vietnamese. Is… would she be
someone you’d be comfortable talking to?

Josh: At this point, I don’t think I’m comfortable to come to her yet, so…I will start
off with my friend first, and see what happens.

Mark: Okay. So it’s a little bit safer to work with somebody your own age, and maybe
we can use her as a future reference as we go along, and a future resource.

Josh: I would rather that way.

Mark: Okay. Another thing that comes to mind for me as may be helpful is that there
are, fortunately, now a lot of books and articles—resources out there about
individuals who’ve come through this same experience that you have—not
necessarily being raised in a family that acknowledged all of who they are. I
was wondering if you’d be interested, if I put a list together, to look at that and
see if any of them resonate with you, that we could, you know, take a look at,
read, and discuss during our meetings.
Josh: That would be great. I think it’s perfect.

Mark: Um-hmm. Okay. It just dawns on me, too, that there’s some… some also websites and chat rooms. I know for your age group, sometimes that’s a good way to connect with people, and to gain some knowledge and understanding on this topic. Would you be interested in doing that?

Josh: Oh, sure!

Mark: Okay. Well, I’ll pull that list together for you, and, in the meantime, maybe you can make that contact with that one student. And I think the important thing is, though, what is it that you’re taking away from our session today?

Josh: Well, I guess… I’m trying too hard… so learning something shouldn’t take one day. I guess I have to relax and try to learn but… take it easy.

Mark: Okay. That sounds like a good first start—you just need to slow down and have some patience with yourself and know that you’re working on the issue. You know, you have a good question in mind—sometimes that’s the most important thing is the question. So, we’ll start with that, but at the same time I think maybe our next session we may want to look at processing some of your feelings regarding that first incident—I just don’t want to let that one slide by us either. So, would you be available at the same time next week?

Josh: Sure.

Mark: Okay, Josh. I’ll look forward to seeing you then. Thanks.

Josh: Thank you.

Discussion Questions:
Cross-racial Adopted Individual

1. What are the salient issues and concerns for this client?

2. How did the counselor address Josh’s salient issues and concerns?

3. What was significant regarding the resources identified during the session?

4. What additional resources would be needed to assist this client with his identity journey?

5. In what ways could the counselor take on a more social advocacy role regarding this issue and this client?

6. What other campus resources/professionals could be utilized in assisting this client?
Working with the multiracial population often requires counselors to be advocates and social and political change agents. Because of the multicultural context, it also often requires working outside of what might be viewed as a traditional counseling framework. As you noticed in a few of the vignette demonstrations the counselors mention resources including: other individuals with similar or like experiences, reading materials, websites, community support groups, etc. There has existed a dearth of professionals with the level of understanding, awareness, and interest necessary to address the issues, concerns, needs, and strengths of the multiracial population. Hence, interracial couples, multiracial individuals, and multiracial families have taken it upon themselves to not only educate others, but to share experiences and provide support to one another, this has been evidenced by the books and magazines written by members of the multiracial population and made available through the popular press, as well as through websites, support networks and groups, and other help resources that have been organized by members of the multiracial population.

As advocates and social change agents, counselors in less diverse communities must not only be aware of these other resources and utilize them in working with clients, but may be called upon to assist in the development and organization of these resources. The next section of this guide includes internet resources that can be utilized by professionals and clients. Many of these provide information or links to other helpful resources.

**Resources and References**

**General Resources**
Loving Conference: [www.lovingconference.com](http://www.lovingconference.com)
Interracial Voice: [http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice](http://www.webcom.com/~intvoice)

Adoption: A Family Choice: [http://adoption.org/interracial.html](http://adoption.org/interracial.html)
The Center for the Study of Biracial Children: [http://www.csbc.cncfamily.com](http://www.csbc.cncfamily.com)
Adoption Assistance Information Support: [http://www.adopting.org/inter.html](http://www.adopting.org/inter.html)
The InterRacial Connection: [http://www.multirace.org/multirace.htm](http://www.multirace.org/multirace.htm)
MAVIN: [http://www.mavinfoundation.org](http://www.mavinfoundation.org)
Mosaic: [http://www.mosaicweb.com/interrac.htm](http://www.mosaicweb.com/interrac.htm)
Personal Stories

WHYY-T.V.: http://www.whyy.org/aybowow

Organizations/Advocacy Groups

Association of MultiEthnic Americans: http://www.ameasite.org

Project RACE: http://www.projectrace.com

Interracial Voice: http://www.webcom.com/intvoice/advocacy.html

Hapa Issues Forum: http://www.hapaissuesforum.org

Magazines

The Multiracial Activist: http://www.multiracial.com

EurasianNation: The Best of Both Worlds: http://www.eurasiannation.com

MAVIN: http://www.mavinfoundation.org

Books and Articles

Interracial Voice: http://www.webcom.com/intvoice/powell.html


Student Organizations

Brown’s Organization of Multiracial and Biracial Students (BOMBS) http://www.brown.edu/Students/Bombs/index.html

Check One at the University of Pennsylvania http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~checkone

Hapa Issues Forum, at the University of California, Berkeley http://hcs.harvard.edu/~gsc/orgs/hapa.shtml

Students of Mixed Heritage and Culture (S.M.H.A.C.) at Amherst College http://www.amherst.edu/~smhac

Neapolitan: Issues Concerning Multi-Ethnic Individuals at University of Texas, Austin http://dpweb1.dp.utexas.edu/dsorg/detail.wb?code=02606
References


America


CA: Sage.


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