

**Innovations in Counseling: Working with Minority Populations- Part 1
Session 2: From Shaming to Sharing: Using Cultural Privilege to Promote Cultural
Empowerment and Advocacy**

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session with Dr. Michael Kocet

Question from NBCC Board Member, Devika Dibya Choudhuri of Ypsilanti, MI

Is this somewhat like the WHO definition of disability--in that it can be as much perceived as actual? For instance, someone may not feel internally as disadvantaged, but maybe perceived as such and treated in such ways. I particularly like the White privilege article by Robert Jensen for graduate students, since he posted online, and then had a follow up article dialoguing with folks who responded to him.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Hello Dibya! I have not read the Jensen piece; I will have to get a copy of that article. Someone may not perceive themselves as lacking privilege, but it can also be directly related to how that person is treated externally in society.

Question from Roxanne Wray of Claysville, PA

What about mental-bodied? By that I mean people that have mental illnesses?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

That is a very interesting question. I have not heard of that mental-bodied privilege before, however, the Power Privilege checklist that I handed out, does reference the notion of “normal vs. abnormal” views of mental health. I will have to add that and make mental health privilege a part of the presentation. It is a very important area, especially given recent events involving mental health and mass shootings. I think there is considerable stigma associated with mental illness. It is important to keep in mind that mental illness is also a medical illness. We wouldn’t stigmatize someone because they broke their arm or because they have cancer. We shouldn’t blame someone with mental illness by suggesting they caused their illness.

Question from Derrick Woodbury of Broken Arrow, OK

Does advocacy help reduce the concept of privilege and what ways do we see a positive result?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Derrick, I believe when we as counselors advocate on behalf of clients and students, the negative aspects of privilege can be reduced. Privilege will never go away (that is unrealistic), but it’s about leveling the playing field as much as possible. One daily type of privilege that I teach my students about is merchandise at a store. For example, let’s say that an African American client shares in session that the local stores do not carry hair care products that are good for “Black hair.” One way we can advocate on behalf of this issue is to have conversations with store managers and encourage them to carry products that are important to customers of color.

Question from Lou Wolner of Los Altos, CA
Geography?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I am sorry, but I don't understand what you mean by 'Geography.' I think there are certain types of privileges that do result in living in certain neighborhoods, for example. Whether talking about increased police patrols, lower crime rates, higher incomes in certain places, this might contribute to living in a neighborhood generally free of violent crimes. This can be viewed as a type of privilege.

Question from Fedder Williams of Matthews, NC

While I understand the premise behind the privilege checklist, my race still supersedes these privileges. How can a counselor help clients move beyond this fact?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Fedder, yes, it is true that race is still a very present, visible, and salient type of privilege. Some forms of cultural privilege are visible (such as race, gender) and some are invisible (sexual orientation, religion). The checklist is designed though, to get us to think of the notion of privilege beyond just "White privilege." Certainly, those of us who have white privilege need to be mindful of how that impacts our lives, and how white privilege impacts the lives of people of color who do not benefit from racial privilege, but the check list gets us to examine that even when we may hold minority status, there may be certain types of privilege we still carry.

Question from Vanessa Wilkinson of Atlanta, GA

What about victims of abuse that are also Deaf and Hard of Hearing?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I am not sure what type of abuse you are referring to. Those who have a hearing impairment or identify as being a part of the deaf community certainly experience instances of prejudice and discrimination. Those of us in the hearing majority must be aware of the impact that privilege plays with physical differences.

Question from David White of Knoxville, TN

"Whatever we once were, we're no longer a Christian nation. At least not just. We are also a Jewish nation, a Muslim nation, and a Buddhist nation, and a Hindu nation, and a nation of nonbelievers," Obama said 2007. Does it seem this nation is shifting in concepts of privilege?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

David, I think President Obama was speaking to the fact that our nation is becoming more and more diverse and these differences are becoming more prominent and visible (and I think this is a good thing). As I tried to communicate in the webinar, having certain types of privileges is not meant to be something to be ashamed about, but rather, be more aware of it.

Question from Autumn Weidman of Woodstock, GA

I always get nervous bringing up especially a racial difference. I am always afraid that it will be taken the wrong way. Any advice?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I always tell my students that if someone asks a question or raises a comment in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect, then I hope that others in the conversation would be supportive and not attack someone, even if their question is not worded in the most effective manner. Just ask questions and be open to learning!

Question from Kristal Walenz of Durham, NC

Can you explain false envy a little more? Definitely feel like one of the biggest challenges is that we can become so proactive/concerned about equality that it backfires on us, like affirmative action has in many cases.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

False envy is when those in the majority who have privilege convey an air of condescendence on those who lack privilege.

Question from Angela Sigga of Northville, MI

We are high school counselors; can you tell us how to deal with privileged parent/student?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Angela, without knowing specific situations you face as school counselors, I would just encourage you to engage in meaningful, yet respectful dialogue with parents and students. We have to work at not putting people on the defense when talking about cultural privilege. I'd begin the conversation in a similar way I started the webinar, talking about Right Handed privilege. It is less threatening to start off in that manner. Then, later get into the more "heavy" discussions.

Question from Mary Shuman of Atlanta, GA

Female privilege very often ensures a seat on the train. Or is this just white female privilege?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Mary I'd say that while women may have a seat on the train, are men the conductors and driving the train? Are the men getting to choose when the stops will be and what the destination is?

Question from Jaeyoun Shin of San Francisco, CA

What about immigration status? Legal vs. undocumented?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Jaeyoun, that is a timely and politically charged type of privilege we are currently having in our national discourse. Legal status does carry with it certain cultural privileges.

Question from Keisha Saunders of

In community based setting, as counselors how do we continue to provide a therapeutic relationship when clients are aware of the privilege?"

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Keisha, if clients are aware of their privilege, then that is a very important step that is accomplished. I think the example of "Name privilege" should be added to the list. Some names which connote a certain cultural background may "disadvantage" someone on a job application, because the person in the majority culture may make assumptions or carry biases about that person, just on a perceived meaning behind their name.

Question from Dr. Maria del C. of New Brunswick, NJ

How does a person with unearned privilege deal with the rejection and stigmatization that he/she may experience for siding with the oppressed?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Great question, Maria. That relates back to when we in the majority have certain privileges, are we willing to let go of some of the "benefits" that come along with carrying that privilege?

Question from Jeana Phillips of Baker City, OR

Rural vs. urban?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Not sure what the question is here.

Question from Mary Parker of Seattle, WA

Is looking at privilege a necessary component for therapists? And are there specific diagnoses that correlate highly with Internalized Oppression or racism issues?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Mary, I think examining cultural privilege is an important part of self-awareness, which is a component of being a multiculturally competent therapist.

Question from Cristal Lake-Sanders of Midlothian, VA

I'm not sure this fits in with privilege, but what about multi-racial families as opposed to families who are all the same race/ethnicity?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Cristal, yes, I think there are familial privileges in a sense. For example, Cheerios did a commercial a few months ago about a biracial family (White mom, Black dad, biracial little girl) and it was very controversial, however, I thought it was a wonderful depiction about the reality that more and more families are cultural blended. Many biracial folks applauded the commercial because it was something they could relate to.

Question from Marianne Kramer of Chicago, IL

Just imagine a student that has multiple disabilities who is trying to obtain advanced degrees and licensure. I am that person and trust me I have been told many times people "like you" don't go on for advanced degrees. Being an albino people often judge books by their covers. Thoughts?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I believe we addressed this question in the webinar.

Question from SaDohl Jones of Albany, GA

How do we as a Counselor Educators help our student understand the concept of privilege...and their own privileges?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I think we accomplish this through using culturally sensitive case studies in our classes, not just Multicultural Counseling. I think integrating cultural privileges in all of our counselor education curriculum is critical!

Question from Jennifer Johnson of New Orleans, LA

As a counselor educator, I have taught about White privilege and the reaction a lot of times (as you mentioned) from Caucasian students is guilt or resistance. What are some ways to navigate those reactions from students?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Jennifer, I would recommend at the start of the conversation, to make it clear to your Caucasian students that this is not about blaming anyone, or making anybody feel bad. This is about increasing our personal awareness so that we as counselors can empower others and level the playing field and fostering justice.

Question from Ginger, Graham-Murphy of Washington, DC

So how she was born plays more of an aspect than her acquired income? Explain that further regarding Oprah's cultural perception.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Ginger, I use the Oprah example as an anecdotal one. To my knowledge, there isn't much research on the topic. I believe issues of Socioeconomic Status and Class is not about how much money one has in the bank, it's a deep part connected to cultural identity. A person born into poverty or lower socioeconomic conditions and later in life acquires financial resources, is still significantly shaped by their early experiences living in poverty.

Question from Jeniele Bennett of New York, NY

I just wanted to mention something socioeconomic- People who have government benefits cannot save money to buy anything more than \$2,000 because they will then take them off their benefits.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Jeniele, that is an important example of how SES/Class privilege allows someone to accrue savings and to increase their financial wealth, yet, other people are penalized for having more money.

Question from Katrina, Pinkney of Philadelphia, PA

As a counselor in higher education, I see it within my office setting. There is a difference without merit and not based on work performance. As a African American female, I experience it two fold based on race and gender and it's difficult at times. It can be stressful. That is just my two cents. I do like when people with privilege acknowledge it does exist.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Katrina, sometimes all that we need is to hear those with privilege publicly acknowledge it, not try to get rid of it, or feel ashamed of it, but just voice it!

Question from Nancy Forth of Warrensburg, MO

P.S. many times those with no children are expected to work holiday, give up days off for those who have children. Thoughts about privilege for parents vs. those without children.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Nancy, it is a valid point, although I am not sure if I would call single people versus parents a cultural group in the same sense as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. We must be mindful not to apply the notion of cultural privilege to each and every group of folks.

Question from Christopher Elliott of Everett, WA

Speaking of religion, what about all of the religions that neglect Atheists? My question from this is then What more can be done to help white society TRULY establish a cultural empathy?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Christopher, that is an important question. When discussing religious privilege, we must also take into account individuals who are Atheists, pagans, and secularists of varying beliefs. We have to broaden the conversation. This is often an invisible topic.

Question from Ida Duplechin of

Will you also address ableism?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

This was addressed in the webinar.

Question from Alejandra Delgado of Gainesville, FL

You talked about people not recognizing their privileges, what can you say about the people that are discriminated that don't recognize it? Physical characteristics meaning attractiveness and how are we perceive by clients.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

Alejandra, certainly perceived attractiveness is a type of privilege. This is certainly true of body weight. Informal studies have been done, particularly in popular media/TV where someone who is a larger body type is

given a series of tasks to accomplish and it is evident that they are not getting the assistance they need, however, when they have someone viewed as an acceptable body weight and “attractive” that person gets more assistance.

Question from Miki Crutchfield of Honolulu, HI

Is Educational Privilege considered unearned?

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

While our educational degrees are certainly earned, the cultural privilege surrounding that may be unearned. For example, the notion that someone who is an MD (a medical doctor) may be given certain unearned privileges in society due to their status.

Question from Christina Cipriano of Missoula, MT

It's refreshing to hear that young age is recognized as a factor, I'm wondering why the law only notes older age as a factor for discrimination.

Answer from Michael Kocet- Presenter

I don't really have an answer for that, but it's certainly something we must talk about more.

Comments

Comment from Elaine Wescoat of Fredericksburg, VA

Have personally experienced some of what McIntosh described related to my neighborhood and I am white. I would add to educational/occupational privilege based on the attitudes of some mental health professionals who present attitudes of superiority and overconfidence without given due consideration to the influence they have on clients as well as colleagues. I have seen counselors refuse to answer appropriate questions from clients. Another counselor intern actually reported another counselor for unsafe practice when a technique was being used that the intern was unfamiliar with. I have left jobs because of administrators who were masters trained in clinical fields who violated ethics and boundaries by making false accusations against other clinicians on staff.

Comment from Linda Graf of Montrose, CO

Most challenging in using privilege as a tool is to constantly keep in mind to use advocacy and empowerment to be a more inclusive society without using these tools to make "them" more like "us".

Comment from Bertha Caldwell of Horizon, TX

I work with children from Central and South America. Being able to recognize our own Privileges allows us to advocate for those who don't.

Comment from Paula Chu of Farmington, CT

I use this article as a handout in a counseling institute I teach at in the summer. Has withstood the test of time, which is both wonderful and sad!

Comment from Brenda Deese of Pembroke, NC

I have read the McIntosh article...and use it often it when I teach Diversity classes in graduate classes. The article opened my eyes as a female American Indian.

Comment from Tracy Edwards of Statesboro, GA

I read the article as a part of my graduate school program and had come across it in some other research before then, and each time the same feelings would come forth. I was reminded of my personal experiences with almost every item listed and I was happy to know that someone openly acknowledged that privilege does exist on many levels.

Comment from Hettie Greer of Nashville, TN

Southern White female here...I've always considered myself very enlightened as far as race and gender relations go, and have always been VERY outspoken about issues of inequality...but I never really "got" what it meant to be white until this article was given to us in my grad school multi-cultural class. I could almost feel my paradigm shifting when I got done with it.

Comment from Catherine Hock of Lincoln, NE

I remember being challenged with the question, "What does it mean to be white?" Nobody in my class had an answer. But it drew to my attn the answers that my colleagues from different cultural (minority) backgrounds had answers to "What does it mean to be ____?" I read this first in my grad program, and it was the first time I'd ever thought about my privilege as a white person.

Comment from Karla Kerstner of Salem, OR

We also typically require clients to come to us/our office to serve them.

Comment from Mitchell Landgraf of Mendota, IL

Was familiar with the article prior to this. Just wanted to share that although I am of primarily European descent, male, was raised a Christian, in the Midwest, English-speaking, etc. my phenotype / appearance is heavily Mediterranean / northern African. In fact, I'm visually easily a twin for Osama Bin Laden. It has been a fascinating sociological experiment over the years to observe privilege vary in relation to whether the given interaction is in person (with my looks) or over the phone (with my "standard American English." Large, clearly notable differences in treatment. Not all of the privileges are based on white appearance, but most are. Some are based on white "sounding" or white "acting" or being involved in something that has predominantly "white" access. Interestingly, often when I sense the discrimination based on my looks, I then chime in with my "white" manner of speech and cultural references, and it's amazing how quickly the interacting party then places me in their Alportian in-group.

Comment from Debbie Lang of DeRidder, LA

Look what happened recently with Duck Dynasty being asked to leave a New York Hotel

Comment from Joanne Lynch of Wakefield, RI

Just thinking of our privilege of having computers to access this webinar

Comment from Sudha Nagarajan of Princeton, NJ

Worldview-enhanced because of experiences of living in different countries, facilitating cultural competence. As opposed to someone who had limited exposure to other cultures because they lived in one place.

Comment from Marie Paddock of Chatham, VA

When I read the article in grad school, I had to face the reality of the privileges I have based on my skin color. It also unearthed underlying ways I categorize others based on my privileged paradigm.

Comment from Bernard Rupe of Palatine, IL

I think the hardest part of white or other privilege is that many of us grow up not realizing we even have the privilege. We assume all have similar privilege.

Comment from Lisa Weber-Curry of Baton Rouge, LA

I believe "White Privilege" does exist, but there is also "Privilege" based on your educational background, university affiliation, or overall appearance, which can be applied to people of all races. What these privileges have in common are that they are unearned and sometimes invisible.

Comment from Melody Thergood of Bridgeport, CT

As a black female I hate that I have to question my interactions with others and wonder if a response I receive is contingent on my race. I often feel judged un-necessarily.

Comment from Rachel Taylor of Larimer, PA

I am a white female and when I first started counseling I was told by some to "wait" until I was older to start working with males.

Comment from Amy Stuart of Burlington, VT

Read during social work school Physical appearance also often overlooked privilege.

Comment from Ben Silverman of Hackensack, NJ

Introduced to "The Invisible Knapsack" in my Multicultural class in grad school at Montclair State University Will never forget it!

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