

Cultural Mindedness, Dialogue, and Action Planning Model

Module Three: The Six Barriers to Effective Communication and Respectful Relationships

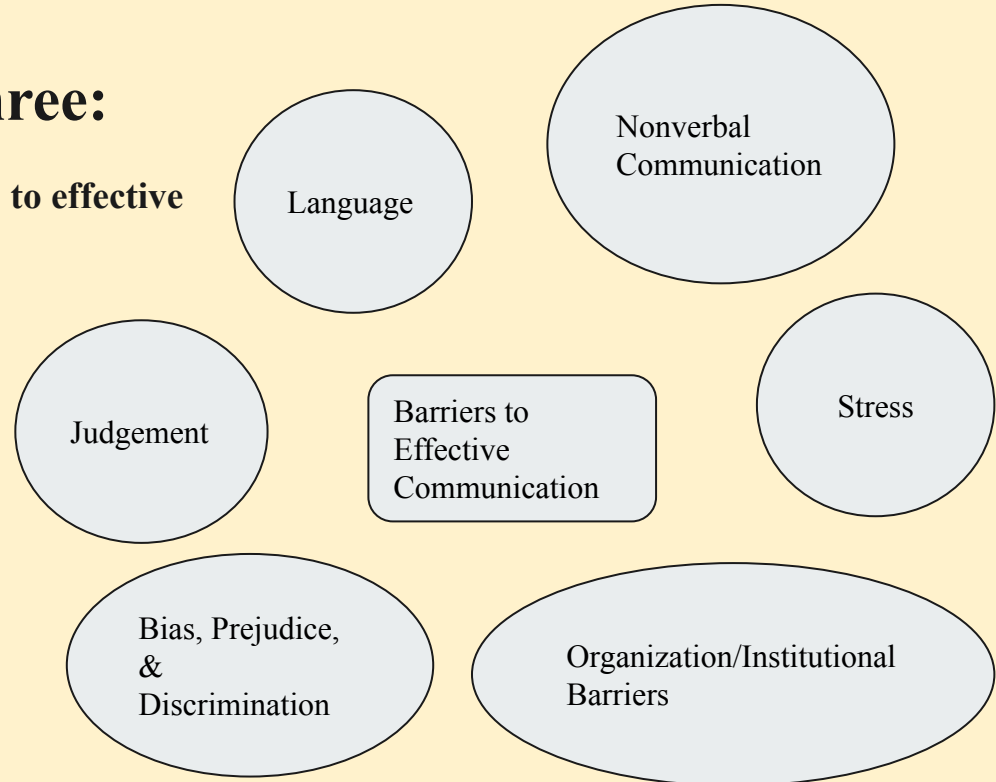


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Introduction to Module Three:

Module Three centers on **six common barriers to effective communication and respectful relationships:**

1. Language/verbal communication
2. Nonverbal communication
3. Bias, prejudice, and discrimination
4. Judgment
5. Stress
6. Organization/institutional barriers





1. Conceptual Tool: Six Barriers to Effective Communication and Respectful Relationships.

The list of the six barriers, which focus on the aspect of culture, social group interaction patterns, provides a conceptual tool for recognizing and understanding cultural dynamics at play in group patterns of conflicted social interaction.

Similar to the multilevel nature of the Aspects of Culture, the six barriers are also based on **levels of social complexity**: the **personal/and interpersonal level barriers** and the **organization/systems level barriers**.

1.1 Personal/Interpersonal Barriers

1. **Language /Verbal Communication Barriers:**

Refers to the system of verbal communication defined in Module One in the Aspects of Culture: the verbal categories and language structure (grammar and syntax) for the perception of reality and for communication.

- ★ For example, Mrs. Kim, a monolingual Korean American patient can encounter misunderstanding at a clinic if the healthcare professionals there are monolingual English and don't have Korean translation and interpretation services.

2. **Nonverbal Communication Barriers:**

Refers to communicating without the use of words, such as, eye contact, gestures, body language, and more. Nonverbal communication furthermore is primarily unconscious.



3. Preconceptions, Stereotypes, Bias and Discrimination Barriers:

Preconceptions, stereotyping, and bias function as negative lenses through which people perceive others who look and act differently. Such perceptions, stereotypes, and bias are based on over-generalized, inaccurate beliefs, misinformation, and assumptions.

Decades of cognitive bias research demonstrate that **cognitive schemas (thought structures)** of both implicit and explicit bias, for example, influence what we notice and how what we notice gets interpreted, resulting in discriminatory treatment of others, even when individuals do not want to discriminate.

★ See Dr. Augustus White's, *Seeing Patients: Unconscious Bias in Health Care*, 2011.

4. Judgment barriers:

Relates to preconceptions, stereotyping, bias, and discrimination in that it is the unconscious and automatic tendency to pass negative judgment on others who look and behave in unfamiliar ways.



5. Stress Barriers:

The discomfort of stress is evoked in situations in which familiar ways of speaking and behavioral interacting is missing. This barrier frequently affects all persons involved in the interactions.



1.2 - 6. Organizational/Institutional/ Systems Level Barriers:

The norms, policies, procedures, and programs of an organization or institution create the context and tone of relationships among individuals and social group interactions in the organization.

When organization norms, policies, procedures and programs support disrespectful, unequal, and inequitable relationships among employees, they effectively become the sixth barrier. Cultural assumptions embedded in organizational procedures, processes, and programs are oftentimes highly congruent with the assumptions of mainstream culture.



6. Organizational/Institutional/ Systems Level Barriers Continued

For example, the five narrative themes of U.S. Mainstream culture about cultural diversity presented in Module two such as, the United States is a fair social system, never talk about diversity, if it is different from the mainstream culture's norm (of heterosexist white male supremacy), it is wrong, never admit to being prejudiced, and the other national culture's narrative themes about diversity need to be identified, analyzed and eliminated by members in organizations when they are adopting inclusive policies, norms, procedures and programs.





2. Learning Activity for Module Three

Activity: Identify any of the Six Barriers in a Case Example

Purpose: To practice identifying any of the Six Barriers to effective communication and respectful relationships in culturally diverse situations.

Instructions: Read the case example and then identify two or three of the Six Barriers you think are present in the following case example.



2.1 The Six Barriers

1). **Personal/Interpersonal Barriers**

1. Language (verbal communication)
2. Nonverbal communication
3. Preconceptions, stereotypes, bias, and discrimination
4. Judgments
5. Stress

2). **Organizational/Institutional Barriers**

6. Norms, policies, procedures, and programs hostile to cultural diversity

2.2 Case Example:

- ★ Read the case example on page 4. After reading the case example, write one or two of the 6 Barriers identified in the case below the example.



- ★ 3.1: You may refer to the sample of a student's response on page 5.



2.3 Debriefing Questions

Write the answers to the following questions in the spaces provided.

1. Describe your feelings and thoughts when identifying the Six Barriers by you individually or by your discussion group.
2. What did you learn about yourself in the course of this exercise?
3. What did you learn about others in the course of this exercise?
4. Name two ways you can use what you've learned in your daily life.

★ 3.2: You may refer to the sample of student responses on pages 5 & 6.

4. Glossary of Terms

Subculture/ethnic group:

A subculture or ethnic group is a group in which the members generally share a complex and dynamic common cultural heritage made up of the assumptions, values, beliefs, attitudes, and customs that relate to the Aspects and Levels of Culture worked with in Modules One and Two. The beliefs and identities of members of ethnic groups are generated by its members and by pressures from outsiders, a process of survival for the culture. Ethnic or subculture groups exist within larger cultural systems.

The United States, for example, has most cultures of the world living within its boundaries and each could be called an ethnic or subculture group.



4. Glossary of Terms

Race concept:

The perception of and belief in “race” is a 500 year old folk belief (European transport) that ascribes differential status to groups of people within society based on physical differences, such as skin color and eye shape. Although race is commonly believed to be a fixed biological classification of human groups, based on heredity and genetic differences, it has **no scientific foundation**. The physical characteristics that are used to define “races” are influenced by several genes (are polygenic) and therefore do not exist in discrete geographical clusters of humans. Within any human population the genetic differences within the population is far more than the genetic differences between populations.

The belief and perception of race, however, is deeply pervasive in all the aspects of the national culture of the United States because the race concept and racism developed in the 500 year old context of settler colonialism in which Africans and other people of color were subjugated, exploited, and enslaved.

Another issue with the concept of race is the common use of the terms “race” and “ethnicity” interchangeably. The term **ethnicity** was proposed in anthropology in the 1950’s to refer to cultural differences to avoid the error of categorizing humans into the nonexistent discrete physical categories of “race” (and to avoid racism, in which some groups are defined and treated as superior and others inferior).



4. Glossary of Terms

U.S. National Culture, Hegemony & Privilege:

Mainstream or national culture is often referred to as the “dominant” culture. It is incorporated into, dominates, and informs all the major organizations and institutions of the United States. As a result, it is institutionalized in our hierarchical social structures. It is **hegemonic**, or in control in that it presides over all the various subcultures.

Hegemonic control is most powerful when people are unaware of the control mechanisms.

For example, Peggy Macintosh, a leading expert on white privilege and anti-racism provides a collection of essays on the complexities of power and privilege in her book, *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching As Learning* (2020).

Macintosh defines **privilege** as the unearned advantages that correspond to hierarchical social systems of oppression, such as the United States.

4. Glossary of Terms

Organization culture

Organization/institutional culture refers to the norms, policies, procedures, programs, and processes that organizations or institutions employ to accomplish their objectives and goals. Within each of these areas of organizational culture we find deeply embedded values, beliefs, assumptions, and customary ways of behaving. Using the three conceptual tools from Modules One through Three we can identify the operative barriers that are embedded in an organization's culture and create action plans to integrate inclusive processes and programs throughout the organization.

Module Five focuses on Action Planning for integrating inclusive processes and programs throughout the organization.





4. Glossary of Terms

Congruence between mainstream national and organization culture:

Organizational culture in the United States is highly congruent with our hierarchical mainstream or national culture in that organizational culture reflects and echoes mainstream culture in virtually every respect.

A good example of this congruence is described and analyzed by Michelle Alexander in her book, *The New Jim Crow*, which demonstrates the congruence between the racism of mainstream U.S. policies and their implementation throughout the criminal justice system recreating a caste system for people of color.

4. Glossary of Terms

Human Diversity and Intersectionality:



Intersectionality refers to an important theoretical development because it allows recognition and the growing understanding of the experience of multiple systems of oppressions that exist in the United States and globally. From an intersectional perspective, problems of discrimination and exclusion of persons and groups (e.g., the Six Barriers), cannot be solved unless the experience of those who suffer from multiple systems of oppression are addressed.

For example, researchers, Jorba and Rodo-Zarate say, any study of discrimination needs to acknowledge that different power structures are occurring in the situation being analyzed as in the case of lesbian nurses in the medical system. Such research needs to account for the different treatment if the nurse is eighteen years old or seventy years old, if the nurse has access to the public health system due to her legal status or not...”Being deaf, white, rich, ...may also have an impact on how she faces discrimination....So, it is only at the analytical level that one can point to how homophobia specifically causes discrimination, but any lesbian in the medical system will face discrimination as an integral experience based on her specific configuration of age, origin, social class, and so on. Not taking into account these other positions may imply a bias...”(2019, 194).” The same would apply when planning an organization-wide policy to stop discrimination against lesbians in the medical system, “Making visible only a certain situation may obscure the situation of Black, disabled, old, or migrant lesbians” (2019, 194).



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