

**Cultural Self Project**

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## **Self Acculturation Project**

### **Introduction**

The ADDRESSING MODEL developed is a helpful tool for clinicians to systematically organize overlapping cultural influences to identify their biases of minority cultures and elements of multiple cultural influences with their clients (Hayes, 2013).

ADDRESSING stands for Age, Developmental and acquired Disabilities, Religion, Ethnicity, Socioeconomic status, Sexual orientation, Indigenous heritage, National origin, and Gender.

The purpose of this assessment is to provide my own assessment and reflections to guide my future practice with clients. I will highlight the ADDRESSING elements as noted above as well as provide a high level summary of the biases and areas of inexperience as well as the potential salient factors for future clients (Hayes, 2013).

### **Overview**

I am a 51-year-old, heterosexual, female, Canadian citizen. My parents are Canadian citizens who grew up in the same small rural community close to one of the largest Indigenous Reservations in Alberta. The culture of the community was predominantly Caucasian, Christian, blue collar workers, with a blend of Indigenous peoples, with smaller groups of Asian, Indian, and African-American members of our community.

My maternal grandfather immigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1950 and as were my great-grandparents; my paternal grandmother and grandfather were also Canadian; my paternal great-grandmother was from Germany and my paternal great grandfather was from Russia. All

are Christians of various denominations providing me with an informed lens of the lens of Christianity.

I was very close to my maternal grandparents, my grandfather came to Canada from Scotland when he was 19 years old, after surviving the loss of his parents, living through poverty and World War II with his grandparents, he left to create a new future in a new country. He worked 2-3 labor jobs, met and married my grandmother, who was an affluent Canadian nurse; they had three children (my mother was the eldest as well) and at age 42 returned to school to become a nurse. I was also close to my paternal grandmother. She worked on the farm and raised her three children; my father was the middle child; my grandfather was a small scale farmer in rural Alberta.

My parents were hard-working, but of low socioeconomic status; my father worked as a laborer, construction worker, and livestock hand. My mother worked at home with me and my three younger siblings and looked after 4-5 additional children. I was the first born, pre-mature requiring resuscitation a few times after birth, resulting in my having asthma since birth which had a minimal impact on my life, as I worked hard to overcome any limitations in physical activity.

The generation I belong to is Generation X, Douglas Coupland, a Canadian journalist, is known for creating this term (Britannica, 2024). Our generation is generally known as being independent and resourceful. Generation Xer's were the first to live in a time straddling pre-tech age, and the first to have personal computers, see the end of the Cold War, fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union, the first space shuttle flight, economic recessions, and various through a span of a variety of musical genres such as grunge, rap, and hip-hop. I feel grateful to have grown up in transformative time – from living simple, low tech lives to the current world we live in.

I was always driven to be independent and saw the benefits of working hard to achieve more independence and social connectedness. My first job was acquired at the age of 8 years of age when I delivered newspapers; at age 11, I babysat 5 children full time in the summer and babysat as many weekends as I could; I acquired my first official job at a shoe store when I was 14 years of age earning minimum wage of \$2.85/hour. I graduated from high school, graduated from my nursing programs in 1997 (5 years) and have been advancing in my career, predominantly in diverse areas of rehabilitation, addiction and mental health since then. There was a strong influence and I have also leaned towards caretaking, and hospitality, I believe largely from the role models in my life.

The biases I would have would be leaning toward the familiarity of living in a predominantly Caucasian community with European descent with little exposure to multiculturalism and the impacts of multi-level microaggressions experienced within the rural community we live in (Lee, 2021).

I was married at the age of 27 and started my family when I was 29, having two sons, who were 20 months apart. Middle class life was good, living in a small rural community, with my mother caring for my boys. I worked in a professional capacity as an executive at a large mental health facility, my ex-husband worked as an electrician, and my children attend school with a welcoming environment/blended cultural experience. All was well, with close knit family close by until social structures/bullying entered into the equation for my eldest son, compounded with the impact of isolation of the COVID restrictions.

Tragedy struck in 2021 when I lost my oldest son, my ex-husband and I divorced, my son and I moved to a new city for him to play elite hockey and soon after became very sick with COVID requiring hospitalization. The impact of these three years re-shaped my life, from an

established pattern of family, friends, sound social structures, socioeconomic independence, and routines established over 48 years to a whole new, unrecognizable state of reduced socioeconomic independence, loss of family, loss of friends, and limited stable foundation.

Learnings from this experience made me aware of a bias we held, as parents, around the impact of criticism, expectations, and lack of presence, acceptance of teenage children can have; the impact of trauma, grief, and loss can have on a person's ability to adapt, reintegrate into life, and relationships can have; and new insight into post-traumatic growth and resilience factors as well. I am hoping these lessons will help me to relate to others in positive way.

## **Conclusion**

Over the history of my life events, I have experienced sexism (work in a male dominated field of leadership/authority), ageism (work when I was the youngest and now older member of the workforce), stigma (mental health challenges/help seeking for me/my children), and witnessed racism (work/community of individuals of minority groups), and classism (low socioeconomic status) (Hayes, 2013). I learned to adapt and work through these microaggressions and they created an increased awareness in me in these areas. The pursuit of expanded knowledge of other cultures, generations, and communities, helps me to continue to grow, learn to be more aware and mindful of the individual's experience and the impact of that and their culture, to form the foundation of working collaboratively together. Often times, the depth of knowledge/awareness may be limited, however I think being open, curious, genuinely present, and interested in who the person is, what there experiences are, their perception of their experience, and the goals they want to achieve are fundamentally important.

The time between 2020 and 2022 was tremendously difficult and completely changed the trajectory of my and my youngest sons lives. We have been working since to overcome many obstacles. Of all things experienced in life, the foundation of my upbringing and the loss of my son have shaped my worldview.

The intersectionality of my values were originally shaped by my environment of working hard to overcoming socio-economic hardship and achieving independence to reconnecting to my faith in God, humanity, and seeing people/circumstances through a different lens (Lee, 2021). Experiencing significant emotional trauma and PTSD myself gave me a different view of that of a clinician of 26 years; seeing my sons struggle with anxiety, depression, suicide - I have a new lens as to see how to see and understand peoples' perspectives differently (Hayes, 2013).

These views have helped to shape me to try to listen, seek to understand the essence of the person, be present, be curious/don't assume, explore strengths and challenges from the person's authentic perspective and the impact of our perceptions on others.

**References:**

Hays, P. A. (2013). Connecting across cultures: the helper's toolkit. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, pp. 15-16. Washington DC: APA.

Lee, C. (2021). Multicultural issues in counseling: new approaches to diversity. 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. American Counseling Association.