# Chapter 3
# Worldview: Implications for Culturally Responsive and Ethical Practice

This chapter focuses on the concept of worldview, the current research and available information on worldview. Originally, my research on cultural competence in counseling and psychotherapy focused on the concept of worldview. This was considered a key variable in working across cultures, and understanding the client's world and experiences (Ibrahim, 1984). After developing the Scale to Assess World View© (SAWV; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1984, 1987), and using the SAWV in training, the feedback I received convinced me that core values and assumptions are one element that helps us understand our clients, but we had to go beyond worldview to comprehend the client's identity and world. This section will focus on understanding the concept of worldview, and how to use it in counseling and psychotherapy.

## Worldview Defined

Worldview pertains to the lenses we wear to see the world (Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 1997). The concept of worldview is explained as "mental lenses that are entrenched ways of perceiving the world" (Olsen, Lodwick, & Dunlap, 1992, p. 4). The term worldview is derived from the German word "Weltanschauung," and indicates a view of the world, or a person's total outlook on life, social world, and institutions (Wolman, 1973). It represents beliefs, values, and assumptions about people, relationships, nature, time, and activity (Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994). Worldview refers to core values, beliefs, and assumptions that govern decision-making and problem solving in everyday life; it is derived from one's primary culture, and the socialization process that a person undergoes from childhood to adulthood (Hart, 2010; Ibrahim, 2003). It is mediated by the experiences that people have and it is modified as one confronts issues and challenges over the life-span. Worldview tends to be fairly constant over the life-span and the core values are sustained, unless there is dramatic life changing events, such as a near death



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experiences (Furn, 1987). Every individual has an ethnic-cultural background, and this plays a significant role in shaping a person's worldview, especially a strong influence on core values from the socialization process (McGoldrick, 2005). Along with variability of worldviews within a society or culture, societies also have dominant and alternative worldviews (Cieciuch & Ibrahim, 2011; Ibrahim, Siquera de Frietas, & Owen, 1993; Kluckhohn, 1951; Olsen et al., 1992). Individuals with an alternative worldview from the mainstream, within a dominant society will have some dominant assumptions, exemplified by national, secular, or religious values, and values derived from their primary ethnic-cultural socialization, along with assumptions held in communities they grow up in.

Hart (2010) notes that worldview is a cognitive, perceptual, and affective map that is used to understand and make sense of the social world, he agrees that it develops over the life-span, tends to be unconscious, and uncritically taken for granted to assume that this is the way things are, and rarely alters in any significant way. Although, he allows that change can happen. There can be incongruences in beliefs and values within a worldview. Koltko-Rivera (2004) defines worldview as a set of beliefs and assumptions that describe reality and encompasses a heterogeneous set of assumptions pertaining to human nature, nature of life, and the composition of the universe, to list a few. Koltko-Rivera (2004) notes that the concept of worldview has been described in several different ways, e.g., Jung refers to it as one's philosophy of life (1942/1954); Maslow (1987) speaks of a world outlook; and Kottler and Hazler (2001) refer to self-and world-construct systems. The term worldview has been used over time to describe how people perceive their world, culture, religion or spirituality, etc. It can be used to describe the behavior and attitudes of other cultures. It has also been conceptualized in many different ways given the perspective of the theorist or the researcher (Ibrahim, Roysircar-Sodowsky, & Ohnishi, 2001; Koltko-Rivera, 2004).

Several researchers have focused on core values to understand how people understand their world, behave, make decisions, and resolve conflicts in interpersonal relationships, in organizational settings, and in conflict between countries. The struggle to identify core values among cultures has historical significance, given the work of Kluckhohn (1951) in anthropology, Williams (1968) in sociology, and Rokeach (1973) in psychology. Originally, Kelly (1963) addressed the concept of worldview in psychology, specific to personality; he noted that people use certain constructs, which were personal to them, to understand and make meaning of their world. Cross-cultural and cross-national research was initiated by Hofstede (1980), followed by Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990); they sought to identify a universal structure for understanding compatibility or conflict among values held by the cultures of the world, which would allow for comparison across cultures. Now we have access to universal aspects of value content and structure, and this has laid the foundations for investigating culture-specific aspects in research, and to conduct comparisons across cultures. Schwartz's empirically derived structure and content of values, and the common meaning within and among cultures correlate well with Kluckhohn's universal value orientations, the comparison is presented in Table 3.1

**Table 3.1** Comparison of Kluckhohn's existential value orientations and Schwartz's empirically derived universal values

| Kluckhohn | Schwartz |
|---|---|
| Human nature: Good | Equality; politeness; self-respect; reciprocation of favors; self-discipline; mature love; family security; true friendship; broadminded; humble; honest; obedient; responsible; forgiving; curious; self-discipline; helpful; healthy |
| Human nature: Bad | Social power; pleasure; an exciting life; wealth; detachment; social recognition; ambitious; authority; daring; choosing own goals; preserving public image |
| Human nature: Combination of good and bad | Equality; politeness; self-respect; reciprocation of favors; self-discipline; mature love; family security; true friendship; broadminded; humble; honest; obedient; responsible; forgiving; curious; social power; pleasure; an exciting life; wealth; detachment; social recognition; ambitious; authority; daring; choosing own goals; preserving public image |
| Social relationships: Lineal-hierarchical | Social power; social order; respect for tradition; self-discipline; family security; authority; loyal; honoring of parents and elders; preserving public image; responsible; helpful |
| Social relationships: Collateral-mutual | Equality; a sense of belonging; self-respect; reciprocation of favors; true friendship; moderation; broadminded; humble; helpful |
| Social relationships: Individualistic | Independent; enjoying life; seeking an exciting life; preserving public image; daring; ambitious; a varied life; social recognition; detachment; self-discipline |
| Nature: Harmony | Unity with nature; a world of beauty; protecting the environment; curious |
| Nature: Control of nature | Social power; pleasure |
| Nature: Accept the power of nature | Humble; accepting life and the natural order; inner harmony |
| Time: Past | Honoring parents and elders; wisdom; respect for tradition |
| Time: Present | Enjoying life; seeking adventure and risk; family security; a world at peace; reciprocation of favors; pleasure; freedom; meaning in life; creativity |
| Time: Future | Devout; protecting the environment; a varied life; family security; social recognition; a mature love; national security; a spiritual life; social order; a world at peace |
| Activity: Being | Pleasure; an exciting life; creativity; daring; choosing own goals; accepting my portion in life; enjoying life; curious; forgiving; helpful; detached |
| Activity: Being in becoming | Inner harmony; a spiritual life; meaning in life; mature love; self-discipline; family security; a varied life; wisdom; true friendship; social justice; moderation; influential; loyal; broadminded; humble; choosing own goals; capable; devout; curious; responsible; helpful; creativity |
| Activity: Doing | Wealth; self-discipline; social recognition; independent; ambitious; daring; influential; capable; preserving public image; responsible; successful |

## Worldview and Counseling

Grieger and Ponterotto (1995) note that worldview is one of the most popular constructs in the multicultural counseling literature. Understanding core values and beliefs in the counseling process reduces the chance of oppressing the client by imposing therapist values and assumptions, which is considered cultural malpractice (Dana, 1998). Ibrahim and Arredondo (1986) note clarifying client and counselor core assumptions is critical to meaningful and positive outcomes in counseling and psychotherapy. Considering the hierarchies and the diversity that exists in the US population, and internationally, there are very few cultures that have completely monolithic cultural assumptions. Worldview as a concept has existed in several disciplines as a construct to understand how people understand their world, people, individuals, or cultures.

Although in conducting psychotherapy, guidelines for developing a therapeutic relationship are primarily effective for mainstream US (White Anglo Saxon middle class) populations. These guidelines have encountered difficulties in helping the culturally different (Seligman, 1995; Smith, Glass, & Miller, 1980; Wampold, 2001). To engage in a therapeutic relationship with culturally different clients, Sue (1978) proposed that understanding client worldview is most helpful. Sue used two psychological theoretical frames to understand the client's worldview, i.e., Locus of Control (Rotter, 1966) and Locus of Responsibility (Kanouse, Kelley, Nisbett, Valins, & Weiner, 1972). Locus of control and responsibility help identify whether a person has an individualistic or a collectivistic perspective, and can help identify a person's cultural orientation. Although an assessment measure exists for Locus of Control (Rotter), there is no measure for locus of responsibility. This conceptualization is left much to the counselor's discretion in terms of identifying cultural perspectives of clients. Sue also recommended that understanding the client's sociopolitical history and how it has affected the client was important. We recommend a comprehensive cultural assessment, which includes an assessment of worldview to prevent the possibility of bias that can function unconsciously in cross-cultural, or multicultural encounters. Further, to reduce the possibility of cultural bias, it is critical to involve the client in the process, and explain how the assessments will help provide information for counseling and psychotherapy, i.e., information that would make the counseling process client-specific.

Worldview needs be understood within the cultural identity of the client, to understand the mediating variables that have created the perspectives that a person holds, which may become facilitating or negating factors in the therapeutic process. Understanding cultural identity means acknowledging all the multifaceted dimensions of identity (all the variables identified in the Cultural Identity Check List-Revised© (CICL-R; Ibrahim, 2008)), and including areas of privilege, oppression, and acculturation level. Core beliefs and values have a significant place in the counseling and psychotherapy process; these are linked to the central components of one's identity, and the decisions that are being made in counseling must be consistent with the values and assumptions of the client to be meaningful (Ibrahim, 2010, 2011).

The concept of worldview as it is used in this text was conceptualized from the perspective of beliefs, values, and assumptions that are derived from a cultural context and was based within an existential values model (Kluckhohn, 1951, 1956; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Kluckhohn proposed a model of universal existential values that are relevant to all cultural contexts; however, the emphasis within each culture varies (Table 3.1). Ibrahim, in collaboration with Kahn, developed the Scale to Assess Worldview© (SAWV; Appendix B; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1984, 1987) to provide a measure to assess worldview, i.e., beliefs, values, and assumptions, in an effort to operationally assess worldview in cross-cultural, and multicultural counseling and psychotherapy. This effort resulted in creating increased specificity in counseling and psychotherapy (Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; Sadlak, 1986). Cultural responsiveness and sensitivity to client assumptions requires cultural assessments, instead of relying only on information about the client's cultural group's assumptions, which is general information about a cultural group, and may not accurately describe a specific client's worldview.

In using the SAWV, core beliefs, values and assumptions can be assessed for an individual, a family, a social group, a nation, or society. Dana (1998) notes that the concept of worldview includes group identity, individual identity or self-concept, values, beliefs, and language. Knowledge of client worldview can facilitate both the therapeutic relationship and the delivery of counseling services. We believe mental health professionals convey respect and acceptance for the client's perspectives by accepting their cultural identity and worldview. Both Dana (1998) and Ibrahim (1999) note that cultural identity, and worldview provide a blueprint for understanding the client's core assumptions in cross-cultural therapeutic encounters. However, these two variables provide a partial window into the client's world given that cultural identity until recently was considered a univariate construct. Cultural identity is multidimensional; it includes the intersection of ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, client's experiences, and other socializing agents that mediate worldview.

Multicultural competencies (American Counseling Association (ACA), 1992; Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), 1992; Ibrahim & Arredondo, 1986) emphasize that helping professionals must clarify their own cultural identity, and worldview to avoid imposing their own values, beliefs, and assumptions on clients. Effective multicultural training incorporates assessment and understanding of both client and counselor worldviews. Although many theorists and researchers use the term worldview to understand between-group and within-group worldview differences, they may or may not agree on what it means to them (Claiborn, 1986; Fisher, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998; Ibrahim, 1985; Ibrahim et al., 2001).

The concept of worldview focusing on values, beliefs, and assumptions is important in understanding the client's cultural perspectives (Ibrahim, 1985). Although this was a significant movement forward toward specificity in therapeutic encounters, it was not enough. Over the last 30 years it has become apparent that core values do not provide all the information that is needed to understand a client, because cultural identities are mediated by several variables, these include ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socialization process, religion/spirituality, privilege, oppression,

and acculturation (Ibrahim, 2007, 2008, 2011). These variables help us clarify the client's identity development over the life-span, and assumptions critically important to the client that need to be considered when setting goals and seeking outcomes that are consistent with the client's socialization.

## *Conducting Worldview Assessment*

Worldview assessment using the SAWV can be conducted face-to-face, in groups, online, or using an interview format for individuals who are not comfortable with paper-pencil instruments. The scale originally had 45 items, after empirical testing, the items that had adequate reliability and validity were retained based on a factor analysis (Ibrahim & Owen, 1994). The current scale has 30 items, and provides four distinct worldviews. These were named *Optimistic*, *Traditional*, *Here-and-Now*, and *Pessimistic*. The hypothesis that all people have a primary and a secondary worldview was retained from Kluckhohn's (1951) theoretical proposition. The two highest scores obtained reflect the worldview held by an individual. The worldview with the highest score is the primary worldview, and the worldview with second highest score represents the secondary worldview. According to Kluckhohn's theory, individuals use the primary worldview to understand their world, make decisions, and solve problems. However, when they cannot explain a phenomenon, or are struggling with a decision, they tend to fall back on their secondary worldview.

Research on the SAWV shows that most cultures have a dominant value system and a secondary value system (Ibrahim, Roysircar-Sodowsky, & Ohnishi, 2001). With the US sample, the primary worldview is *Optimistic*, and considering the values inherent in this worldview, it is consistent with cultural assumptions that are institutionalized through the educational system, and these assumptions are an important part of the socialization process, and homogenization of cultural assumptions in the USA (Takaki, 1979). Table 3.2 identifies the values inherent in each worldview.

**Table 3.2** Four worldviews derived for the US sample (Ibrahim & Owen, 1994)

| Optimistic | Traditional | Here-and-now | Pessimistic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Human nature: Good | Time: Future orientation | Activity: Being | Human nature: Combination of good and bad |
| Activity: Being-in-becoming | Social relationships: Lineal-hierarchical | Time: Present orientation | Human nature: Bad |
| Activity: Being | Time: Past orientation | Time: Past orientation | Nature: Power of nature |
| Nature: Harmony with nature | Social relationships: Collateral-mutual | | |
| Nature: Accept the power of nature | Human nature: Bad | | |
| Activity: Doing | Nature: Control of nature | | |

### Using Worldview Information in Counseling

The information gathered from understanding worldview can be very helpful in (a) establishing a positive therapeutic relationship and (b) in helping clients recognize and understand their values and assumptions, and keeping this information in the forefront as issues, concerns, and decisions are addressed in counseling, will help make counseling interventions client and context specific for an individual client. In addition, understanding the client's worldview and cultural identity will help in establishing a positive therapeutic relationship, and facilitate counseling interventions.

## *Establishing a Positive Therapeutic Relationship*

Mental health professionals, who have objectively assessed their own worldview, will be able to recognize the similarities and differences between clients and themselves. Knowing the similarities helps in building a connection with clients; this helps in creating a *shared worldview* and increases trust for clients leading to a positive therapeutic relationship (Fisher et al., 1998; Ibrahim, 1985, 1993, 1999). Shared worldview in Ibrahim's conceptualization is derived from finding commonalities in values, sociopolitical history, acculturation level, privilege, and oppression (Ibrahim, 2011; Ibrahim & Heuer, 2013). A shared worldview helps in establishing similar understanding of the issues, and conditions that led to the presenting problem, further, it enhances trust, and hope, that a resolution is possible (Frank & Frank, 1991; Torrey, 1986). Recognizing value differences also facilitates the helping professional's ability to be careful, as these areas may lead to a lowering trust, and create stress for clients if the helping professional imposes her/his/zir assumptions on the client (Ibrahim, 1985, 1999). The goal of counseling and psychotherapy is to help the client find resolution within her/his/zir own value system and cultural identity, and for helpers to assist in the process without imposing their own cultural assumptions (Dana, 1998; Ibrahim & Arredondo, 1986).

Dana (1998) considers it cultural malpractice when therapists are unable to recognize that they are imposing their own assumptions and values on the client. We believe that such a scenario creates stress for the client, and it is the reason why clients who are culturally different from the therapists terminate by the third session (Sue & Zane, 1987; Sue, Zane, Nagayama Hall, & Berger, 2009). It is also important to attend to nonverbal behavior of the client, to recognize signs of discomfort, and to address the nonverbal communication by following up with an empathic query, e.g., "I sense something I said has made you uncomfortable, and I would like to know what you heard me say, in an effort to clarify my statement." Taking the lead to address client discomfort results in renewed trust by the client, and helps the therapist get a better perspective on what may be creating discomfort, or conflict for a client. Further, it reduces the chances of creating a rupture in the therapeutic relationship, which is highly likely in working across cultures and contexts (Gaztambide,

2012; Owen, Imel, Tao, Wampold, Smith, & Rodolfa, 2011). Understanding values and cultural identity is not enough, because the therapeutic environment also needs to be supportive and caring. If a client is distressed by a statement or believes that the therapist was not being supportive, or has misunderstood a comment, it is important to seek clarification, and follow-up with an apology, or a restatement that is more affirming to the client, and exploring the misunderstanding (Ivey, Pedersen, & Ivey, 2009). Professionals need to have courage and own their behavior to create a meaningful and supportive therapeutic relationship (Corey, Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2014).

Knowledge of worldviews can assist in matching professionals with clients who may have similar worldviews. When client-counselor values are congruent, trust develops quickly and the therapeutic relationship is facilitated (Ibrahim, 1999; Tyler, Sussewell, & Williams-McCoy, 1985). The more the professional and client have in common the easier it is to work together. Beutler and Bergan (1991) note that research on value similarity, and counseling efficacy suggests two conclusions: (a) Value convergence between counselor-client beliefs, and attitudes is directly related to positive outcome in counseling and psychotherapy and (b) a "complex pattern of similarity and dissimilarity between client and counselor values is conducive to enhancing the strength of this convergence" (p. 18). This implies that, for a positive outcome in therapy, counselor and client cognitive and cultural schemas must have certain points of convergence. S. Sue (1988) supports cultural matching; which he believes is more relevant than ethnic matching. He notes that ethnic matching does not necessarily imply cultural similarity, because there are multiple factors mediating client worldviews. Previously, it was assumed that only helping professionals with similar cultural backgrounds could have a positive therapeutic relationship with clients. However, assuming that cultural similarity alone (such as culture, gender, and sexual orientation) will help in creating a strong therapeutic relationship has not proven to be an effective strategy, and research has not supported this assumption (Pedersen, Fukuyama, & Heath, 1989; Tyler et al., 1985).

Recommendations encouraging therapists to be culturally sensitive and to know the culture of the client have also not proven effective (Boysen & Vogel, 2008; Sue & Zane, 1987). In addition, when culture-specific techniques are applied across cultures, without attention to appropriateness of the techniques for a specific client, this poses a threat of cultural oppression (Dana, 1998; Ibrahim, 1993, 1999, 2003; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986). Educating counselors to assess and understand cultural assumptions of clients has shown promise in building the therapeutic relationship (Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986).

Stanley Sue (1988) notes that cultural factors in the treatment of nondominant ethnic clients have received the greatest attention among therapists, yet services for culturally different clients remain inadequate. The training protocols employed today were originally developed to provide services to the dominant cultural group (Beutler & Bergan, 1991; Nagayama Hall, Lopez, & Bansal, 2001; Sue, Zane, Nagayama Hall, & Berger, 2009). Although there are several recommendations to diversify training models, the problem of academic acculturation and its effect on what therapists actually believe or say when working with clients seems to differ

(Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979; Nagayama Hall et al., 2001). It is also important to recognize that although counselor and client worldviews appear similar, without consideration of oppression and exclusion, the implications for the client can be very different from the counselor. Characteristics, such as culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, and disability, mediate worldviews, and result in integration or alienation from the cultural context. Within this context, it is important to recognize issues of privilege and oppression helps the professional in identifying challenges that the client faces, and design interventions to not only address the presenting problem, but also focus on empowerment on issues that pertain to racial, cultural, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability status (Ibrahim, 2010; Ibrahim, Julie, Estrada, & Michael D'Andrea, 2011).

## Using Worldview Information to Facilitate Counseling Interventions

The worldview profiles derived from the SAWV can be helpful in responding to client-specific values and in understanding the cultural values that are most meaningful to a client. This information helps the counseling process in both diagnosis and treatment planning. In arriving at a diagnosis, it is important to first conduct a cultural evaluation to identify the client's cultural context, assumptions, beliefs about the presenting problem and the possible resolutions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Castillo, 1977; Lonner & Ibrahim, 2008). Understanding core values and assumptions helps clarify the client's cultural identity. The USA is a highly diverse country with several ethnic and cultural groups, to complicate matters further, within and between the 21 White ethnic groups and the four identified nondominant cultural groups there is variability in values, beliefs, and assumption, mediated by social class, gender, age, sexual orientation, geographic location, religion/spirituality, educational level, and ability/disability status. When values information is viewed within the multidimensional intersections of an individual's identity, it creates specificity, and movement away from imposing cultural assumptions of the client's primary cultural group. The information about a cultural group is a general framework that identifies core cultural assumptions of a cultural group; however, without taking the client's specific cultural socialization, and the influence of various identity variables (such as gender and sexual orientation) it becomes cultural malpractice.

Values are at the core of cultural identity and how life experiences are understood and integrated into a person's ongoing reality, and the meditational forces of privilege and oppression result in creating either a commonality or distance from the primary cultural group, and clarifies the uniqueness of each individual cultural identity (Ibrahim, 2010). Clarification of worldview can make the counseling process meaningful to a client and ethical. Knowledge of worldview can assist in all phases of counseling and psychotherapy, from diagnosis to treatment planning and execution to evaluation of the intervention by keeping the whole process within the

client's belief and value perspectives (Ibrahim, 1999, 2003). Understanding client worldview can facilitate counselor understanding of the presenting problem, and the reason why the presenting problem is causing distress (Diener, Shigehiro, & Lucas, 2003). All presenting problems may not have equal significance for helping professionals, as their perceptions of these issues are guided by their own cultural identity, worldview, acculturation, privilege, oppression, and life experiences. Having client cultural information eases the process of understanding client concerns and reduces the possibility of misunderstanding, ruptures in the therapeutic process, or misdiagnosing a client. Our proposition is that worldview interacts with all client variables and, consequently, must be central in understanding the presenting problem, and treatment interventions in multicultural and cross-cultural counseling.

Knowledge of worldview can be a critical facilitator of the common factors that are attributed to therapeutic success, primarily, therapist and relationship factors (Grencavage & Norcross, 1990; Imel & Wampold, 2008; Lambert & Barley, 2002). Garfield (1995) identified change factors that are common to all therapeutic approaches in producing positive change, which include (a) the therapeutic alliance, (b) interpretation, insight, and understanding, (c) cognitive modifications, (d) catharsis, emotional expression, and release, (e) reinforcement, (f) desensitization, (g) relaxation, (h) information, (i) reassurance and support, (j) expectancies, (k) exposure to and confronting of a problem situation, (l) time, and (m) the placebo response. We contend that without a therapeutic alliance and a perceived bond with the therapist, based on convergence of assumptions, and genuine acceptance using the skills of empathy, and cultural intentionality, other change factors would not follow (Ibrahim, 2003, 2010; Ibrahim & Heuer, 2013; Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morrill, & Haase, 1968). Having an understanding of the client's worldview, and conveying genuine acceptance would lead to a strong therapeutic alliance, create hope that resolution is possible, and lead to a positive outcome (Vajari & Ghaedi, 2011). Two research studies used the SAWV to educate the counselors about their own worldview and assessment of client worldviews, and using the information facilitated a therapeutic alliance with positive outcomes (Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; Sadlak, 1986).

The discussion on using the information gained from the SAWV in counseling interventions will be limited to the data derived from the US sample in this chapter. The SAWV identified four worldview profiles for the sample, and these were named: Optimistic, Traditional, Here-and-Now or Spontaneous, and Pessimistic (Ibrahim & Owen, 1994). These examples will help exemplify how worldview information in any context can be applied appropriately. The information gained can help in deciding on the process to use and the goals that would be most meaningful for the client in resolving the presenting problem (Fisher et al., 1998; Ibrahim, 1993, 1999, 2003). The process and goals need to be consistent with the client's cultural identity (as assessed by the CICL-R©), acculturation level, privilege, and oppression issues, along with other important dimensions, such as racial identity development level, for example. Values, although very important, alone cannot provide all the information needed to develop client-specific interventions (Ibrahim & Heuer, 2013). A discussion follows regarding each worldview, and implications for counseling and psychotherapy.

### *Optimistic Worldview*

The items in this worldview are: Human nature is essentially good, activities that people engage in should empower them to grow spiritually, and should also provide for material needs. There is a desire to live in harmony with nature, and an acceptance of the power of nature. This is a balanced perspective on life, work, people, and nature. Values show how a person apprehends the world, and other people, and these values influence how the individual relates to people, life and work, and nature (Binswanger, 1962, 1963; Ibrahim, 2003).

The *Human Nature* value orientation ranges from people are basically good, to people are a combination of good and bad qualities, to people are basically bad. Each of these variations indicates how an individual would relate to other people in her or his world. In the Optimistic Worldview (OWV), the perception that people as essentially good indicates that the person enters counseling with a positive expectation, trusting that the therapist would know what needs to be done, and would be able to develop trust, because the person is entering counseling with positive assumptions about people.

The *Activity* value orientation varies from Being (a preference for spontaneous expression of the self) to Being-in-Becoming (an emphasis on development of all aspects of the self, as an integrated being, including the spiritual domain), to Doing (a preference for activities that result in measurable accomplishments by external standards). The two activity domains in the Optimistic Worldview emphasize the need for humans to seek meaning in their lives (Frankl, 1978; Hillman, 1997). Frankl identifies the midlife crisis as a crisis of meaning, coming to counseling indicates a similar crisis of meaning, where an individual who was managing her or his life, is overwhelmed by a dilemma, that has become unresolvable. Yalom (1980) supports this perspective, and notes that most clients are suffering from a lack of meaning in their lives; the therapist must function as a catalyst to help clients find meaning in their lives. Existential philosophy has traditionally addressed the issue of meaning of life, within the context of the finiteness of life, and the desire to answer the ultimate question, i.e., what is the meaning of life (Hillman, 1997; Ibrahim, 1984; Sartre, 1953).

The *Nature* dimension ranges from accepting the power of nature, living in harmony with nature, to controlling nature, these vary based on the cultural context (Kluckhohn, 1951). Binswanger (1962, 1963) notes that the way people perceive their physical world affects how they relate to it, and further, it helps explain how they choose to live their lives in relation to the physical world. To ignore this aspect results in oversimplification of the issues clients bring to counseling, simply knowing where people were socialized, and where they live now is not enough. The challenge for helpers is to understand the "meaning" of the environment for clients (Kemp, 1971). For example, considering indigenous cultures and nature, Maweu (2011) asserts that divergent perceptions, interactions, and knowledge are determined by different worldviews and the underlying environmental ethics; for many traditional societies, indigenous knowledge forms a holistic worldview. Indigenous worldviews have many commonalities, and these have emerged from the close relationships between people and their environment (Fitznor, 1998; McKenzie &

Morrissette, 2003). Clients with the *Optimistic* worldview prefer to live in harmony with the cycles of nature, and also recognize the power of nature, they tend to prefer to work with nature, rather than go against it, or disregard the cycles of nature. This perspective may also indicate a concern for the environment (Wesley Schultz & Zelezny, 1999).

### OWV: Implications for Process and Goals

*Considering this worldview*, the communication process that would be most useful and productive would be relationship oriented (Garfield, 1995; Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2013). Primarily, because clients with OWV see human nature as basically good, they will not have difficulty establishing a trusting relationship with the counselor, who is genuine, warm, caring, and interpersonally responsive. Initially, the focus needs to be on establishing a positive relationship, identifying strengths, while gathering information, would also help both relationship building and trust (Ivey, Ivey, & Zalaquett, 2013). Once trust is established, the focus can shift to developing goals. Goals for this client must reflect both inner development (moral/ethical concerns) and success as measured by external standards (community, society, work site, etc.). The client will also value therapeutic interventions that help clarify the role of the self, family, cultural group, and her/him/zir sociopolitical history. Getting a sociohistorical perspective, and how the events may have influenced the client's life, and specifically the presenting problem, would be very important. Clients with this profile will be fairly easy to work with for a counselor or therapist trained in a traditional program that emphasizes mainstream US culture, and assumptions. However, clients with OWV may have a tendency to respond in a culturally appropriate manner, or social desirability, their responses may not be truly reflective of their perspectives. With OWV clients it would be important to listen carefully to client narratives, to ascertain if their stated position matches the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects displayed. Clients with this profile match the assumptions of modern first world counseling and psychotherapy expectations.

## *Traditional Worldview*

This worldview is composed of items from *Social Relations*, *Time*, and *Nature*. Social Relations vary from Lineal-Hierarchical (power rests with authority figures, and everyone must comply with authority) to Collateral-Mutual (if you treat me well, I will treat you well), to Individualistic (the individual is responsible for all decisions, what others require is of no importance) modes of relating to people. The Traditional Worldview (TWV) is primarily focused on two domains of social relations, i.e., Lineal-Hierarchical and Collateral-Mutual schemas. Time orientation varies from Past Time orientation (a focus on the past), Present Time orientation

(being in the here-and-now), to Future Time orientation (emphasis on future goals and plans). The TWV perspective on Time shows a very strong focus on the Future dimension and some attention to the Past (history, events). TWV perceives nature as something humans can control. The primary characteristics of this perspective are that relationships are primarily lineal-hierarchical, implying that lines of authority are clearly defined, power comes from the top, and traditional gender roles are accepted. Lineal-hierarchical implies ordered positional succession within the group, continuity through time, and primacy given to group goals. Collateral-mutual implies that primacy is given to the goals and welfare of lateral extended groups, and the self is enhanced through mutual relationships. There is a strong future orientation, which implies a focus on long-range planning, and an emphasis on delayed gratification. There is a belief that humans can control and overpower the elements of nature (Ibrahim, 1993, 1999).

Existential philosophers such as Binswanger, Buber, Fromm, and Yalom have addressed the importance of relationships to humans. Existentialists view social relationships as the interpersonal world (Binswanger, 1962, 1963). Buber (1970) considers relationships one of the most important aspects of human existence and defined people as creatures of the in-between, who need relationships. Fromm (1963) and Yalom (1980) agree that the greatest fear for people is existential isolation. This according to Yalom (1980) is an "unbridgeable gap between oneself and other beings" (p. 355). The isolation is the source of all anxiety and a major psychological task that counselors face is to help clients to work through this anxiety within counseling and psychotherapy (Fromm, 1963). Time is a critical variable in existential philosophy as it focuses on the finiteness of human life and the anxiety associated with issues of death and the denial of death (Becker, 1973; Frankl, 1978; Yalom, 1980). Existentialists believe that the profound human experiences of life (joy, tragedy, etc.) occur in the dimension of time rather than space (Kemp, 1971). Yalom (1980) notes that recognition of the finiteness of life generally results in a major shift of perspective and can be a catalyst for positive human growth.

The TWV indicates a traditional perspective on life, and the welfare of the group may be more important than the needs of an individual. The emphasis is on respecting tradition and authority, to create order in society, which will eventually lead to well-being for the individual (Ibrahim, 1993, 1999). TWV reflects a cultural orientation found in more traditional societies except for the control of nature perspective. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) in their research show that US cultural values differed from Mexican value orientations on issues of authority, and social positioning, and welfare of the group over welfare of an individual, as these were found in traditional societies, such as Mexico. In their research they found that control of nature was attributed to US culture, which at the time was thriving during the industrial revolution, and it was a prevalent belief among US citizens in the 1960s. Recent research has linked the control of nature as a self-enhancement perspective (Wesley Schultz & Zelezny, 1999). Control of nature within the constellation of assumptions in TWV could indicate considering nature useful for the benefits it could provide for society (Gagnon Thompson & Barton, 1994).

### TWV: Implications for Process and Goals

Clients with TWV require both relationship and task-oriented approaches. This assumption is based on the values underlying ordered social relationships, and importance of the future (Ivey et al., 2013; Lambert & Barley, 2002). Role boundaries will be important for a client with this worldview, especially, in using respectful, culturally appropriate mode of address and formal communication with clients, and recognition of their cultural contexts (Corey et al., 2014; Ibrahim, 1999). Developing a genuine, empathic, and warm relationship with a client with TWV is important. Given that source credibility is important for clients with this worldview, helpers need to recognize that clients come to them because they are seen as experts (LaCrosse, 1980). In selecting an expert, clients with TWV, value the opinions of the counselor as an expert. The most beneficial process would involve mutual respect, and the client's involvement in generating goals and making decisions. Clients with this worldview value long-term goals, and accept working with short-term interim goals; the usefulness of this approach needs to be explained to get buy-in. In addition, since TWV client have a lineal-hierarchical assumptions, clients will be influenced by traditional, historical assumptions, and will value the therapist's attention to traditional values, and goals.

The communication process for TWV clients also needs to be both relationship and task oriented. With TWV clients it is important to give them respect for what they have achieved personally and professionally in their lives. In resolving the presenting problem they would prefer a task-oriented approach, and would have greater respect for the therapist if the focus were on the problem and the solutions rather than on the personality of the client. The best process to use in counseling would be action oriented, such as in Solution-Focused therapy (Murphy, 2008). TWV clients will value confrontation when there are discrepancies in beliefs, goals, and progress toward resolution, otherwise they will lose respect for the counselor. Long-term goals would be beneficial, along with interim short-term goals (Ibrahim, 1993, 1999).

The decision-making model again must be action oriented and directive, to be consistent with the role of the expert. We consider directive to imply staying on task, moving the process along, and not telling the client what would be the most useful way to approach resolution. Furthermore, TWV clients prefer task-focused therapeutic approach. The final decisions must rest with the client. The outcomes that a TWV client would prefer are ones that will emphasize needs of their larger system, family, or group. Too much focus on the client will create discomfort, as TWV place the needs of the group above individual needs. For a helper to be successful in working with TWV clients, it would be necessary to work from a perspective that respects authority, and accepts client assumptions, and works from the TWV perspective.

### *Here-and-Now/Spontaneous Worldview*

Originally this worldview was named the Here-and-Now perspective, it is more relevant to call it Spontaneous Worldview; the emphases in this worldview is on two elements, Time and Activity. In the time dimension, all three items from the present orientation, and one item from the past orientation are emphasized. The main characteristic of this worldview is that client with Here-and-Now/Spontaneous Worldview (SWV) would require a focus on the presenting problem, which may shift from session to session. There may be no possibility of long-term goals. In each session, the concerns presented would require immediate attention. The therapist needs to respect the client's urgency, as it is critical to maintaining the therapeutic relationship. The Being orientation in this worldview demands that the client's needs are met, and the spontaneity is respected. This could be a challenge for a counselor trained, and educated in traditional counseling or psychotherapy as the mainstream values that guided counseling and psychotherapy programs assumed that people would be focused on the future instead of the present (Nagayama Hall et al., 2001). From an existential perspective, the client with SWV is influenced by past events, including historical issues (i.e., the client's family, group, and national sociopolitical history, this is also not consistent with mainstream US culture it is more consistent with perspectives found in collectivistic cultures (Castillo, 1977)). Furthermore, the being dimension requires exploration of the client's present concerns, including the finiteness of life and the meaning a client's ascribes to his or her life (Abdoli & Safavi, 2010; Ibrahim, 1993, 1999; Sartre, 1953). The focus on the here-and-now to the exclusion of other issues may create some dissonance for a helper, because it may seem like the client is escaping from the responsibility of confronting the original presenting problem, and basic psychological tasks that are relevant to create equilibrium. This may be another area of exploration for the therapist, to understand the immediate goals for the session (Ibrahim, 1999).

#### SWV: Implications for Process and Goals

The communication process needs to focus on the client, with an emphasis on relationship building in the present. The process needs to be nondirective, with the therapist following the client's lead. The decision-making model should be mutual. The outcomes that the client will possibly seek will be on the presenting problem of the day. A problem-focused approach or a crisis intervention model, or a solution-focused approach would be the most appropriate (Burwell & Chen, 2006; LeCroy, 2008; Murphy, 2008).

A client with this worldview could pose the greatest challenge to a mainstream counselor with traditional counseling training (future planning and goals). From a process perspective, counseling this client would be a relatively

positive experience for the counselor, because the here-and-now focus would allow both the counselor and the client to stay with the issue at hand, and closure in each session, with no unfinished business. It is recommended that goal setting for each session needs to be addressed formally at the beginning of the session, with a summary at the end of what was accomplished and any unfinished business (Ibrahim, 1999).

## *Pessimistic Worldview*

The Pessimistic Worldview (PWV) perspective perceives human nature as basically bad. Alienation (from self and others) can be a factor in creating a negative self-evaluation and perception of others. An understanding of how individuals see themselves and others can be of tremendous value in understanding the quality of their lives and the meaningfulness of their relationships (Ibrahim, 1993, 1999). The second main characteristic is that PWV acknowledges the Power of Nature, and accepts the vulnerability of humans to the forces of nature. This finding among US majority population is contrary to C. Kluckhohn's (1956) assumptions about mainstream culture. This finding highlights a change in values, beliefs, and assumptions, among the US population, specific to the nature dimension (Ibrahim & Owen, 1994). In previous research, mainstream culture viewed nature as something that could be controlled and managed (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). The Social Relations orientation in PWV is collateral mutual (one item): that is, "do unto others as they do to you." This assumption implies a degree of mutuality in relationships. People with PWV consider how others treat them, and formulate their response to people accordingly. Given the perception of human nature, one must view this orientation with caution (1999). The research on the SAWV consistently shows that people who are vulnerable or second class citizens based on their lack of privilege, generally opt for the PWV as their secondary worldview, although their primary worldview is usually OWV, which is consistent with the overarching assumptions in US culture (Ibrahim et al., 2001).

### PWV: Implications for Process and Goals

Clients with PWV will pose a challenge to a counselor primarily in the process domain. Trust development will be difficult with this population, due to their perception of human nature. It is important to focus on relationship building in each session with empathic responding and working to always be there for the client (Ivey et al., 2013). Considering the client's low evaluation of human nature, it is critical to focus on the task, i.e., the presenting problem. This will facilitate trust development, as it will help a client with PWV to accept that the therapist is following through on the contract. This perspective could be common among clients in the immersion-emersion stage of racial identity development (Cross, 1995; Helms, 1990). It may be important to have a secondary goal of racial/cultural/gender/sexual orientation/gender identity development for clients with PWV.

Clients with PWV have a slight propensity toward the collateral-mutual orientation, they will need to be respected for their beliefs and will reciprocate with respect for the counselor (LeCroy, 2008). The client's feelings of vulnerability also mediate their perception of nature, and their low trust of human nature. The therapist needs to be able to work with both these dimensions, respecting the client's core assumptions, without negative evaluation of the person with a PWV perspective. Acceptance and understanding of the PWV is important and must be communicated appropriately. Goal development needs to be a mutual process. This will demand a great deal of flexibility on the part of the counselor who has been educated in traditional counseling and psychotherapy approaches.

## Research Overview: The Scale to Assess Worldview

The therapeutic community strongly recommends "understanding" client worldviews (American Counseling Association (ACA), 1992; Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), 1992; American Psychological Association, 2002; Beutler & Bergan, 1991; Fisher et al., 1998; Ibrahim & Arredondo, 1986). This indicates that helping professionals need to understand client assumptions, and this recommendation could lead to erroneous conclusions, unless formal assessment is conducted (Ibrahim, 1999). Formal assessments have not been used to understand client worldview, formal assessment measures designed to assess core values measures do not exist, except for The Scale to Assess World View, specific to assessing basic values, beliefs, and assumptions (Ibrahim & Kahn, 1984, 1987), and Carter and Helms (1990) Intercultural Values Inventory. Both these instruments are based on the original research on core values was conducted by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961), who developed an open-ended questionnaire developed on Kluckhohn's (1951) model of existential value orientations, and collected data in the USA and Mexico. Koltko-Rivera (2004) provides an extensive review of the literature on the construct of worldview, and finds several conceptions of worldview in the literature however, specific assessment measures that focused on values and an attempt to assess them empirically in therapeutic encounters were not identified, except for two mentioned above that specifically addressed the core values. There are also assessment measures available in the intercultural communication domain, and the most prominent is *The Intercultural Development Inventory* (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

### *Research on Worldview*

Over the last 30 years several research studies have employed the construct of worldview using the SAWV. These studies show that cultural differences in values can be identified using the SAWV (Ibrahim et al., 2001). This research also shows that comparison of core values and assumptions can be conducted and used to

develop appropriate programs and interventions for organizations, families, and individuals. Studies reviewed were on the Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck model of existential values orientation. Instruments for assessing beliefs, values, and assumptions varied in these studies, primarily they included the *Intercultural Values Inventory* (Carter & Helms, 1990; Carter & Parks, 1992; Kohls, 1996) and the *Scale to Assess Worldview*© (SAWV; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1984, 1987; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994). The SAWV was used in 29 studies (Berkow, Richmond, & Page, 1994; Cheng, O'Leary, & Page, 1995; Chu-Richardson, 1988; Cieciuch & Ibrahim, 2011; Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; D'Rozario, 1996; Furn, 1986; Gerber, 1998; Gordon, 1997; Hansman, Grant, Jackson, & Spencer, 1999; Hickson, Christie, & Shmuklcr, 1990; Ibrahim et al., 1993; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994; Lin, 2008; Lo, 1996, 1996; Lockney, 1999; Lopez, Salas, Arroya-Jurado, & Chinn, 2004; Ngumba, 1996; Ohnishi, 1998; Russell, 2005; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986; Sodowsky, Maguire, Johnson, Kohles, & Ngumba, 1994; Tarricone, 1999; Thompson, 1997; Toczyska, 1996; Tonnessen, 2001). Two additional studies used the SAWV Short-Form (1994); SAWV items were reduced to the two dominant factors (Ihle, Sodowsky, & Kwan, 1996; Kwan, Sodowsky, & Ihle, 1994).

In a previous publication Ibrahim et al. (2001) had discussed the issue of American (US) cultural identity, given that several cultures are represented in both the dominant and nondominant cultural groups in the USA. Carter and Parks (1992) had also noted the issue of an American (US) identity, as several of the participants in their study identified as "American" when the responded to the demographic questionnaire regarding ethnicity. In the studies conducted on the SAWV in the USA, regardless of ethnicity, dominant or nondominant group membership, the primary worldview is Optimistic, it is the secondary worldview that discriminates members of vulnerable cultural groups as they always identify the secondary worldview as "Pessimistic." Ibrahim (2003) notes that this worldview needs to be renamed as "Realistic" given that it shows that all US participants aspire to the same cultural assumptions as exemplified by the Optimistic worldview, however, members of vulnerable groups, which included women, LGBTQ, nondominant cultural ethnic groups both indigenous to the USA and immigrants, and people with disabilities, and nondominant religions or spirituality, recognize that they may not be able to achieve their goals in a dominant society that does not value their identities, or undervalued nondominant cultures, genders, sexual orientations, etc.

The findings across studies indicate that there are cultural differences among and between societies, specifically on the cultural orientations of individualism and collectivism, and the dimensional variations on the East–west continuum (Green, Deschamps, & Paez, 2005; Hofstede, 1980; Van de Vijver & Leung, 1997). Studies comparing US cultural assumptions with other countries and cultures showed cultural differences consistent with the assumptions of each given society (Berkow et al., 1994; Cheng et al., 1995; Cieciuch & Ibrahim, 2011; Ibrahim et al., 1993; Schwartz, 1994). Research comparing US and Brazilian assumptions highlights cultural differences in values that are consistent with cultural assumptions in both countries (Ibrahim et al., 1993). Research with the SAWV discriminates on cultural assumptions within cultures and between cultures (Cieciuch & Ibrahim, 2011; Furn, 1986; Ibrahim et al., 1993; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994).

The SAWV has been used in several research studies research within group cultural values, and variations (Cieciuch & Ibrahim, 2011; Gerber, 1998; Hickson et al., 1990; Ibrahim & Kahn, 1987; Ibrahim & Owen, 1994; Lo, 1996; Lockney, 1999; Thompson, 1997), for cross-cultural comparisons of cultural assumptions (Boatswain, 1997; D'Rozario, 1996; Ibrahim et al., 1993), disability worldview (Gordon, 1997); therapeutic interventions and counselor efficacy as perceived by clients (Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986), gender differences (D'Rozario, 1996; Furn, 1986), comparison of international and US students worldview (Berkow et al., 1994; Cheng et al., 1995; Ihle et al., 1996; Kwan et al., 1994; Sodowsky et al., 1994; Thompson, 1997), variations in worldview by social class (Gerber, 1998); and academic and organizational culture (Chu-Richardson, 1988; Hansman et al., 1999; Toczyska, 1996). In most cases the findings have been consistent with the cultural values and assumptions of the cultural groups within societies, and their contexts. The SAWV provides the information on the client's and the professional's subjective reality (Ibrahim, 1985; Lin, 2008; Saenz-Adames, 2014). This information is critical in expanding the professional's knowledge base and in developing meaningful interventions that are culturally sensitive and humanistic (Hickson et al., 1990).

The SAWV can be useful in developing a shared frame of reference and when a shared frame of reference was established between the counselor and the client, counselor effectiveness and perceived efficacy leads to successful engagement in counseling (Cunningham-Warburton, 1988; Sadlak & Ibrahim, 1986). The SAWV can be successfully used as a training tool to enhance cross-cultural counselor effectiveness in addressing existential dilemmas that people face, and can help them cope with life's challenges. The scale can also be used in different cultures to compare groups as well as to compare differences within each cultural group and to gain important information on cross-cultural differences and similarities. The SAWV addresses some universal concerns pertaining to core values and thus compensates for the deficits of limited, Western-based assessment research (Sue, Ito, & Bradshaw, 1982; Triandis & Brislin, 1984; Triandis, Malpass, & Davison, 1973). The scale also attempts to address the lack of attention to individual differences within cultural groups, a major drawback in cross-cultural research of the 1970s and 1980s (Atkinson, 1985; Hilliard, 1985).

## Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the concept of worldview in general and specifically the conceptualization the authors use to understand core values, and assumptions of clients. It includes information on understanding client worldviews as assessed by the Scale to Assess World View© and using the information gained in counseling and psychotherapy. The chapter concludes with a review of research conducted using the Scale to Assess World View.

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