Cultural Influences

Cultural influences mean historical, geographical, and familial factors that affect assessment and intervention processes. Cultural influences (as defined in 9505.0370 subp. 9) that are relevant to the client may include the client’s:

- **Racial or Ethnic Self-Identification:** The individual/family would report how they identify themselves in a racial or ethnic context
  - Etta identifies as a biracial 10 year old girl with a White mother and an African American father.
  - Rick identifies as a White 18 year old from a Norwegian family line who lives in the East Metro.

- **Experience of Cultural Bias as a Stressor:** Description of how the individual has experienced cultural bias from other people (cultural bias being the practice of interpreting and judging behavior by standards inherent to one’s own culture), and how it relates to his or her overall mental health symptoms.
  - Etta states that she feels excluded by her classmates because she’s the only biracial (black and white) child in the classroom and feels like she doesn’t fit in with her classmates. She says that she tries to insert herself into the conversations around her because she feels ignored and lonely. She also says that she always worries that she’s doing something wrong and that’s why they don’t like her.
  - Rick says that he feels like he never fit in high school; he wasn’t a jock or a “good student”—he just went to classes. He thinks he was really unpopular and he and his friends often got taken advantage of by the popular kids at school. The jocks took particular advantage of him during gym class and made him really self-conscious because they would laugh at every mistake.

- **Immigration History and Status:** Description of the individual’s immigration path (if applicable). Is the client a political refugee, an economic refugee, or on a work or student visa? The intent is not to identify whether the client has documentation to be in the country but more his or her experience as an immigrant.
  - Ana Lucia’s mother emigrated from Mexico when she was a young adult. Ana Lucia was born in the United States and identifies as a Mexican American. She says that she’s heard stories about her mother’s difficulty immigrating to the United States but she doesn’t really think that it applies to her because she’s always been here.

- **Level of Acculturation:** Level of acculturation (the modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture) could be to “mainstream” culture or it could be into a new social group, a new town, family (in-laws or adoption), or any change in group of people with whom the client associates.
  - Etta has had trouble fitting in at her new school and finding friends in the neighborhood. She feels like they all follow a different rule book which no one wants to lend her. Her teacher states that she often has social missteps with the other children at school and seems to be having difficulty acculturating to the classroom peer culture.
  - Rick feels like one of the reasons why he gets along so well with his girlfriend is because he likes her family so much. He says that he really loves that he can drop over at any time and they will include him in dinner or whatever they are doing. He reports that his own family was is really
rigid with guests and that it took him a while to realize that he didn’t have to get permission all
the time before he goes over to their house.

• **Time Orientation:** Time orientation is about how the client understands and uses time. On one end of
  the continuum there are people with Monochronic orientation of time—task oriented, expect things to
  be on time, and a separate time and place for work and play. On the other end are people with
  Polychronic orientation of time—time and schedules are more flexible, maintaining relationships and
  socializing is more important than accomplishing tasks.
  o **Etta’s teacher** states that Etta is always focused on time and whether or not things will get done
    on time. She constantly checks to clock to make sure that the class is switching subjects at the
    right time according to the schedule. She also “nags” the other students when they are not done
    when something is due and seems overly anxious about due dates and timelines to the point that
    she misses the point of the activity.
  o **Rick** described how bothered he gets when people rush him to get places. He hates it when
    people get mad at him for not showing up on time. He says he’s always been the late one in the
    family. He can never keep track of time and things that people just get worked up over that
    stuff—which is why he is scared about getting a new job.

• **Social Orientation:** Can involve information regarding the client’s friends, social group, partnership
  status, sexual orientation, etc.
  o **Etta** has always gotten along better with adults than children her own age. She has trouble
    fitting in with the other children in her class as she seems to be very rule focused and reminds
    others of expectations—which tends to get on other children’s nerves.
  o **Rick** likes to spend time with people, he tends to be nervous about what other people are
    thinking about him and gets overwhelmed with their facial responses and non-verbal
    communication. This is why he prefers on-line interactions with people he doesn’t know very
    well. He feels more confident and he enjoys communicating with others a lot more if he doesn’t
    have to do it face-to-face.

• **Verbal Communication Style:** Culturally impacted verbal and non-verbal communication styles—like call
  and response, looking at people in the eyes when they are talking, the teenage rolling of the eyes,
  means of conveying conflict or conflict avoidance, tone of voice, posture and means of expressing one-
  self verbally and non-verbally.
  o **As Etta grew up going to church with her grandma in Minneapolis,** she often participates in the
    “call and response” process when in school. When her teacher says something that she agrees
    with she nods her head and verbally says “mmmhmm” which caught her teacher off guard until
    she talked to Etta about it. Etta reports that she felt shamed that her teacher told her to stop
    doing that—she didn’t even realize she was doing it.
  o **Rick,** as he often feels nervous in front of people, tends to look at the ground when people are
    talking and doesn’t speak very loudly. He says that he feels much more confident when
    typing/talking than speaking—especially in public.

• **Locus of Control:** does the client feel like they are in control of their environment—their own choices or
  does the world push them from one choice to another?
As Etta is only 10, she feels like most things get decided by other people and then they impact her life—like moving around or her parents getting divorced. Adults make decisions and they impact her and she doesn’t like it.

Rick feels like a lot of what is going on for him is out of his control. He can’t find a job because the job market is horrible. He can’t take his driver’s license test because the evaluator seems judgmental and scary. It all seems out of his hands.

**Spiritual Beliefs:** Religious or other forms of spiritual beliefs.

- The family attends St. Mary’s Catholic Church and has a good relationship with Father Jim Albert. Etta reported that God looks out for her and that her future was in God’s hands.
- Rick grew up going to an ELCA Lutheran church and used to be quite active. For the past year, he hasn’t wanted to attend and he refuses to explain what changed.

**Health Beliefs and the Endorsement of or Engagement in Culturally Specific Healing practices:** What is the client’s philosophy behind their symptoms or mental health situation? Have they gone to culturally specific providers such as a religious provider, Shaman, psychic, etc?

- Etta believes that she has troubles because her parents divorced and then her dad went to Afghanistan. She was doing just fine before that all happened. She thinks that church helps her a lot because God can protect her father in Afghanistan.
- Rick doesn’t have a theory on why he feels this way. He can’t really remember when he didn’t. He hasn’t tried anything but marijuana to try to feel better before coming to the appointment.