

# **Cultural Self Project**

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## **Introduction**

The ADDRESSING model is a framework designed to explore various cultural and identity-related factors that shape a person's life and worldview. This model is particularly useful in counseling as it encourages practitioners to consider the complex interactions between culture, gender, ethnicity, and other personal factors. In this paper, I will reflect on my cultural identity using the ADDRESSING model, which will include an examination of my experiences as a second-generation Samoan immigrant, my gender, socioeconomic challenges, and other relevant aspects of my identity. By incorporating readings from course materials, such as Hays' work on the impact of culture and gender in counseling (Hays, 2013) and Lee's chapter on cultural self-awareness (Lee, 2020), I will deepen my understanding of how my personal identity impacts my worldview and my approach to counseling practice.

## **Age and Generational Influences**

I was born in San Francisco, California, as a second-generation Samoan immigrant. My parents moved from Samoa to the U.S. to provide better opportunities for their children. Growing up, I felt the tension between my parents' traditional Samoan values and the broader American culture I was exposed to. While I am not certain about the specific societal expectations placed on my community at the time, I can identify with the generational gap in immigrant families, especially in the context of balancing cultural preservation with assimilation. My experience resonates with what Hays (2013) described about the importance of understanding generational differences in shaping identity and opportunities. Social movements related to immigration and racial equality have broadened my perspective, particularly regarding belonging and cultural adaptation. Recognizing these generational influences can help in

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understanding a client's cultural adaptation process and the resulting challenges in self-identity and social integration.

### **Developmental or Other Disabilities**

I do not identify as having any visible or non-visible disabilities, but my parents have experienced health conditions that led to disabilities. These challenges, particularly their medical struggles, impacted our family dynamics and limited certain opportunities. As I reflect on this experience, I recognize how these disabilities have shaped my values around resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness. Despite these challenges, I strive to maximize opportunities and move forward with optimism. According to Hays (2013), understanding how disability impacts identity is essential in counseling, as it affects both individual opportunities and family dynamics. Recognizing how disabilities—whether visible or nonvisible—can affect a person's sense of self-worth is crucial in the therapeutic process, as it allows counselors to provide more empathetic and individualized care.

### **Religion & Spirituality**

I was raised in a strict Christian household, as my father is a pastor. My religious upbringing has shaped my values and goals, emphasizing discipline and a service-oriented mindset. I am no longer as religious as I was in my childhood, I choose to value relationship over religion. Hays (2013) discusses how religious beliefs can serve as a crucial part of a person's identity and coping mechanisms. As a counselor, I recognize that clients' spiritual beliefs often influence their sense of purpose, identity, and coping strategies. Understanding the intersection of spirituality and personal values can be vital when working with clients from religious or spiritually informed backgrounds.

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### **Ethnic & Racial Identity**

I identify as Samoan, a Pacific Islander, and this identity is central to who I am. Although my family has a minor racial distinction due to a German great-grandparent, we identify strongly with our Samoan roots. Growing up in the U.S., I often navigated between my Samoan cultural expectations and the broader American society. This experience aligns with the challenges that Hays (2013) outlines regarding bicultural or multiracial individuals who must reconcile different cultural norms and values. My cultural heritage has provided me with a strong sense of community, belonging, and pride. It has also shaped my worldview in ways that influence how I engage with people and understand their struggles. In counseling, acknowledging and exploring a client's ethnic identity is essential for developing a holistic understanding of their experiences, challenges, and the resources they may have for coping.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

I grew up in a low-income household, where my parents faced significant financial challenges. As a result, many opportunities—especially educational and work-related ones—were limited. Despite this, basketball became a vehicle for change in my life, as it earned me a full-ride scholarship to college, a rare opportunity given my financial situation. This opportunity was life-changing and enabled me to attend college without burdening my parents financially. Lee (2020) discusses how socioeconomic status influences a person's worldview, opportunities, and even self-concept. My own experiences with financial hardship have shaped my values of resilience, determination, and the importance of access to resources. In counseling, it is crucial to understand how financial constraints can affect a client's mental health and

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aspirations. By recognizing these barriers, counselors can better support clients in navigating the challenges related to socioeconomic disparities.

### **Sexual Orientation**

I identify as queer and am in a relationship with a female partner. This aspect of my identity has been difficult to navigate within my family, as they do not fully accept my sexual orientation due to religious and cultural reasons. Over time, I have come to accept and embrace my identity, even though it has strained my relationship with my family. Hays (2013) emphasizes the importance of understanding how sexual orientation can shape a person's identity and influence their relationships with others. My personal experiences with rejection and the subsequent journey toward self-acceptance have made me acutely aware of the emotional and psychological toll that societal or familial rejection can have. In counseling, it is crucial to foster a nonjudgmental and inclusive space where clients feel safe to explore their sexual orientation without fear of rejection or stigmatization.

### **Indigenous Heritage**

As a Samoan, I am part of a Polynesian cultural group with deep historical roots. Although I was born and raised in the U.S., I feel a strong desire to reconnect with my heritage in Samoa to better understand the cultural values and traditions that have shaped my family. This sense of disconnection is something that Hays (2013) notes when discussing indigenous populations, whose cultural practices and worldviews can sometimes be marginalized or overlooked. In counseling, it is essential to respect and understand the traditions, practices, and healing methods of indigenous communities, especially when working with clients who may be

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seeking to reconnect with their cultural heritage. By acknowledging the value of indigenous practices and perspectives, counselors can create a more culturally inclusive therapeutic space.

### **National Origin**

I am a U.S. citizen, born in California to Samoan parents. While English became my dominant language, I grew up in a bilingual household where Samoan was the first language spoken by my family. This bilingual experience was challenging at times, as balancing two languages and cultures often led to feelings of confusion or isolation. However, it has also given me a unique perspective on identity and belonging. Hays (2013) discusses the complexities of being part of a bilingual or multicultural family, where language plays a crucial role in shaping one's identity. As a counselor, understanding the linguistic and cultural dynamics that influence communication and self-expression is crucial. It is important to respect and incorporate clients' linguistic backgrounds into the therapeutic process.

### **Gender**

In my Samoan family, traditional gender roles were strictly defined. Men were expected to be the "head of the household," and women were primarily responsible for domestic duties. These dynamics shaped my early understanding of gender, particularly in how power and decision-making were distributed within my family. This exposure to male dominance has had a lasting impact on my views of gender roles in society. Hays (2013) highlights the importance of understanding gender dynamics and how they shape a person's worldview. In counseling, it is essential to be aware of the gendered expectations that clients may face, particularly when those

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roles are tied to family or cultural expectations. Helping clients navigate these dynamics can be an important part of promoting self-efficacy and autonomy.

### **Conclusion**

Reflecting on my cultural self through the ADDRESSING model has provided valuable insights into the ways in which my identity has been shaped by various factors, including ethnicity, religion, gender, and socioeconomic status. By considering the impact of these factors on my worldview and experiences, I have gained a deeper understanding of how these influences can affect my professional practice as a counselor. I recognize the importance of continuously reflecting on my own cultural identity and how it interacts with the identities of my clients. By remaining open, empathetic, and self-aware, I hope to create a supportive and culturally competent environment that fosters growth and healing.

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### **References**

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