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Cross Cultural Interview

Interviewing / Dr. Purnell

This is a superb piece of work!
I really enjoyed reading this
& hearing your interview's
point of view!
Very well written!
DJP

Inquiring about India

In this profession to be a truly effective social worker one must embrace cultural competence as a vital skill that should always be observed during practice. In order to maintain a competent practice, a social worker should never be satisfied with the knowledge that they presently possess, but rather continue to learn and seek knowledge about other cultures that are unfamiliar to them. In this cross cultural interview, I decided to interview Alka, a lady from the Asian Indian population. Before the interview I had some prior knowledge about the Indian community, but after formulating some questions in my head I realized that I needed and wanted to know more.

absolutely true!

Alka Patel, age 23, was born in the city of Nadiad in the state of Gujarat; she was only a teenager when her family made the trip to permanently establish residency in the United States. "I have parents, one brother and one sister. They all are here. We all live together under one roof; this is one of the significant attributes that apply to the Indian family, we always live together." Alka also looks after her niece and nephew, who publicly and very affectionately refer to her as "mom". "Family is very close; nothing goes on in house unless there is a big meeting to discuss."

great value!

Taught by her family and by the traditional ways of the Indian culture, Alka learned the importance of respecting others, valuing the quality of life, and always appreciating the power of the spirit. "I would say that I value most my commitments to family, to others, to my job, and to society as a whole. I believe that people should be considerate, thoughtful, and have a basic care for others." When asked about the

differences between traditional Indian culture verses that of the dominant American culture, Alka stated, "Women in Indian culture are not as opinionated as American woman. They are not as dominate as American women, because their freedoms are very limited. Most women are house wives, they stay home, cook, and raise the child. I was lucky to have grown up in the United States and because of the freedoms and opportunities I am able to be very much like a business women. Indian women don't have much say when it comes to arranged marriage. They are pretty much only told to whom and when they will be married. Most marriage used to be all arranged, but now it is getting flexible. I would say 75% is still getting arranged in India and 60% are getting arranged in the U.S. The dressing used to be very conservative; most of the womens' bodies were to be covered by a wrap (SARI), only revealing the head. Nowadays the dressing has lost its respect, now women are trying to be more sexually attractive; woman are wearing tank tops and shorted or lesser clothing. Movies have influenced young women in dressing sexually provocative. The movies are exploiting Indian girls just like American girls on American TV."

Wow, what
awesome insight!

When asked how she would grade the American government's performance of addressing her culture's needs and concerns, she replied with, "They have done a poor job. I haven't seen or heard the American government expressing any concerns for the Indian community. I think the government can do a better job with establishing Indian benefits. Lots of Americans are under the assumption that Indians are in minority and that Indians get more benefits. The truth is the Indian community does not fall in the minority and we pay the same taxes as Americans, sometimes we even have to pay more." As we talked more about social justice, we also touched on another sensitive

how sad!

subject, that of racism. I asked her if she or anyone else in her family had ever experienced any form of racism while living in the U.S. "Yes, it happened to my son Raj when the whole 911 happened. Kids on the school bus were kicking and beating him up. They would say hurtful things and they accused him and our family of making bombs in our basement. Finally I went to the school board to stop the pain. In the end, the school board and all the families of the bullies had to come out and apologize to our family. As far as me personally, I guess you could say that I feel like every time I am out with white friends the people are watching. I feel that people are judging me sometimes when I am walking across a room of people who are not the same color as me. I can feel the judging eyes."

Being that English is my primary and practically my only language, I guess I got surprised whenever someone tells me about how difficult it is to learn the language that I've been speaking every since I was knee high. Alka then expressed the difficulties that she experienced when she began to learn English for the first time. "It took me about a year to learn the English, but it still has been an on going process. The pronouncing is still a big issue, because I was taught in the British style of English. As of today, I still feel that I am very weak when it comes to English. I experienced hardships in school while I was getting my BS in business management. It has been difficult for me to lay out what exactly I am trying to say to others. I always have had to work three times harder than normal Americans to achieve my goals, which can get me frustrated at times."

In conclusion, I found that the interview was very comfortable and actually quite social. Alka didn't show any signs of resistance or avoidance of my questions. She was

open and willing to talk to me about whatever questions I proposed. She kept constant eye contact and her body language was very open as well. I suppose in taking something away from this experience, I would say that you just have to take a chance and straight out ask people. A person should never assume that their knowledge about someone or something is right, unless they can back it up with a reliable source. I think that I will take this approach of being more straightforward into my practice as I continue to grow stronger in the field of social work.

Excellent!