I Am A Cultural Being

I. Background

Describe yourself in terms of basic demographics (e.g., age, gender, race, ethnicity, birth order, etc.) Where were you born? How many people are in your family? What generation in the United States do you represent? Are you and your siblings the first of your family to be born in this country? Were you foreign (not born in the United States) born? Where did your ancestors migrate? Within the United States? From outside the United States? Why?

What was the occupation of your mother when you were a child? Your father’s occupation? How would you describe your family’s social class? Where did you go to school? What did you like best about school? Like least? What was your undergraduate major? What is the most important thing you learned as an undergraduate?

Does your immediate or extended family practice ethnic or cultural customs that you or they value or with which they identify (e.g., foods, celebrations, traditions, social behaviors, manners, beliefs)? What customs do you prize most? Do your relatives speak your ethnic group language?

II. Group Awareness

Describe your earliest recollection of learning your gender and race or ethnicity. When do you recall learning that you were male or female? How did you learn this? When do you remember learning what your sexual orientation is and how did you learn this? When did you find out what religion your family practiced? How did your family feel about people who had a different religion? Did you have similar feelings? How often did your family talk about your ethnic heritage and in what context?

III. Social Awareness

Describe your earliest recollections of learning that people were “different.” When do you first remember hearing about or learning about prejudice? How do you recall feeling at that time? When was the first time you remember learning about racism? How did you first come to understand that racism existed? What did you learn from this experience? When did you first know people who said things that you thought were prejudiced or bigoted? When was the first time you recall seeing someone act in a way you thought was prejudiced or racist? Describe your feelings about that situation.

IV. Encounter

How much racial and/or ethnic diversity did you have in your home town? What was the general perception surrounding African Americans, Asians, Native Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and people from outside of the United States in your home town? Did your immediate family share these views? How were gay, lesbian, transgendered, or bisexual persons perceived? When (if this is applicable) did your perceptions of any of these groups change?
What was your parents’ main advice to you about people from other ethnic and/or cultural groups? How would your parents have responded if, while in college, you had invited a member of a different ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, or a person with a disability home for Thanksgiving? How would your parents respond, or have responded, if you announced plans to marry a member of a different ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, or a person with a disability?

How do you think you would respond, or have responded, if your college-age son or daughter announced plans to marry a member of a different ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, or a person with a disability?

V. Present Views

Describe any significant relationship that you have with an individual outside of your own race or ethnicity. What types of relationships have you had with individuals from different racial and/or ethnic groups? What has been most rewarding about these relationships? Least rewarding? What has been the major source of information which has shaped your perceptions of ethnic minority group members? Which ethnic minority group do you know least about?

As a counseling professional, how do you think your cultural background and attitudes help you in working with culturally diverse clients? How will they hinder you in working with culturally diverse clients?