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## Journal Entry 1: Article Reflection, COATES

***What was your reaction to the Coates (2014) article, and how does it apply to the work you might do as a counselor or human services provider?***

My initial reaction to the Coates (2014) article was an emotional response of outrage at the overt oppression toward Clyde Ross. Then, that sense of anger expanded broadly to all people of color represented by these story vignettes. I reflected upon how often, historically, our young government has failed to live up to the ideals set forth in The Declaration of Independence (Jefferson, 1776). *If we are equal, how does this oppression continue to happen to various groups throughout history?* I reflected at great length about whether the notion of equality is even possible as anything more than a beacon. We formed the United States seeking relief from one form of oppression and yet, here we are today, repeating the same oppressive behavior - like bullies. I thought at length about how, if our country were an individual, its politics are showing the symptoms of bullying behavior. Its leaders are not psychologically healthy if they perpetuate oppression. For me, it is a sign of sickness if an individual or group wants to inflict pain or suffering on others.

Although Mahatma Gandhi is oft mis-credited with the quote stating that *"the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members,"* it is former vice president Hubert Humphrey who, in 1977, spoke about the treatment of the weakest members of society as a reflection of a government: *"The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."* (Knight, 2019). Reflecting on various times throughout history when a dominant group has made such egregious gains at the expense of another, the same recurring theme appears - one group makes the system unfair so they can grow or at least maintain power. *But why does this happen? Who is in this group (it changes over time), and why do they think they are more special than others? What is the psychological basis, or justification, for this belief?*

I wondered how much of this aggressive behavior is rooted in childhood development, particularly in Erikson's stage of industry versus inferiority as it relates to culture (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2019). Perhaps there is no coincidence that bullying behavior in childhood seems to correlate with this stage (Estévez et al., 2020). It makes me wonder if bullying is tied to malformed ideas that emerge at this stage of human development. I remember an experience when I was 9 years old. A boy in my class liked to pick on the girls. He'd insult their clothing, hair or mimic things they said. It was awful enough that he was picking on all of us, but one day he was especially awful to one girl. That day, his bad behavior spread and his friends joined him in picking on her. I marched over to his desk and flipped his chair, causing him to fall to the ground. "Feeling tough now?" I asked. The shock on his face made the entire room burst in laughter, and he didn't say a word for the rest of the day. I guess that action made me look like a bully. My sense was that she needed to be put back on equal footing with him, and I had to do something. I

wasn't proud of my actions, but I remember it felt good to act. I did not know a better way to correct his actions other than to act.

So, what happens to a child's developing core values when a child becomes discouraged and feels inferior or incompetent? Do some of those kids eventually become leaders who then adopt a belief that bullying works? Do they then emerge as bullies later as a justified rage against their deeper sense of inferiority? The relational overlap between the bully and the bullied is curious and one that requires that I do much more research on this dynamic. This dis-ease could certainly amplify outward in any cultural context, but it all starts with the individual. The problem is, the majority of people want to be led. Therefore, it is especially important to teach leaders that bullying is unacceptable, and the consequence of bullying is so severe that the privilege of leadership is revoked. Quite the opposite is reality: we learn that bullying is rewarded in the social context (Andrews et al., 2023).

Bringing this full circle to the Coates article: yes, a discussion of reparations can pose much good. However, I think the broader issue to be explored at depth is one of oppression in general. Just as we do not want history to be forgotten, there are many groups who have and continue to fight oppressive forces. If we attach money to one group's suffering, is this a slippery slope that suggests that all groups who have or will experience oppression are entitled to some form of compensation? Who pays and how do we ensure it's distributed fairly and without corruption? There must be a way to penalize those individuals who oppress others in real time versus looking back and punishing groups of people.

This is problematic because, for example, Hawai'i's monarch was overthrown by white, US business owners. Should all white business owners pay to return Hawaii to its citizens? What about indigenous people who inhabited the plains of North America? What about other cultures, countries and lands? How far do we go back in history? Therefore, I believe the issue is to recognize the root cause of oppression - how does it start and how do we stop it? If a discussion of reparations initiates this dialog, I am 100% for it.

This article highlights just how complex system oppression is, and serves as an excellent starting point to draw parallels between ALL oppressed people at many intersections of cultural identity. As a counselor, this strengthens my belief that in any culture (and at each level), the highest should care for the lowest. We must be consistently kind to others. It is not enough to have an awareness that some people experience oppression; we must also act (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2016). There are so many organizations leading by this example and so it is my responsibility as a counselor to support and learn from them (National Equity Project).

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## Journal Entry 2: Reflection on Cultural Immersion Activity

### Dinner at Italian-Owned Restaurant

I went to dinner at a restaurant not far from my home, owned by an Italian family originally from Naples, Italy. I chose this spot because I have yet dined there under this new owner. Neighbors say it's too busy and overpriced (for pasta) and that people sing at your table, and the staff are loud and "brusque." Although I had not given it much more thought, these deterrents were not based on first-hand experience, so why did the feedback from neighbors hold so much weight? Were they xenophobic? Was I? I also chose this spot because we have so many Spanish-speaking communities in the Florida Keys. I thought this might be an opportunity to observe a "minority" in this context of ethnicity, language, and nationality.

Upon being greeted, I noted the restaurant was effectively one large room. There were multiple taller seats at a bar area which blended into the main dining area that had multiple standard height chairs and tables. I noted the seat and table configurations, the cleanliness of the room and bar area, and the setups (napkins, dishes, tableware). I also noted unusual features, like a microphone stand and an Apple iPad in the dining room itself. Ah, karaoke. I closed my eyes to observe any scents: sanitizer and perhaps a little whiff of baked garlic, but sadly not fresh baked bread. These details stand out to me because I am a former restaurateur. In reflecting on why I had not visited this restaurant prior to this occasion, for me, it really came down to a problem of food value. As a restaurateur, I understand pasta-based dishes to be

one of the highest margin types of menus. If I am dining out, I prefer dining out at meals that I would not prepare at home. After scanning the menu, I looked around at the other patrons. What I observed was that every person had an oversized cocktail or wine. I peered at the menu; beverage costs were a good value if you were a patron who wanted two drinks for the price of one-and-a-half. Ironic - a good value. I glanced at the food menu in order to gauge its authenticity. Interesting items on the menu; some I did not instantly recognize. As a frequent traveler, I am accustomed to a lot of menus in myriad languages. I reminded myself that I was not there as a restaurant critic.

Switching gears to the people in the room, I reflected upon whether I tend toward looking *through* people instead of *at* them, unless they were interacting directly with me. When I was younger, I was told it is rude to stare at people. Also, I reflected that as a woman, when looking at men, in particular, that can be construed as an invitation for them to speak with me. I took a deep breath, reminded myself to relax, and observed each person in the room. I did not feel judgmental; it felt more like an anthropologist looking for clues to explain each person's story. A man who appeared to be the owner walked into the room, greeted several patrons, and took a seat opposite me at the high tables. He dressed in a preppy way, like a tennis player just returning from a match. He motioned at the bartender, who promptly filled his glass nearly to the rim with wine and then returned a few minutes later with a steaming dish of mussels.

I made notes in my journal: why was I noticing certain things and why? Was I looking for things in common with others, or focusing on things that felt foreign? Did anything about this setting or the people make me feel in a certain way? I jotted down that I was happy that I came because overall there was a sense of joy or celebration in the people in this room. Then I thought about how the act of dining often brings people together in celebration. Maybe they are celebrating a birthday, or a deal at the office, or just pampering themselves with the privilege of others preparing the meal. My thoughts went to all the people who were not in this room. Dining out is expensive. How many people in this community never or seldom have the privilege of dining out?

Overall, I recognized that slowing down to reflect on my own self-awareness and understanding of what is in the room, as well as what is not in the room, might be useful as a counselor. I need to be more mindful and learn more skills around this practice. Slowing down and bringing this kind of open-ended mindfulness to clients might be really useful to them, as well. I felt myself asking an iterative chain of "but why?" to each assumption that I made. That must be useful?

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### Journal Entry 3: Reflection on Cultural Immersion Activity

#### Visiting a Greek Restaurant

There's a Greek restaurant nearby, owned by a local family who often supports community events by donating food at fundraisers. I visited their restaurant one afternoon to get a sense of their values through my lens of being a former restaurateur. For example, if you value the environment, you might choose compostable or recyclable materials for food service orders. If you value profits, you choose the

least expensive materials for food service. I think about the decisions we make each day and how much they reveal about our values.

I ordered a snack and also some take away items for dinner. It's a small restaurant; maybe 40 seats in total. Tables are configured as two or four tops, which is normal in the US. It's far less common here for people to dine as a large family unit than in other countries. I recall how perplexed the Italian family was when they initially opened their restaurant. They had several 6-8 person tables set up but few family groups came in for dinner. They ended up swapping out those tables for smaller ones.

One thing I noticed immediately was that the chef/owner in the kitchen was a man. He was focused on preparing hummus, *labneh* (yogurt) and broiling eggplant for *baba ganoush*. He rarely spoke to staff other than when they occasionally inquired about customer-directed questions, "is the hummus gluten-free?" He rolled his eyes.

It's interesting that so many movies portray women primarily cooking in American households. In both of the restaurants I visited, men were working in the kitchen. I reflected on gender roles in various cultures. Who is responsible for running the family business and which roles do the family members play? At the Italian restaurant, I remember seeing a couple of younger kids rolling silverware (wrapping spoons, knives and forks into napkins). I wondered if this owner's family was involved in the restaurant.

At one point, I gently knocked on the door to the kitchen to ask a question about catering. The owner looked toward a staff member as a signal to answer my question while he turned his back toward me to continue scraping hummus into a container. Not friendly, I thought.

I remember feeling like I wasn't my best self when I owned a restaurant; it's one of the biggest reasons I chose to shut it down. I wondered if he's feeling good about his job and/or decision to have this restaurant. Maybe he's just having a bad day, or dealing with other more serious issues, or trying to get his staff to be more proactive in answering questions. I recognize my counter transference in this process.

In the dining area, there is a large wall unit that features several retail items: cans of spices, stuffed animals themed for Florida, and chocolate bars. The food items aren't selling well; I noticed the approaching expiration dates on the packages.

The food is wonderful, and I hope the restaurant stays in business. It's open only through lunch time, closing by 4p each day. It looks like they rely on some regular customers, but mostly the steady stream of tourists who stop in for a quick lunch on their way to Key West. It's difficult to have a profitable restaurant operation based on his hours, and it makes me wonder what drives that decision (to not remain open for dinner). I'm curious if he has a wholesale business where he provides boxed lunches for fishing guides, for example. Perhaps he doesn't need to stay open for dinner. It would be interesting to hear his story.

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## Journal Entry 4: Reflection on Cultural Immersion Activity

### Meet Jose, from Puerto Rico

My original subject cancelled, so I asked an individual who sometimes drives for us if he'd be willing to tell me about himself for my studies. Jose's story piqued my curiosity because he shared previously that he owned a chauffeur service in Puerto Rico up until September of 2017 when Hurricane Maria decimated his town. Shortly after, he moved his wife and twin sons to the Miami area to rebuild their lives. They lost their home and business in that storm. He said they had a significant loss; they invested everything in their home and business. It felt to me like he wanted to share that he valued hard work and had built a successful company and would continue to work hard to improve their lives. He wanted me to know he possessed skills beyond those of a driver. My default is to convey respect to people to the best of my abilities. I reflected upon why he might feel the desire to express that he's not "just a driver," and I wonder if he is embarrassed to be working as a driver. It would be emotionally impactful to lose job status. My instinct is to reassure him, but if my assumption is wrong, I risk potentially insulting him. I make a mental note to ask more questions about this so that I can understand if I am sensing an issue of injury to his pride.

Jose is 61 years old. Their family is Catholic. His twin boys are 15, turning 16 in May. We share a few stories about our boys because my son is the same age. Both of his children are studying at a private arts school in Miami; one has an interest in pursuing a culinary education and the other aspires to work in theater. In learning that his parents are Cuban, I wondered to what degree that specific cultural background influenced their decisions to pursue careers in the arts. From what I understand from visiting Cuba, one of the most admirable traits of Cuba is their national support for the arts. People may very well starve, but they have fine art adorning their walls! In Cuba, artists, actors, and musicians are supported by national funding. I wondered if being here in the States would dampen their enthusiasm once they realized the difficulty of obtaining jobs in theatrical arts. When I asked to what degree they worried about job prospects, Jose explained that the older son was quite talented with his cooking skills so he knew he'd be fine. The younger son, he explained, still had time to find his way toward a well-paying job.

He volunteered a story about reprimanding his younger son for being late to meet him one day after school. His sons have to transfer between school and after-school programs each day; Jose drives him between sites. However, after showing disrespect by being 40 minutes late, Jose drove away and then texted his son, saying he'd need to catch a bus, which required a transfer. Even though Jose could have been there and accepted his tardy son, he wanted to teach him a lesson. Jose also let his wife know what was going on so she could stand united with him. I marveled at their united front. In what I might consider a congruent broaching style, I shared what I thought might be common values around parenting, such as correcting poor behavior early in childhood when children are old enough to understand the consequences of their decisions. I reflected on the age-appropriateness of enforcing rules on children; if enforced too young, that scenario of leaving a child "stranded" would be terrifying to an immature child. Timing is everything with raising children to recognize respect in the family dynamic. A story like this could signal problems within that family support system if one parent wants to enforce

rules prematurely on children, for example. Or, if one parent then undermined the other's decision to enforce a rule. Jose's decision to enforce this rule seemed entirely appropriate in this instance. I asked Jose if he was proud of his son's adjustments to starting anew, and we talked about knowing how to overcome adversity and developing resilience as one of the best gifts you can give to your children. This theme of adversity and resilience continues to be a major influence in my theories and reading about trauma recovery.

Overall, I keep thinking about the role of family and faith, and how it supports resilience. It helps me understand about interventions I can offer as a therapist to help people who suffer major upheaval, like a devastating storm. It's important to check in with each family member to ensure they feel safe, and if that's not the case, I can offer for them an awareness of protective factors that can help people develop resilience after traumatic experiences.

I feel gratitude. Gratitude for meeting people to hear their stories. I consider it one of the highest honors when people say how comfortable it is to share their experiences with me. I reflect on what a gift it is to be in service.

For me, as a woman who suffered from developmental trauma, it is important to note that a way of being "in service" is mutually beneficial when it's healthy. Prior to treatment, being "in service" was unbalanced. People pleasing isn't a healthy relationship. Now, I'm enjoying the balance and want to be mindful that I also need to check in on myself so that I'm at my "in service" best for others who I might counsel.

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#### Journal Entry 5: Reflection on Cultural Immersion Activity

##### Cultural Immersion with Mariko, from Japan

This week, I am in Japan as part of a cultural immersion tour. I am part of a group with members from all over the world who enjoy traveling to lesser known places to meet people who shape the cities in which they live. As an example, we meet with a local restaurateur who has a family-run business of preparing one item on their menu, *tonkatsu*, a pork (or vegetable) cutlet dish prepared consistently for over 100 years. We are amateur Anthony Bourdains, if you are familiar with the controversial yet tragic celebrity chef-turned-author who ultimately took his life after much acclaim as a world-traveling travel writer.

The translator/guide and local liaison is Mariko. She is 63, native of Nagano, Japan. We talk about the tragedy that took place years ago near Nagano. Japan Airlines 123 suffered catastrophic damage to its tail section, resulting in one of the most terrifying experiences imaginable as their plane crashed: the plane "porpoised" dozens of times as the pilots heroically attempted to save their lives. That experience within the cabin would have felt like an uncontrollable roller coaster, the nose steeply ascending, pitching so steeply that the plane stalled, and then it would dive forward into a free-fall. Mariko knew

families who had loved ones on that flight. We connected in that moment, expressing our sadness together for their suffering.

I chose Mariko for this journal entry because of her deep knowledge of Japanese culture and especially about changing roles for women within this complex culture. Mariko explains her background and decision to become a translator and guide. She married a foreign national, a British man, and traveled to the UK and throughout Europe as his job required. She did not want to sit idle during these years abroad, so she started tutoring Japanese-speaking people while there. When they retired to Japan, she continued her work as a guide for visitors seeking immersive tours of Japan.

A second reason I chose Mariko is because my final assignment is based on Japanese help-seeking behaviors. I thought this would add context when I tackle that article.

Mariko is very curious about me. I remind her she is the subject of my research and we laugh. I share with her a story about Rosalie Silberman Abella, a Canadian Supreme Court judge who strongly impacted women's equal rights. Abella's judicial decisions remain foundational in calculating the value of a woman's work in the home in cases of divorce, for example. Mariko discusses changing dynamics across multiple gender-related issues: career expectations, social behavior, and increasing tolerance for individual expression. The media does not accurately portray most people's empathy toward one another, she states. As an example, Japan has a history of gentlemen's clubs, where hostesses basically spend the evening entertaining them as paid escorts within a restaurant-lounge environment. Now, in fairness, there are women's clubs: young men, many of whom undergo plastic surgery to change the shape of their eyes, in particular, entertain women in these same posh settings. Many of these young men retire in their early 30's! She talks about the aging Japanese population and how that impacts worker shortages and opportunities for this next generation.

Considering there are nearly 40 million people living in the Tokyo metropolitan area (Tokyo city is a large, well-defined city center), it is the world's most populous metropolitan area. This is four times the size of New York metro. Even though the overall population of Japan is decreasing for the next couple of decades, Tokyo will see an increase in population growth. This is where the young people live. Government programs, established to encourage younger families to move outside the city center, are nominally successful. Younger families want to remain near their social circles despite the high living costs and overwork.

I reflect on the complex layering of identity within this fascinating culture. Thinking about what it must feel like to be born into this place: gender expectations, family values, the role of individuals, government policies, and social acceptance. Learning about how many Japanese view religion, for example, gave me a new perspective. According to Mariko, Japanese people are quite tolerant of differing religious beliefs because Japanese mythology supports the notion of 65 gods, or *kami*. This polytheistic basis, she believes, is why Japanese people can accept that other individuals have different gods. I share with her that Polynesian beliefs are similar, and we talk about how all of our shared ancestors originate from the Pacific region. We find much in common when discussing how important it

is to practice open-mindedness around individual spirituality. We both agree on the dangers from religious extremism.

Reflecting upon this entire experience thus far, I am thankful to find a love for travel and cultural immersion so early in my life. I hope my life experiences with people from around the world allow me to broach and bridge subjects with my clients in a respectful, curious way, and with an informed base of knowledge about dynamics that might impact them. Learning about other cultures helps me offer anecdotal stories where I can invite clients to offer their perspective. It feels like my work is to offer the loom on which we weave these rich stories into a tapestry.

Values of mutual respect within the Japanese culture are aligned with mine. I reflect on how I view this value as integral to my approach as a counselor. I want to create a safe space for people to share their experiences in all of my interactions; not just when acting as a counselor.