



# QUESTION #1

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## A Textbook Discussion

Inspiring today's youth within a school to become proactive leaders

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The challenge of offering a wide spectrum of services to several different audiences makes school counselors unique in their practice. Although similar skills and expertise are required of counselors in other settings, counselors in schools, as noted throughout this text, apply their knowledge beyond the limited scope of a single service because they do so in a comprehensive program of interrelated services and activities.

Schmidt, John J., (2008) . "Defining School Counseling", [Counseling in Schools: Comprehensive Programs of Responsive Services for All Students, Fifth Edition](#), Boston: Pearson Education, p. 53 Inc.

## Question #1:

### (Chapter 2)

Reflect on the following factors discussed in Chapter #2:

- culture
- subcultures
- sex, gender
- sexual orientation families and communities
- socioeconomic status

Examine your own beliefs about these variables and explain how your beliefs will affect your functioning as a successful counselor with diverse student populations.

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### Connecting Cultures

Coming from a mixed race family, having to deal with the acceptance of other belief systems and way of life was commonplace in my home. There was a strong compulsion to accept the norms “imposed” upon the dominant culture at the time, although, from my parents point of view, we became part of Canadian society and culture because of the choices we made. Times have changed in that the term “minority group” almost seems erroneous to describe the communities that compose much of the GTA. In this chapter, Schmidt goes into some depth to explore the increased diversity of American society and explain the factors that help to define it. He argues that counselors who are capable workers with diverse students develop keen

insight into what a school needs to do to address this diversity. In modern society, with such a heterogeneous grouping of people located in rather near proximity to each other, it continues to impress me how, despite the idiosyncrasies that each share, how each culture is able to express themselves without free of overt discrimination compared with the levels reported in other countries and regions. Yet, is this characteristic

(that some would argue is strictly “Canadian”) evident in our schools? Is having a cultural day, or “**insert culture here**” month enough to show that our schools are serving the diverse student community and their families with the adjustment to new cultural beliefs and behaviours? Counselors have a duty to see that schools are designed, organized and governed for the welfare of children.

## HOT ISSUES TODAY



There is an increasing range of students attending schools and the information around sexual identity continues to build. Counselors need to be equipped to address questions of sexuality and gender that may make them seriously reflect and evaluate their own viewpoints, attitudes and beliefs.

\* Schmidt reports latest brain research findings that reveal that differences in males and females may relate to differences in thought=processing abilities.



**About Sexual Development:** Schmidt asks that counselors keep informed of latest research findings. Why? Counselors must be able to locate findings and interpret them to students in a clear and understandable manner.

## CLASSROOMS NOW: A CHANGING LEARNING LANDSCAPE



Successful counselors will be knowledgeable about cultural differences that influence students [...] and how these differences relate to gender roles.” (Schmidt, p.37)



Is being part of a sub-culture a bad thing? Schmidt states that sub-groups like sports clubs to band make up sub-groups and are important to address the diverse needs and identity that young people yearn for.

### What resonated for me:

- gender roles are defined by a culture
- students perceptions about sex, gender roles interacts closely with cultural beliefs and acculturation into the school.
- strong religious/spiritual views may interfere with a counselor's services provided in schools.
- counselors must work to become multiculturally competent
- counselors can't do it all!



# Families, communities, lifestyles...

What characterizes the modern family?



**The influence of family.**

Schmidt writes that counselors must work to ensure that children feel safe and secure to the point where children are able to share thoughts and feelings on sensitive topics. This applies even more so to children from family structures that would not be considered part of the “norm”. In my last school I worked in, the number of single parent run homes was staggering. Add to that, there were a significant number of children who endured physical, mental and sexual abuse and were residing in group homes. As teachers, we were obliged to provide more than effective curriculum programming and extracurriculars: we were instructed to provide more to address the “whole child”.

As students go through their daily lives at school, eventually they all will have to make choices (we pray, good ones!) about future career goals where the influence of the family plays a vital role. Schmidt reports

that the measure of which certain students accept or even reject their family’s values and input “...affects the ease or difficulty with which they move through developmental processes.” (Schmidt, p.40). This is absolutely imperative for the counselor to not only know, but how to handle students who face this dilemma. What a responsibility!

## ECONOMICS OF FAMILIES

There is no doubt in my mind that the socio-economic status of families impacts how people live, work, and even how they approach schooling. In the text, we are given a lesson on this aspect of diversity and even an expose on rural vs. urban schools. I think the latter is critical to know especially in a school board as large as mine. It’s not unlikely that teachers may find themselves working in different communities within the highly diverse region. The small school environment that Schmidt speaks about is almost spot-on to the climate present in my own building: a counselor often performs duties that go well beyond what she originally prepared for, which, as Schmidt notes, raises role conflicts. This type of school, and those found in urban settings face unique challenges and show how issues of diversity will influence counseling practice. A challenge indeed!

1. Dual earners
2. 30% led by single parents
3. remarried, blended
4. teen pregnancy
5. increased # of adoptees
6. same sex parents
7. grandparents are primary custodians in many communities

My family is different, but does it mean I learn differently too?



## FROM MR. SCHMIDT:

To be “Multiculturally Competent” a counselor must develop in their...

- ☒ Awareness
- ☒ Knowledge
- ☒ Skill Level
- ☒ Leadership
- ☒ Competencies

## WORD WALL

### KEY WORDS FROM CHAPTER 2

ADVOCACY OPENNESS  
COMPETENCY  
DIVERSITY  
LEADERSHIP  
POSITIVE CLIMATE

### 5 things to spark change in schools:

1. A strong commitment by the school and school system for the education of culturally diverse students
2. An understanding by schools of their responsibility to teach the value of cultures
3. Support by schools for persons, such as school counselors, actively seeking ways to change institutional policies and programs to better serve diverse students and their families
4. A clear effort by the school and school system to communicate that they value diversity
5. Strategic planning and ongoing evaluation of school policies, programs, and processes related to the education of all students, including those of diverse cultures (pp. 171–172)

(Schmidt, p.47).