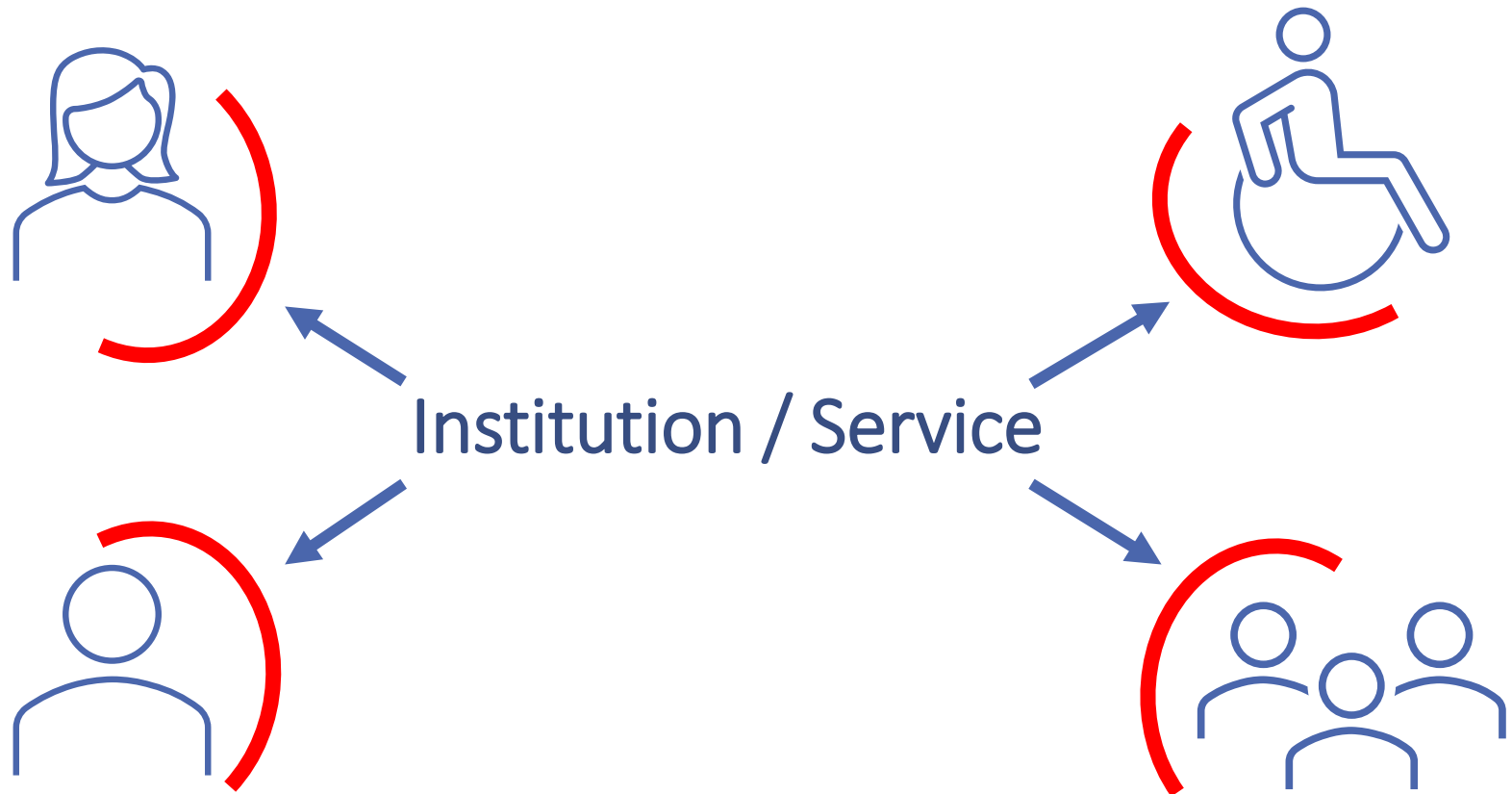# The Importance of Diversity & Identity to Support Increasing Accessibility in Counselling Training & Services

Adopting the Working Within Diversity anti-oppressive approach
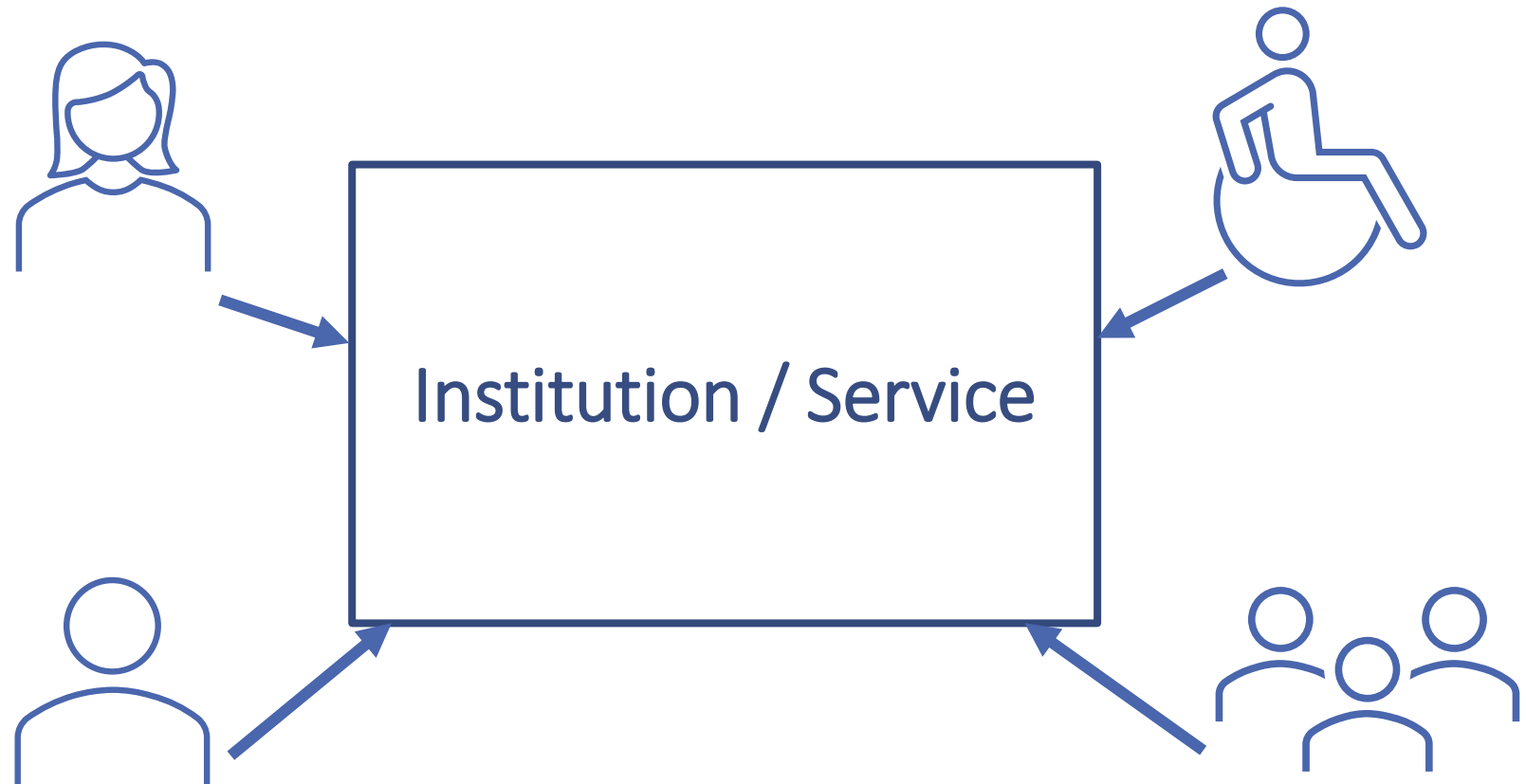
#WorkingWithinDiversity
#AntiOppressivePractice
@myira_khan

MK
Myira Khan
COUNSELLING

Barriers

Institution / Service

Barriers to training and services

Institution / Service

Barriers to training and services

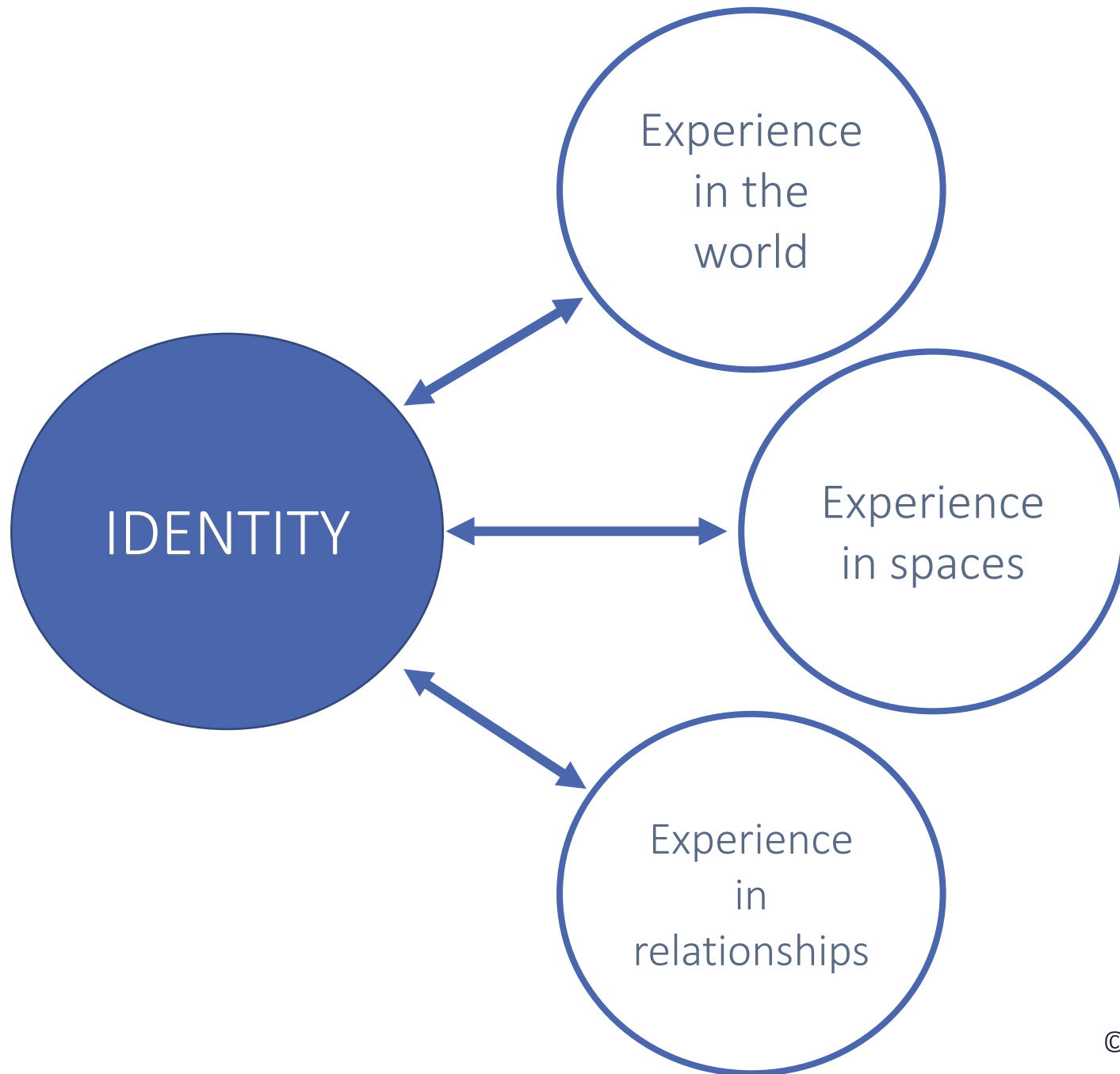Organisations and services are responsible for creating spaces.

Responsible for making these spaces accessible . . . Or not inclusive and exclusive.
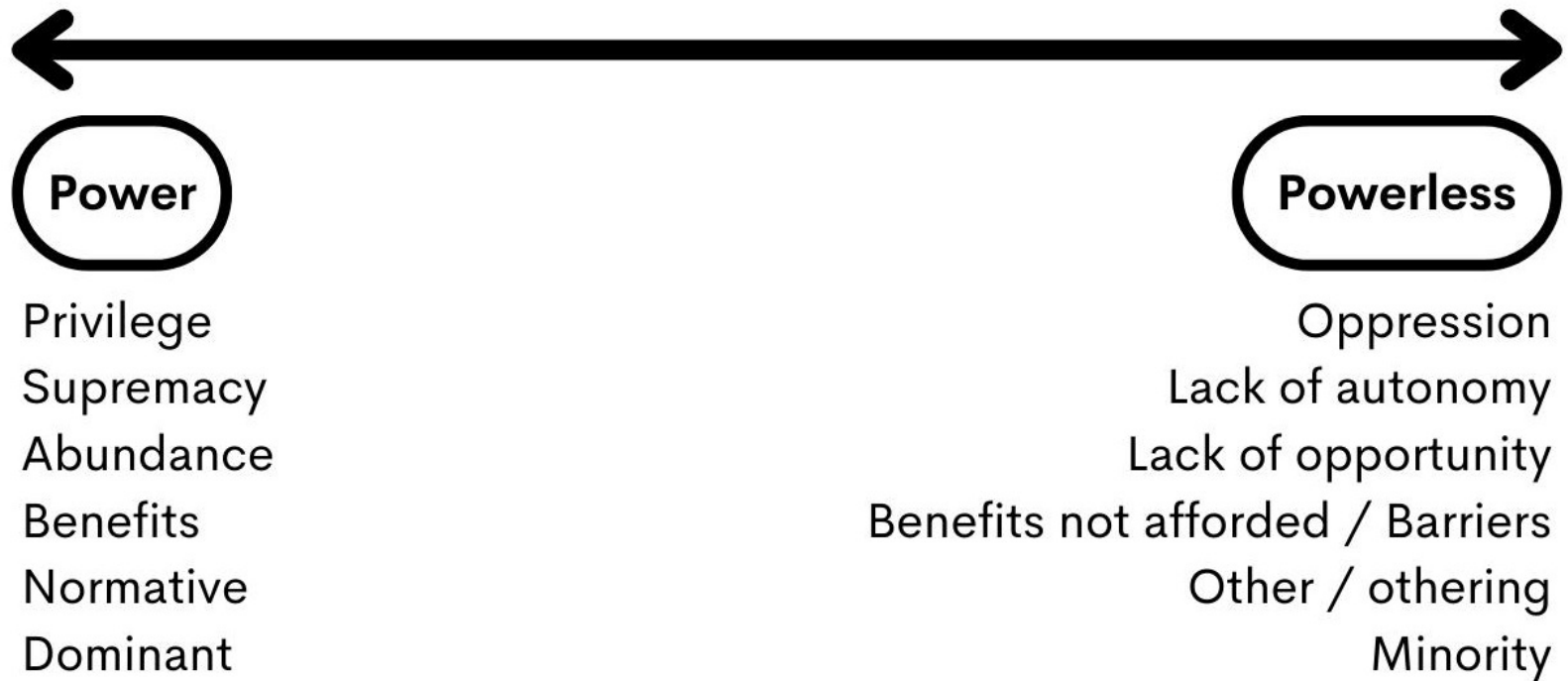
Organisations/services create barriers.

Not 'hard to reach' communities.

Not the individuals trying to access them.

Not their responsibility.

IDENTITY

Experience in the world

Experience in spaces

Experience in relationships

Social Location & Spectrums of Oppression

Power	Powerless
Privilege	Oppression
Supremacy	Lack of autonomy
Abundance	Lack of opportunity
Benefits	Benefits not afforded / Barriers
Normative	Other / othering
Dominant	Minority

How does identity or diversity create barriers?

- Lack of **representation** & **visibility** of diversity/identity
- Lack of **intersectional identities**
- Lack of **understanding between identity and lived experiences**
- Lack of **understanding of lived experiences**
- Lack of understanding of how we **relate to spaces and people** in institutions and services **through power dynamics**
- Lack of **feeling safe**
- Lack of **belonging**
- Lack of **being seen and heard**
- Lack of understanding the **relationship between students/clients and the institution/service**
- **Stigma to accessing therapy** itself

How does identity or diversity create barriers? Cont.

- Experiences of **oppression**
- Experiences of **how being viewed** & positioned (through bias, projections, social location & privilege/advantages)
- How **being ignored and excluded** in spaces
- How being **positioned as the 'other'**
- How being seen and **positioned as the 'teacher'** for the counsellor or other students on issues of diversity
- Being seen as **representative** of their identity characteristic
- Not being seen as an **individual**
- Lack of access to **first-language services**
- Lack of **financial support**
- Inaccessible due to **disabilities**

Impact of barriers

- **Training/service** becomes **inaccessible**
- Space feels **unsafe**
- Feel you **don't belong**
- Feel you **won't be accepted**
- Feel you **won't be fully understood**

- All becomes about the **relationship between the individual and the organization/service**

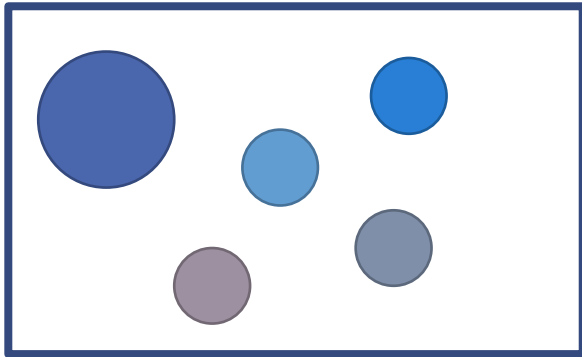# Inclusion vs Anti-Discrimination vs Anti-Oppressive

Inclusion vs Anti-Discrimination vs Anti-Oppressive
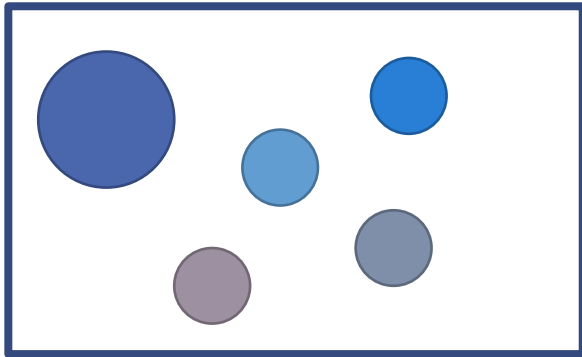
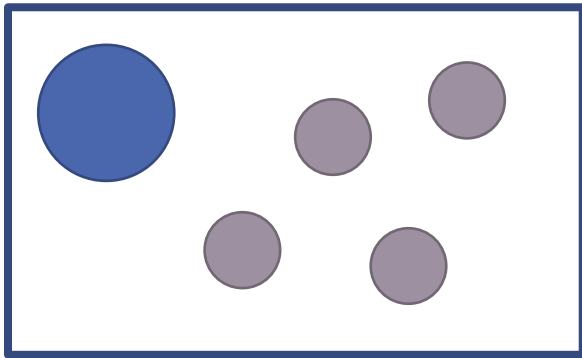Inclusion

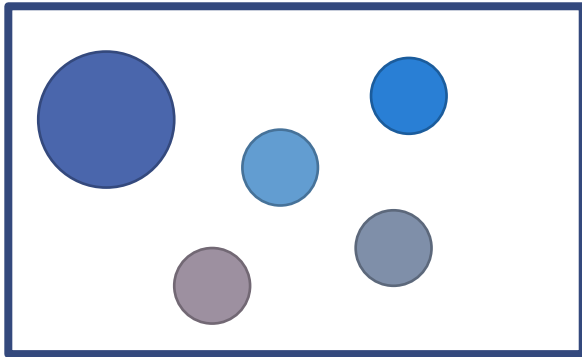# Inclusion vs Anti-Discrimination vs Anti-Oppressive
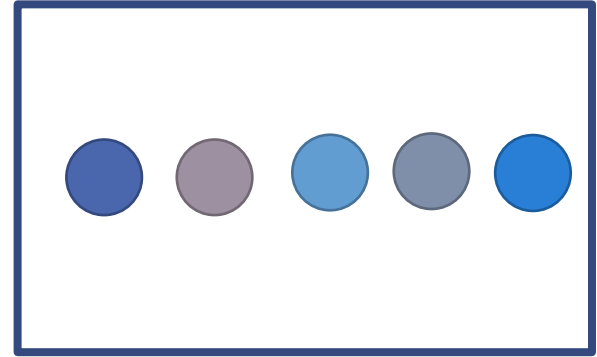

Inclusion

Anti-Discrimination

Inclusion vs Anti-Discrimination vs Anti-Oppressive

Inclusion

Anti-Oppressive
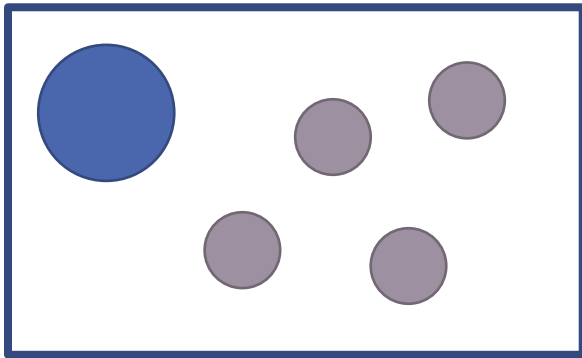
Anti-Discrimination

Oppressive and Anti-oppressive Practice

What do we mean by 'oppressive' practice?

- OPPRESSION: The systematic targeting or marginalization of one social group by another social group for the benefit of the more powerful social group.

- Ignores, denies and removes any acknowledgement of systemic & structural inequality both 'out there' and 'in here' between counsellor & client.

What do we mean by anti-oppressive practice?

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Anti-oppressive practice:

- explicitly **acknowledges structural and systemic inequalities**, **systems of oppression** and the entire **power-oppression relational dynamic**.

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- explicitly acknowledges structural and systemic inequalities, systems of oppression and the entire power-oppression relational dynamic.

- supports an **understanding of how each person is shaped by their lived experiences & by the underlying systemic and structural context of their lived experiences** and which **end of systems of oppression and power-oppression relational dynamics they experience.**

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- supports the facilitation and approach to offer a **relational dynamic of equality and flatten the power-oppression hierarchy** in our practice, in our processes and our relationships.

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- identifies the 'out there' context within which students/clients have their lived experiences of privilege and/or oppression.
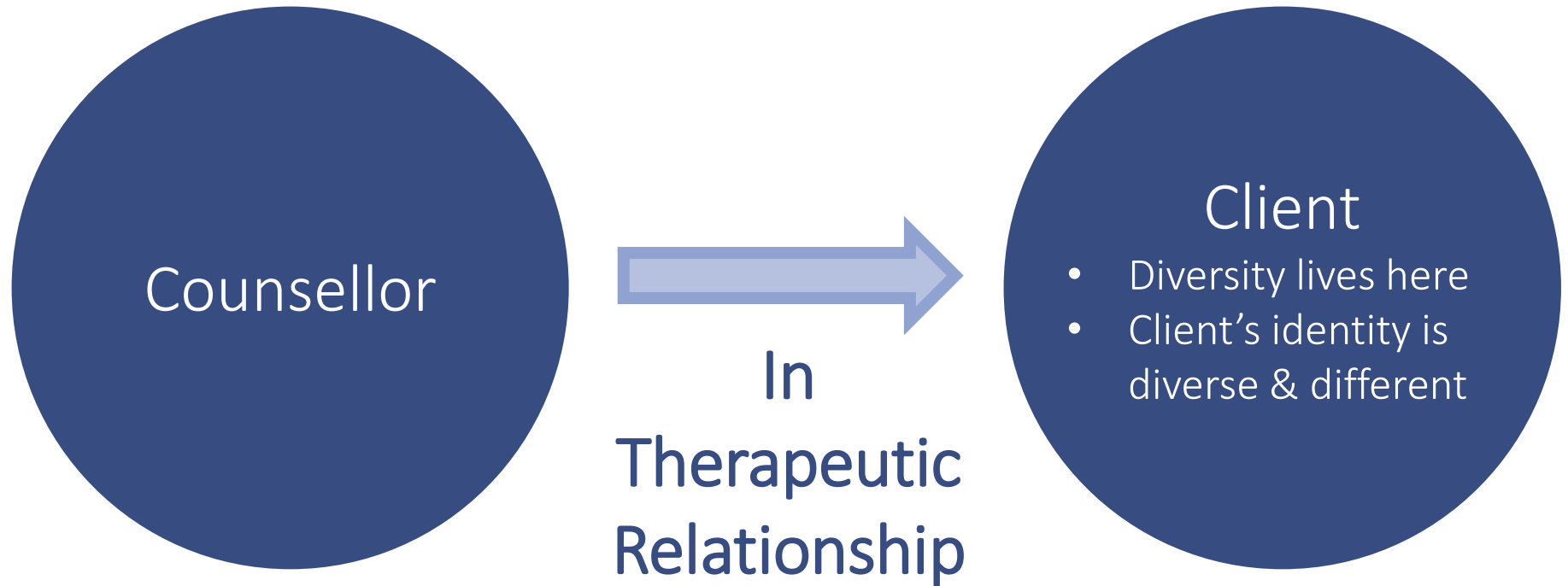
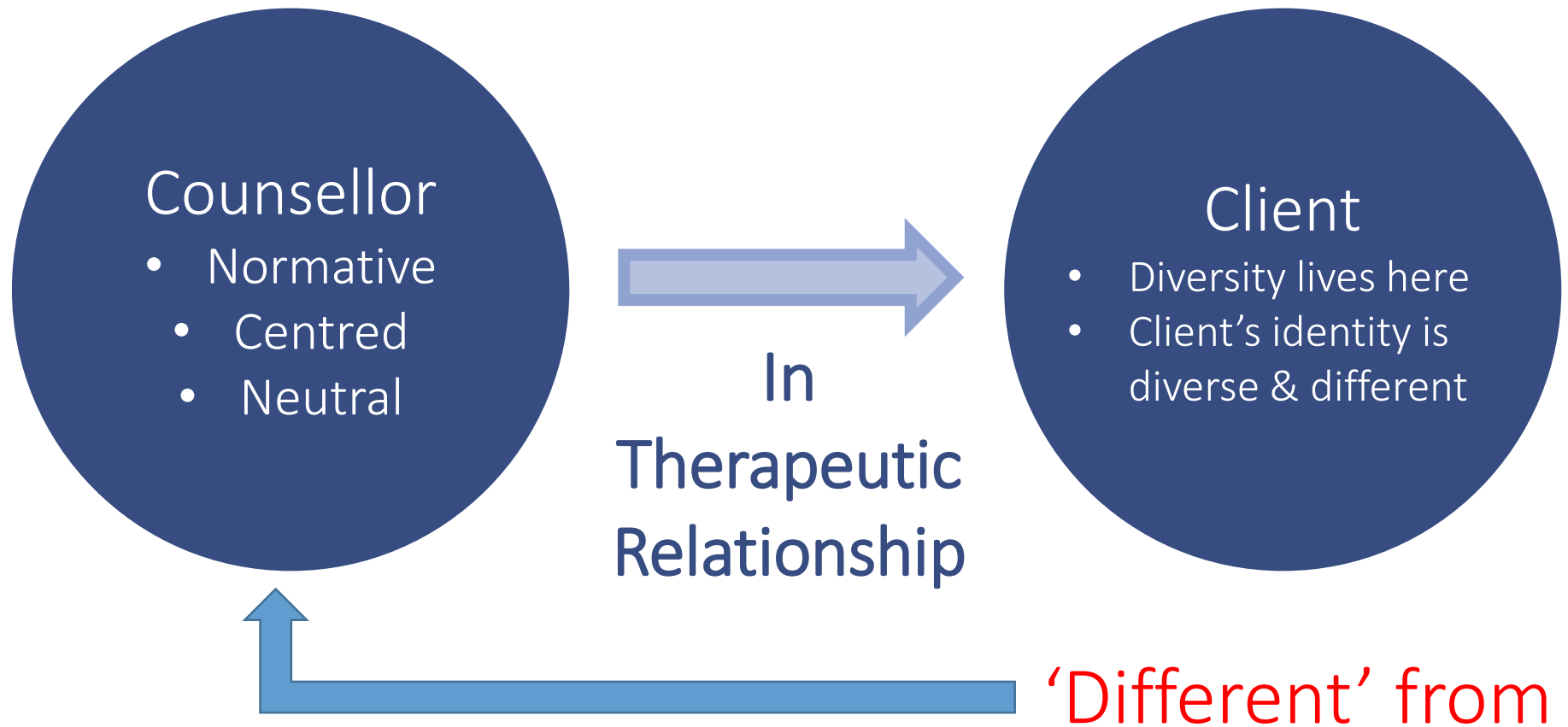## What do we mean by anti-oppressive practice?

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- identifies the 'out there' context within which students/clients have their lived experiences of privilege and/or oppression.

- acknowledges the **structural inequalities of the 'in here' context** and working to **flatten the power** and oppression between counsellor-client/ tutor-student, offering a process and relationship, which **holds the client/student in equal regard** to the practitioner/tutor, **without the client/student being marginalised, minoritised or 'othered'** by the service/institution or practitioner/tutor.

Working 'with' Diversity

The problem of working 'with' diversity

Counsellor

In
Therapeutic
Relationship

Client
- Diversity lives here
- Client's identity is diverse & different

The problem of working 'with' diversity

Counsellor
- Normative
- Centred
- Neutral

In Therapeutic Relationship

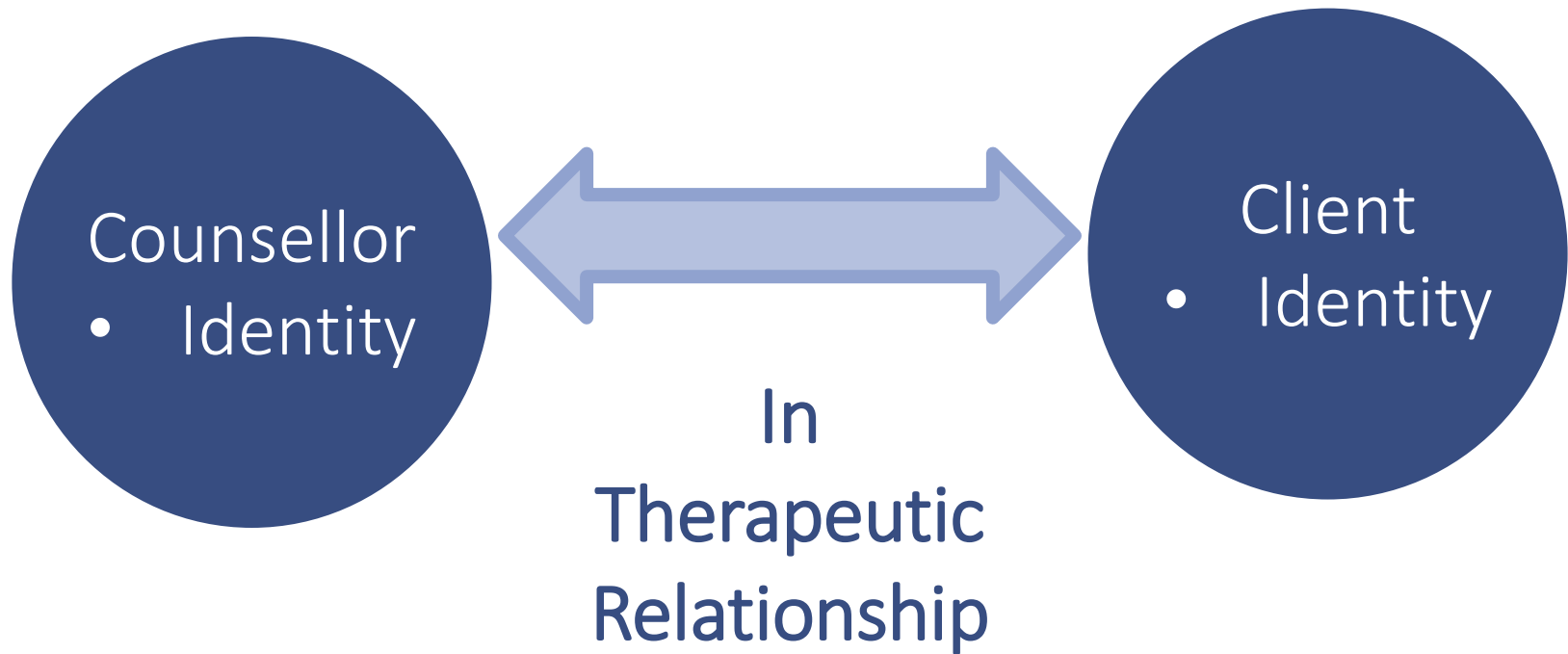**Client**
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- Client's identity is diverse & different

'Different' from
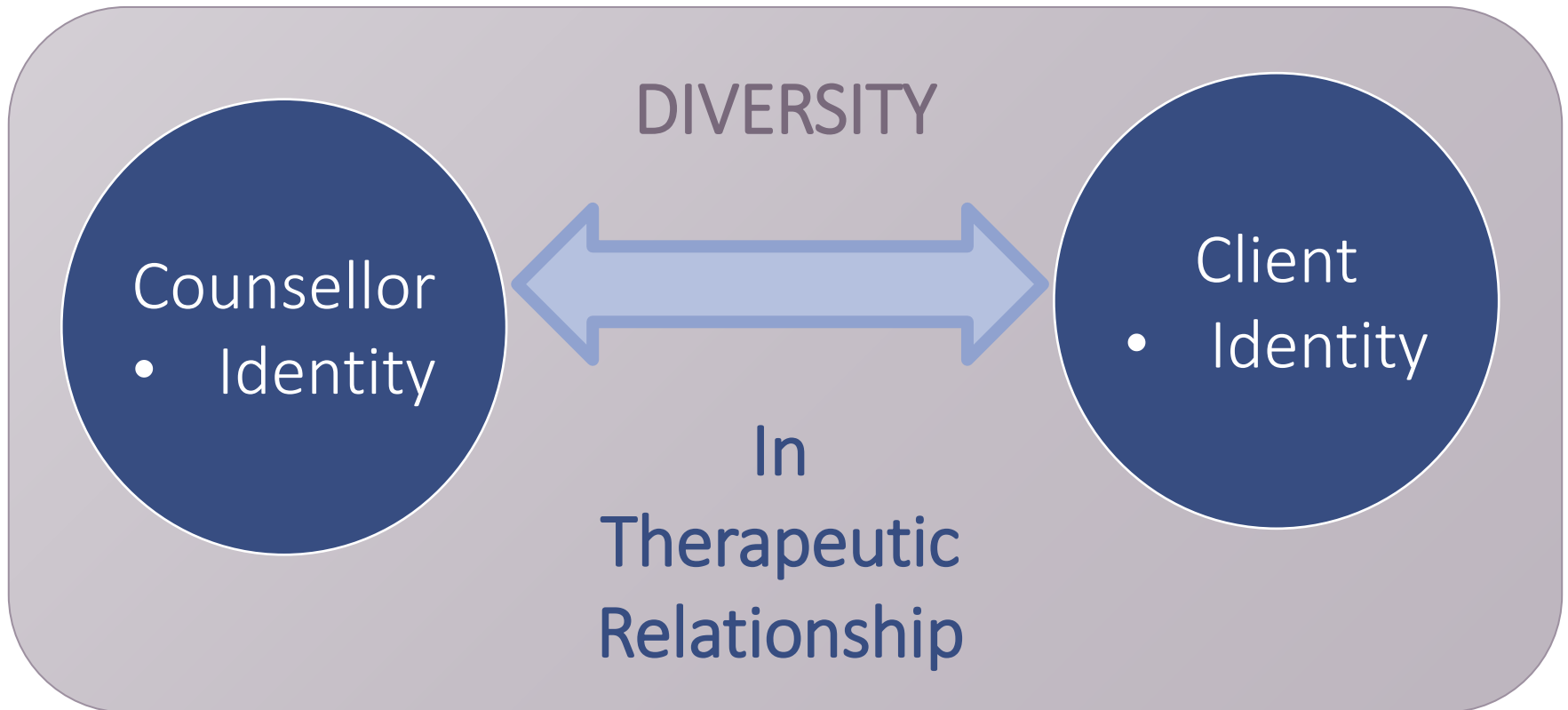
Removing barriers by taking up an anti-oppressive position and approach

Working *within* Diversity

What is 'Working within Diversity'?

Counsellor
- Identity

Client
- Identity

In
Therapeutic
Relationship

What is 'Working within Diversity'?

DIVERSITY

Counsellor
- Identity

Client
- Identity

In
Therapeutic
Relationship

Working Within Diversity – The Model
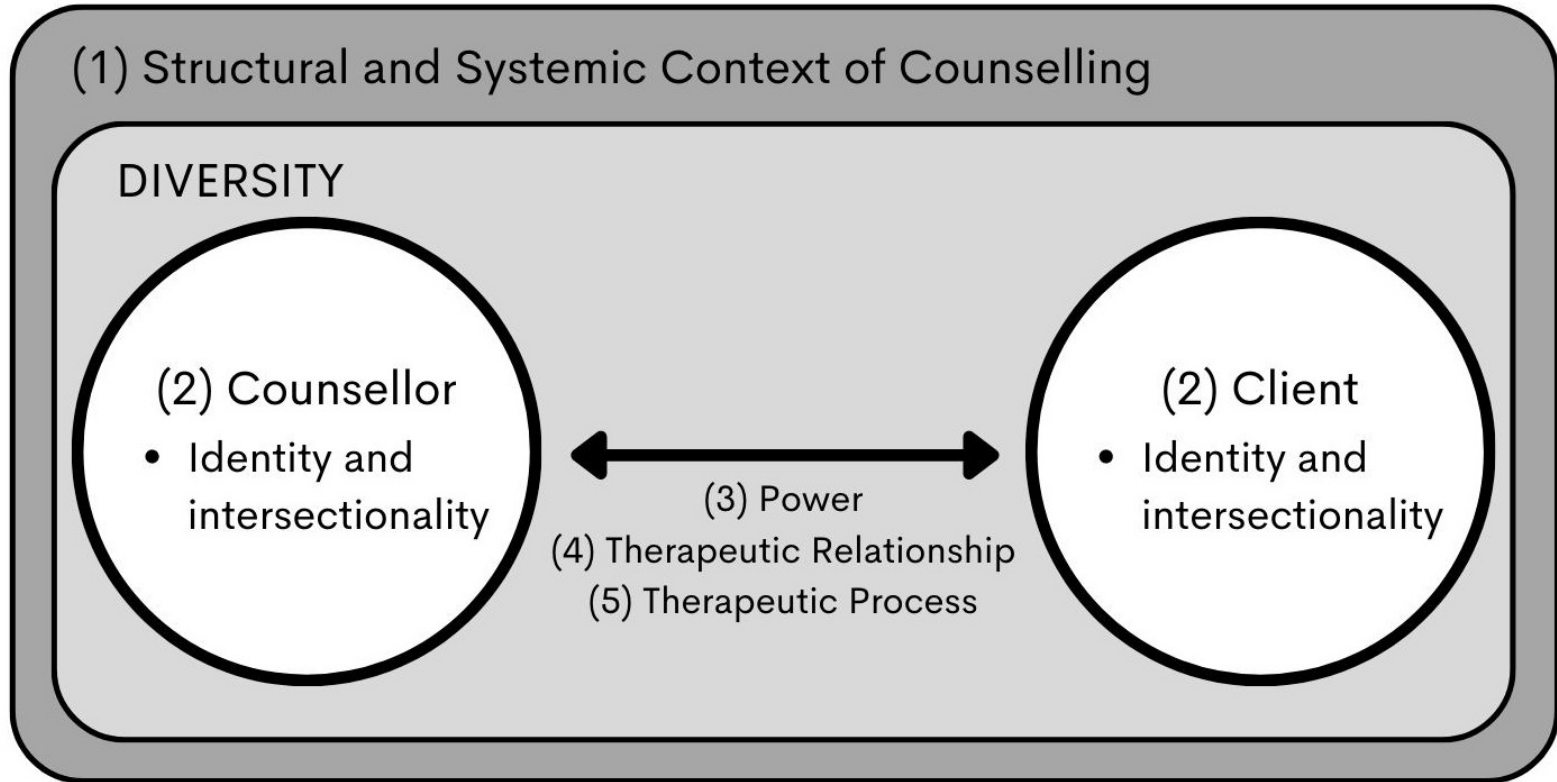
Working Within Diversity – Power Relational Dynamic

Increases power

Being:
White-racialised
English speaking
Male
Aged between 25–45
Middle class or elite
Heterosexual
Able-bodied
Educated
Employed
Attractive

Decreases power

Being:
Ethnically-minoritised
Racially- minoritised
Non-English speaking
Strong regional accent
Female/non-binary
Young/old
Working class
LGBTQ+
Disabled
Uneducated
Unemployed
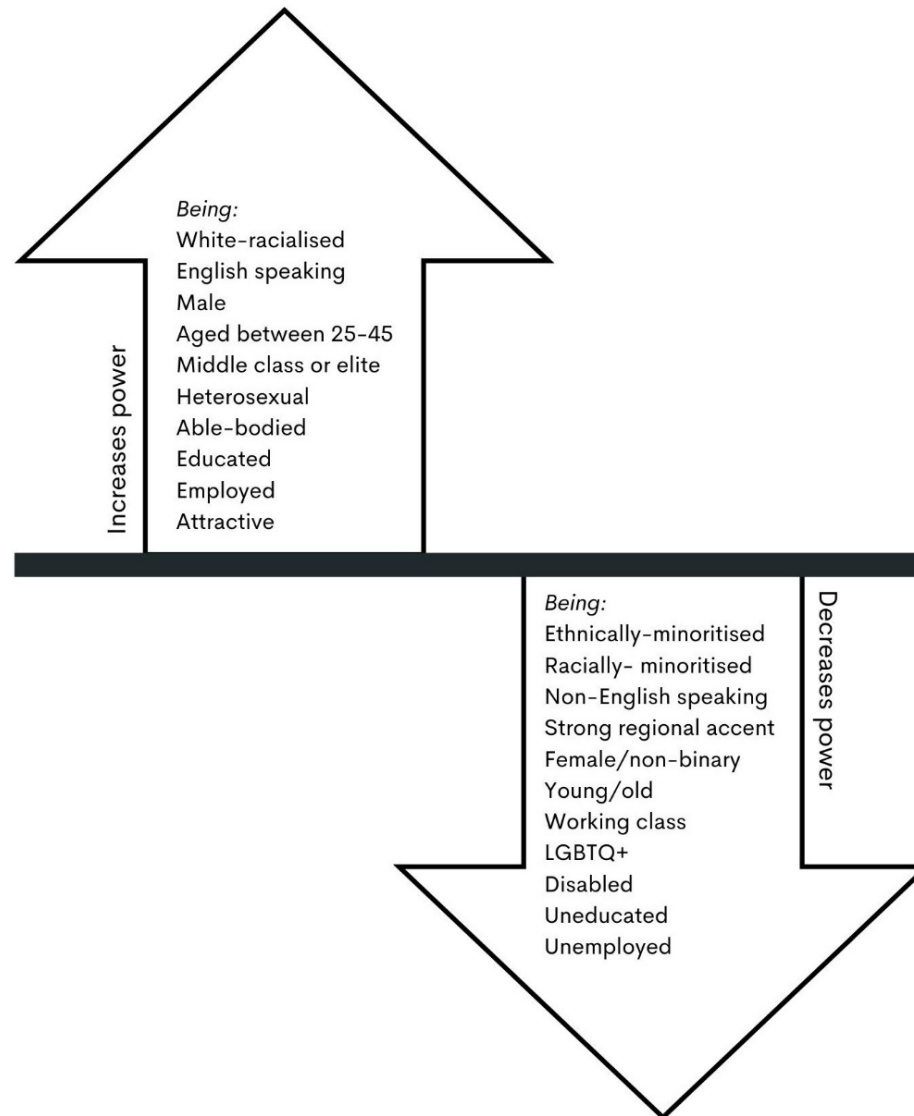
Working Within Diversity – Addressing Power Dynamics
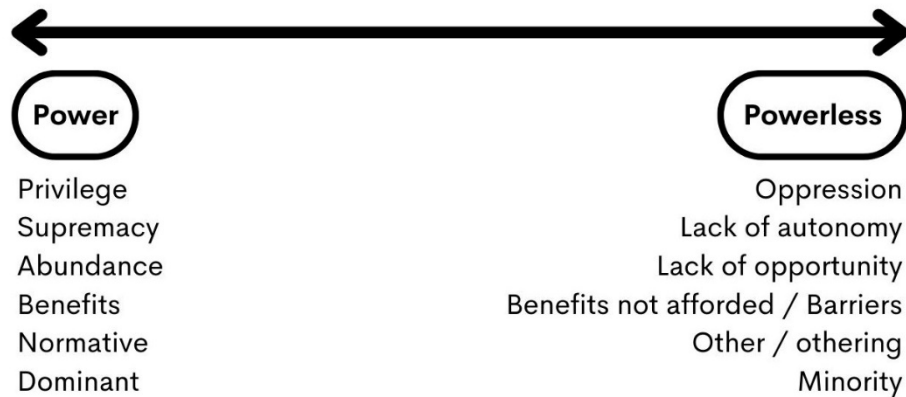
- **Minoritised** not minority or BAME
- **Cultural Attunement** not Competence
- **Cultural-closeness** & **Cultural-distance**
- **Safe spaces** are felt
- Experience **belonging**, being **felt, seen & heard**
- Greater **representation of diversity**
- Explicitly **acknowledging and delivering anti-oppressive practice**
- Accessing and delivering **anti-oppressive supervision**

Commitment to anti-oppressive practice

Commitment to anti-oppressive practice

- Removing barriers around our institutions and services by **embedding working within diversity and anti-oppressive practice as a core element** to our systems, structures, policies and relationships.

Commitment to anti-oppressive practice

- Removing barriers around our institutions and services by embedding working within diversity and anti-oppressive practice as a core element to our systems, structures, policies and relationships.
- Proactively working from an **anti-oppressive position beyond inclusion, by acknowledging power relational dynamics and levelling power.**

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- Accessing training in anti-oppressive practice and Working within Diversity for counsellors, supervisors and tutors
- Decolonising curriculums to offer diverse theories and texts from practitioners of minoritised backgrounds.
- Actively **reflecting on what relationships you are setting up** with your students/clients, **are they oppressive or anti-oppressive?**

MYIRA KHAN

Working
within
Diversity

A Reflective Guide to
Anti-Oppressive Practice
in Counselling and Therapy

Thank you!

Any questions?

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www.myirakhancounselling.co.uk
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MK
Myira Khan
C O U N S E L L I N G