BUILDING FOR ETERNITY:

THE APPLICATION OF CULTURE-CENTERED CONCEPTS IN DELIVERING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

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Assumptions

1. If the foundation of our individual, institutional, organizational, and societal competencies is not anchored in values that contribute to the cultivation of the human spirit, then what we build will not sustain itself over time.

2. The identity of a truly competent professional can never be anchored in the notion of material acquisition.

3. Building for eternity requires a synthesis between preparation and construction on one hand and an aspiration to harmonize with divine intent on the other.
Additional Assumptions

- Legitimate theories of cultural diversity can never be anchored in constructs that do not support and affirm the humanity of your patient populations.

- Training of a culturally competent professional can not be done in a single course, or by reading a single book. Real challenges in life are not solved in 30 minutes or less, without commercial interruption.

- There is a fundamental difference between skin color and consciousness.
Competency Definition

Competencies are skills or attributes that allow psychologists, counselors, or therapists to respond effectively to the demands of a particular situation or circumstance.

Proficiency requires a consistency over time with a standard of excellence.

(Parham, 2002)
Competency Requires

Freeing ourselves from traditional definitions counseling and psychotherapy.

Expanding the boundaries of professional practice.

Expanding and utilizing alternate helping roles.

Learning from indigenous models of helping.

A high degree of congruence between ethical standards and professional behaviors.

Challenging our biases and assumptions we carry with us each day.

(Sue et al, 1978)
The goal of multicultural competence in practice, research and training is to increase the likelihood that...

• The mental health of all clients will improve.

• Clients representing groups that have been traditionally disenfranchised by the counseling profession will be more likely to seek treatment than they have been historically.

• Clients will receive culturally appropriate therapy and service.

• More than ever before, clients will be retained in treatment.

• Assessment tools will be culturally valid and only used in culturally appropriate ways.

• Training in counseling will be culturally relevant for learners and communities being served.

• Research will be culturally informed and relevant for diverse communities.
Need For a World View Which Emerges From a Culturally Different Frame of Reference

Problem:
• Normative Standard
• Generalizability of Norm
• Difference Equals Deficiency

- Narrow Conception of Black Behaviors, Thoughts, Lifestyles
- Weakness Dominated Inferiority Oriented Conclusions about Black People
- Emerges from an African Frame of Reference; Does not validate in Comparison to White Normative Standards
Culture

Typically Thought of As:
- Celebrations
- Food
- Music
- Dance
- Dress/Clothing
- Holidays
Culture is at the center of any ethnic group

- It unifies and orders our experience by providing a worldview that orients our experience and interpretation of reality.

- It provides collective group identification built on shared history, symbols and meanings.

- It institutionalizes and validates group beliefs, values behaviors and attitudes. (Ani, 1994)
Culture

Culture is a complex constellation of values, mores, norms, customs, and traditions that provides a general design for living, and a pattern for interpreting reality.

Relevant Question:
- What is clients design for living?
- What patterns does he/she use to interpret reality?

Nobles (1986)
What is Cultural: What must we study?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>ASIAN</th>
<th>AFRICAN</th>
<th>CAUCASIAN</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>LATINO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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**ISSUE:**

- **ONTOLOGY**
  (Nature of Reality)

- **AXIOLOGY**
  (Value Orientation)

- **COSMOLOGY**
  (Relationship to the Divine)

- **EPISTEMOLOGY**
  (System of Truth & Method of Generating Knowledge)

- **PRAXIS**
  (System of Human Contact)
African Centered

African Centered - Using African values, traditions, worldview as the lens through which my perceptions of reality are shaped and colored.

African Centered Psychology examines processes which allow for the illumination and liberation of the spirit (one’s spiritual essence).
Relying on the principles of harmony within the universe as a natural order of human existence, Africentric psychology recognizes:

- The spiritness that permeates everything that is.

- The notion that everything in the universe is interconnected.

- The value that the collective is the most salient element of existence.

- And the idea that self-knowledge is the key to mental health.
## Value Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Euro American</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>African-American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fragmented Dichotomized</td>
<td>SELF</td>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dualistic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritness made evident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Suppressed/Controlled</td>
<td>FEELINGS</td>
<td>Legitimate/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Individual/Competitive</td>
<td>SURVIVAL</td>
<td>Expressed/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Written/Detached</td>
<td>LANGUAGE</td>
<td>Vitality/Aliveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Metric/Linear</td>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>Collective/Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Control</td>
<td>UNIVERSE</td>
<td>“I am because we are, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. End</td>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>because we are, therefore I am.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Material Possession</td>
<td>WORTH</td>
<td>Harmony -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ontological</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Principal of</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Immortality</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Contribution to One’s Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence

• Strong belief in the possibility of human transformation
• Strong foundation and belief in theoretical and conceptual models of helping
• Knowledge of culture at the deep structure level (difference between surface understanding and deeper insight)
VALUES

• Aspiration to harmonize with divine intent
• Cultivation of the human spirit and elevated human consciousness
• Strong ethical standards that are culturally based

CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS
Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct

1. Resolving Ethical Issues
2. Competence
3. Human Relations
4. Privacy and Confidentiality
5. Advertising and Other Public Statements
6. Record Keeping and Fees
7. Education and Training
8. Research and Publication
9. Assessment
10. Therapy
Effective practice requires a scientific foundation to our work that is grounded in ethical standards.

- The core of ethical responsibility is to do no harm to individual clients or the larger community.
- Ethical decision making requires a synthesis between:
  * Professional ethical codes
  * Agency policies and practice
  * Legal guidelines
BUILDING BLOCKS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE

**Ethical Markers**

**Challenge**

*Maintain Confidentiality*

Whether to privatize or publicize a client’s issue that is a systemic problem

*Recognize your Limitations*

Examine personal worldview, as well as biases and assumptions we bring into our work space

*Seek Consultation*

Ensure your consultant is culturally competent as well/ (degrees and supervisor status do not make one culturally competent)

*Be aware of individual/cultural Differences*

What is the salience of the factor in managing the immediate therapeutic issue

*Review Ethical Standards (Ivey, et. Al. 2002)*

Balancing ethical standards against Culturally oriented practices
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence

COMPETENCY DIMENSIONS

**SKILLS**: Connecting with clients, competent assessment, facilitating awareness, set goals, take action and instigating change, feedback and accountability.

**KNOWLEDGE**: A group’s history and culture, within group variability and between group differences, cognitive, affective, behavioral, dimensions of personality.

**AWARENESS**: Self, biases, assumptions, social oppressions, and MAAFA experiences.

VALUES

CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS
A Four-Tiered Competence Framework

Counselors, counseling psychologists, educators and researchers who are...

- **Incompetent**, lack both awareness and skill

- **Pre-Competent**, possess the awareness that competence is important but lack skills in implementation related to clinical objectives. Where service providers possess awareness and knowledge of what needs to happen but lack skills to intervene effectively. That is, they lack awareness and insight to know how to intervene; they are not in touch with their personal biases.

- **Competent**, possess a set of skills and attributes allowing them to effectively intervene on the demands of a set of circumstances.

- **Proficient**, possess the ability to reflect a high standard over time. Can consistently demo what you want to do.

HEALING IS THERAPEUTIC, BUT NOT ALL THERAPY IS HEALING

T. Parham (2002)
Therapists as “Healers”

Individuals who participate with the client in confronting their mental, physical, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual debilitations
Thus, the task of the healer is to:

- Heal Thyself
- Remember the Past
- Access the Spirit
- Confront the Maafa
Seek Wisdom and Guidance by being Open Listeners

- Subdue Pride
- Subdue Arrogance
- Aspire to Perfection (Congruence)
- Be Open to All
The Cultural Interview

Category: Application of Cultural Information

1. Identifying Information

2. Presenting Problem

3. Relevant History
   a. Problem
   b. Family Background
   c. Mental Health HX
   d. Substance use
   e. Medication

4. Conceptualization
   a. Theory
   b. Diagnostic Nosology

5. Recommendation for treatment

6. Disposition
## Multicultural Counseling Skill Identification

**Issue:** Connecting w/Clients  
**Facilitating Awareness:** Setting Goals  
**Skills:**  
1. **Use of Ritual** (handshakes, libations, music, poetry, gifts (NA))  
2. **Exhibiting Congruent Realness** (Discuss popular issue; self disclosure)  
3. **Being with Client**  
4. **Use of Metaphore**  
5. **Analyzing Defenses** (Obstacles to growth)  
1. **Rephrasing** (helping client creatively synthesize opposites)  
2. **Reflecting**  
3. **Summarizing**  
4. **Restoration of Balance**  
1. **Becoming a Subjective companion** (African and Native American)  
2. **Reframing** (environment) teaching improvisation, transcendence and transformation (Nobles, 1986)  
3. **Helping Clients with culturally corrective experience** (Letting go)
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence

**DOMAINS OF ADVOCACY**
- Societal
- Organizational
- Institutional
- Individual

**COMPETENCY DIMENSIONS**

**VALUES**

**CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS**
What is Advocacy Competence?

Advocacy Competence is the ability, understanding and knowledge to carry out advocacy ethically and effectively. Advocacy-oriented counselors and recognize the impact of social, political, economic and cultural factors on human development (ACA Advocacy Competencies, 2002).

Advocacy:
- Action taken by a counseling professional to facilitate the removal of external and institutional barriers to the clients’ well-being (Toporek & Liu, 2001).
- Serves two primary purposes: increasing the clients’ sense of personal power and fostering environmental changes that reflect greater responsiveness to the client’s personal needs (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels & D’Andrea, 1998).
COMPETENCY DOMAINS:
(Sue, 2000)
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence

LIBERATION
- Spiritual
- Behavioral
- Emotional
- Intellectual

DOMAINS OF ADVOCACY

COMPETENCY DIMENSIONS

VALUES

CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS
TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL SPIRITUALITY:
LESSONS FOR THE COUNSELING PRACTITIONER
Humans are not material beings having occasional spiritual experiences, but rather spiritual beings having occasional human experiences.

Yogi Paramahansa Yogananda
Assumptions

There is a spiritual essence that permeates everything that exists on the planet.

The source of one’s “Spiritiness” is divine.

Spirituality exists before, after, and beyond material existence.

Spirituality and religion are not necessarily the same.
Definition of Spirituality

Spirit is the incorporeal, animating principle of energy that reflects the essence and substance of all matter.

Spirit is the basis of all existence, both what is seen and not seen.

Spirit is the energy and life force in each person, which like a divine spark, giving humans (and all living things) their beingness.

(Nobles, 1998)
What does Spirituality do for us?

• *Spirituality* becomes connected to authentic personhood (by providing a connectedness to the divine force in the universe.)

• *Spirituality* provides and affirms a sense of power (by acknowledging each person’s ability to transform and transcend situational circumstance in ways that are beneficial.)

• *Spirituality* provides an assured sense of purpose (by instigating alignment between one’s consciousness and one’s destiny, consistent with the principles of ORI-IRE.)
Building Blocks of Cultural Competence

LIBERATION

DOMAINS OF ADVOCACY

COMPETENCY DIMENSIONS

VALUES

CONCEPTUAL ANCHORS
Closing Thoughts

An opportunity is a threat if you only predict failure, but a challenge if you think you just might win.

Our goal for change is not to be 100% better on 50 things, but 5% better on 1.
Q&A

THANK YOU

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