

UNC SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK CLINICAL LECTURE SERIES



The Ethics of Cultural Humility

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Learning Objectives

- Identify and explain at least two core differences between the concept and practice of cultural competence and cultural humility.
- Articulate at least one core principle from the ethical code of social work or psychology that explains practitioners' responsibility to apply cultural humility.
- Apply at least two strategies to improve self-reflection and application of a culturally humble lens when working psychotherapeutically with diverse individuals.



Definition of Culture

- "Those sets of shared world views, meanings, and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a variety of contexts, such as language; rural, urban, or suburban settings; race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; age, gender, religion, nationality, employment, education, and occupation; political ideology; state of acculturation." (Falicov, 1998)

Another Definition of Culture

“The way of life of a people. The sum of their learned behavior, patterns, attitudes, and material things. It is not innate, but learned; the various facets of culture are interrelated.

Culture includes the ideas, customs, skills, art, lifestyle of a given people at a given time. It includes values and assumptions outside of our awareness and evokes deep feelings. We see the world via our own ‘cultural filters’. Culture includes beliefs, preferences, verbal and non-verbal communication styles, and relationship patterns.”

Dr. Amelia Roberts-Lewis, personal communication

Interacting with Culture

- **Enculturation** – the ability to learn and reflect basic values taught in your own home; Exemplified by the ability to list your own values, and the values of your racial/ethnic group
- **Acculturation** – the ability to adjust to the majority or larger culture and still maintain your identity
- **Multiculturalism** – the ability to simultaneously able to know, adjust to, and practice both mainstream values and traditional values and beliefs
- **Assimilation** – the ability to fully identify with the majority culture and give up your identity to do so

Cultural Differences of Clients

- Their experience of pain
- What they label as a symptom
- How they communicate about their pain or symptoms
- Their beliefs about its cause
- Their attitudes toward helpers (doctors and therapists)
- The treatment they desire or expect

**National Association of Social Workers—
Code of Ethics (2017 Revision)**

1.05 Cultural Awareness and Social Diversity

- (a) Social workers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.
- (b) Social workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

**1.05 Cultural Awareness and Social
Diversity, cont.**

- (c) Social workers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability.
- (d) Social workers who provide electronic social work services should be aware of cultural and socioeconomic differences among clients and how they may use electronic technology. Social workers should assess cultural, environmental, economic, mental or physical ability, linguistic, and other issues that may affect the delivery or use of these services.

6.04 Social and Political Action

- (c) Social workers should promote conditions that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States and globally. Social workers should promote policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and promote policies that safeguard the rights of and confirm equity and social justice for all people.

Cultural Competence

- The extent to which a therapist has acquired and developed knowledge and skills to facilitate work with culturally diverse clients

Qualities of the Culturally Competent Therapist (Ahmed et al., 2011)

- Credibility
- Expertness
- Trustworthiness

Cultural Humility

- “The ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the client.” (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013)
- Includes respect, lack of superiority, and attention to clients’ cultural heritage (e.g., Hook et al., 2013)

Microaggressions

- “Subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-exchanges which are ‘put-downs’.”(Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1978)
- “Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group.” (Sue et al., 2007)

Types of Microaggressions

- Microassaults
- Microinsults
- Microinvalidations

**WHAT ARE EXAMPLES
OF CULTURAL GROUPS,
AND WHAT MAKES
THEM
SO DIFFERENT?**

Examples of Cultural Groups

- Socioeconomic Status (SES)
- Gender & Gender Roles
- Sexual Identity
- Family Configuration
- Disability Status
- Ethnicity/Language
- Religious/Spiritual Identity
- Immigration Status
- Military Affiliation
- Generational Cohort

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

- SES is traditionally measured by:
 - Educational attainment
 - Occupation
 - Income
- We now understand that SES is often stable across generations.

Poverty Defined

- “The extent to which one does without resources”—Dr. Ruby Payne
- Resources
 - Financial
 - Spiritual
 - Emotional
 - Mental
 - Physical
 - Support Systems
 - Relationships/Role Models
 - Knowledge of Hidden Rules
- Poverty may be generational or situational

Characteristics of Generational Poverty

- Presence of background “noise”
- Importance of the individual’s personality
- The significance of entertainment
- Importance of relationships
- Matriarchal structure
- Oral-language tradition (casual)
- Survival orientation
- Male identity -“lover and fighter”
- Female identity -“rescuer/martyr”

Characteristics of Generational Poverty, cont.

- Importance of non-verbal/kinesthetic communication
- Ownership of people (individual & communal)
- Negative orientation
- Discipline as punishment rather than change
- Belief in fate
- Polarized thinking
- Time as present-focused and flexible
- Sense of humor
- Future implications of present actions not usually considered

Is Gender Its Own Cultural Group?

- Female Faculty #1: “Yes, I feel that women are a distinct cultural group (and some belong to other cultural groups as well). I hearken back to Simone de Beauvoir’s notions that women are made, not born. And my sense is that our notions of gender are socially constructed, which positions women as their own culture.”
- Female Faculty #2: “I don’t believe women are a distinct cultural group just based on gender or biology. I recognize many of the commonalities, but I think these are informed by other (or larger) cultural issues, e.g., race, geographical area.”

Gender: Own Cultural Group? cont.

- Female Faculty #3: "My answer is yes. I think of a cultural group as a grouping of individuals based on experiences that are unique to them. These experiences might be social, physical, relational, etc. Women to me have different experiences within our society separate from men. That in no way means that they are a homogenous group, just like any other cultural group, but it does mean that women experience the world in a unique way that separates them from men."
- We might also say that men are a cultural group as well, but are (at least for white males) more privileged than women because of the same issues, their socialization, their physiology, the way society has organized itself around male characteristics, such as independence and monetary success, and supports men's cultural norms over women's.

Is Sexual Identity Its Own Cultural Group?

- Many people, including writers and researchers, say yes!
- "A lively debate in the LGBTQ culture continues about **what comprises** LGBTQ culture" (SAMHSA, 2005, p. xv).
- Multi-layers of culture and multiple cultural identities must be discussed. LGBTQ persons are from culturally diverse backgrounds – are found in diverse racial and ethnic groups, age, education, SES, and live in all geographical areas of the US.

Sexual Orientation



- LGBTQQIAP (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, ally and pansexual)
- Some commonalities: coming out process to self versus coming out to others, families of origin versus families of choice, passing or hiding, social networks and meeting places, experiences of discrimination and homophobia, symbols and signs for identification, and so forth.

The Culture of Disability

- “People with disabilities have forged a group identity. We share a common history of oppression and a common bond of resilience. We generate art, music, literature, and other expressions of our lives and our culture, infused from our experience of disability. Most importantly, we are proud of ourselves as people with disabilities. We claim our disabilities with pride as part of our identity.”

–Stephen E. Brown, co-founder of the Institute on Disability Culture



Disability Cultural Values

- 1) An acceptance of human differences
- 2) A matter-of-fact orientation toward helping and being helped
- 3) A tolerance for lack of resolution or cure, and dealing with the unpredictable
- 4) A sense of humor about disability
- 5) Skill in managing multiple problems

Disability Cultural Values, cont.

- 6) A carefully honed capacity for closure in interpersonal communication
- 7) Flexible, adaptive, resourceful approaches to tasks and problems
- 8) An understanding that needs are different depending on the level of dependence
- 9) Interdependence valued more than independence

Ethnic Diversity in the U.S.

- More than 106 different ethnic groups in the U.S.
- 25% of U.S. citizens belong to one of four major ethnic groups
- In 25 of the largest U.S. cities, at least 50% of students are from linguistically and/or ethnically diverse groups

Religious/Spiritual Differences

- Religiosity often refers to commitment, orthodoxy, or affiliation
- Spirituality is “a relationship with a transcendent force that brings meaning and purpose to one’s existence, and affects the way in which one operates in the world” (Armstrong, 1996)
- Spirituality is conceptually distinct from religiosity, although they often co-occur
- Nonetheless, many of even modern forms of spirituality are rooted in religion



Religious Affiliations in the U.S.

- Protestant (37%)
- Catholic (23%)
- None (16%)
 - One-third of adults under age 30
 - 37% are “Spiritual but not religious”
- Other Christian (10%)
- Other (6%)
- No answer (4%)
- Mormon (2%)
- Jewish (2%)
- Muslim (1%)

**EXERCISE:
TELLING
OUR OWN STORIES
OF
CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

**INNOVATIVE BRIDGES
TO CULTURAL
HUMILITY**

Eliana Gil's
Cultural Competence Model



- Three levels of response that build upon each other
- Building sensitivity → Obtaining knowledge responsibly → Developing active competence

Building Sensitivity



- Introspection
- Attention to the quality of your interactions with others
- Awareness of countertransference
 - Our own background and experiences
 - Prior exposure to cross-cultural work
 - "Comfort with our own discomfort"
 - Internal pressure to demonstrate sensitivity

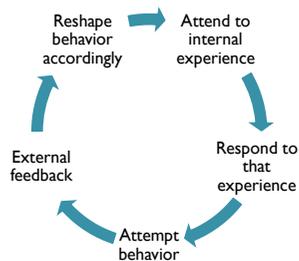
Obtaining Knowledge Responsibly

- We need practice and maturity to translate knowledge and skills to responsible behavior
- We can practice accountably by allowing exposure in front of experienced colleagues and inviting feedback



Developing Active Competence

- Interactive, circular pattern of thought and response



Attending Skills

- Physical proximity (“space preference”/“personal space”)
- Equal height in seating
- Eye contact
- Use titles when addressing adults
- Body posture/gestures
 - Avoid receiving objects with the left hand
 - Avoid pointing/beckoning
 - Accompany head nodding/shaking with warm facial expressions



Responding Skills

- Culturally different groups may not be used to reflection on feelings
- May show reluctance to talking with a clinician
- May not be used to receiving empathy
- Therapists can
 - Use empathy quickly and somewhat ambiguously
 - Display non-verbal communication that is consistent with words used

Suggestions for Clinicians

- Assess importance of cultural difference to patients & families
- Validate and strengthen cultural difference
- Be aware of and use the client’s support systems
- Serve as a “culture broker”
- Be aware of “cultural camouflage”

Giordano & Giordano, 1995; Hook et al., 2016)



Suggestions for Clinicians, cont.

- Know that there are advantages and disadvantages in sharing your client's cultural identity
- Be careful about denying stereotypes and bias about cultural issues
- Approach rather than avoid discussions about cultural issues
- Strive for meaningful engagement with culturally diverse persons

Giordano & Giordano, 1995; Hook et al., 2016



Multicultural Orientation (Shaw, 2016)

- Decreasing the frequency and impact of microaggressions
- Implementing dynamic sizing
- Developing a culture of feedback with clients

Closing Exercise (20 minutes)

- Form a pair or group of three.
- Select one therapist and one client.
- The client will assume at least one non-dominant cultural identity.
- Conduct a role play in which the therapist practices cultural humility with respect to that client's cultural identity.
- Last five minutes: Both the therapist and the client will debrief on the challenges and opportunities of the interaction.



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