FINDING THE PLACE FOR CULTURAL HUMILITY IN THE HEALING PROCESS

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School of Social Work
31st Conference of the National Organization of Forensic Social Work
Fordham University Lincoln Center Campus
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Agenda

• Examine the meanings of culture from a social science perspective
• A perceptual exercise
• Briefly revisiting Cultural Competence
• “Expert” Dilemma
• Culture and “evidence”
• Self-reflection: My “epistemic privilege”
• The three faces of cultural humility
• Case example: Michael – modeling cultural humility
• Summary / Conclusions
• Discussion
Acknowledgements

• Kathleen Coulborn Faller
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• The University of Michigan School of Social Work
• Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County
• The children and families
American Culture: International Perspectives

• Americans:
  • Value independence
  • Assume you’re taking care of yourself
  • Assume you don’t need anything
  • Don’t offer anything a second time
  • Are conformist
  • Gain their identity by belonging to a group
• Important American Holidays and Customs
Disciplinary and professional cultures...

- Natural sciences tend to be more exact and specific in their communication.
- Social sciences and humanities tend to be more variable.
- Other notable differences include how information is processed and recalled, perceptual attention to visual cues and orientations, and attention drawn to specific types of information.
Disciplinary culture

• Cognitively organizes around foundation schema
• Becomes “embodied institutionalized cultural practices” with shared, intersubjective representations
• Can form intellectual blindspots

• A Perception Exercise
WEIRD society

- Western
- Educated
- Industrialized
- Rich
- Democratic
“Epistemic Privilege”
...the lens through which we view the world.”
Cultural competence

• The five A’s: Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, Accountability and Affordability
• Client centered, patient-centered, consumer oriented
• Non-pathologizing, strengths-based (non-deficit focused)
Cultural Competence Perspectives for Education and Training

• Perspectives
  • Assimilation
  • Accommodation
  • Preservation

• Education and Training
  • Multicultural
  • Sensitivity and awareness
  • Cross-cultural
Expert Power and Authority

• Expert: knowledgeable; proficient; savvy; know-how
• Expertise asserts power
• A reliance solely on disciplinary cultural knowledge and assumptions of universal knowledge, without considering our cultural uniqueness, imposes our authority over others and cleanses us from our fallibility
Knowledge as “evidence”

• “...it is difficult to embrace but no less true that research and its pursuit is based on curiosity and founded on an attitude of doubt.”

• “...even within the context of clear “evidence” we must embrace the individual as her or his own authority on her or his lived experience. They become experts of their cultural selves and the clearest call for cultural humility rests in accepting that others are far more knowledgeable about themselves than we are...”
• “In the final analysis, cultural differences are a perennial challenge so that what is offered in the guise of caring must view cultural complexity as the ordinary rather than the exception…”

• “Cultural caring aims to account for cultural compatibility… a search for mechanisms and processes that transparently and successfully negotiate cultural boundaries while disrupting barriers and obstacles to inclusion and responsiveness…”
My “epistemic privilege”...
### Who am I…?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Background</th>
<th>Education and Career</th>
<th>Family Background</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority; Grandparents undoc.; Mother - 7th grade ed.; Father - factory worker; Large family (18 siblings; 12 biological); Parents were foster / adoptive parents; Parents harsh discipl.; Raised in poor, high-risk neighborhood; Heavily recruited by gangs; Low SES thru college; 3 older brothers all had at least one child before their 18th birthday;</td>
<td>Parochial school education; Excellent student, esp. math and science; first generation college student; Accepted into US Naval Academy; Pre-med / Psych in college; Highly educated – 4 graduate degrees from a major university; Faculty for over two decades; Worked in mental health residential facility for children and in outpatient clinic with severely mentally ill adults; Co-direct clinic for abused children.</td>
<td>Athletic - multi-sports; Coached little league / Jr baseball for 16 years; Baseball umpire for past 11 years in summer (high school, adult); Former Religious Ed teacher; once considered Priesthood; Married, three children – all college grads; Wife highly educated; clinical administrator and University instructor; Regularly volunteer as food prep/server at local homeless shelter; Military family (father US Army, 3 Uncles retired Navy; brothers/ nephew - Navy and Marines).</td>
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Three Faces of Cultural Humility

- Cultural Self Awareness: Knowledge of cultural self
- Cultural Openness: Knowledge of other's culture; outside of self
- Cultural Transcendence: Cultural knowledge beyond self and other
“Cultural humility challenges us to broaden our cultural perspectives and frames of reference... to see what we do not see.”
Case Example: Michael
The foundation upon which we all thrive...

Safety  Trust  Support  Hope
Strangers in a new culture see only what they know. unknown
“Cultural humility does not reject or ignore notions of objectivity, neutrality and principled learning. Instead, it invites tolerance, inclusion and diversity that broadens the relevance of caring, and that ultimately invites the sharing of both social goals and opportunities, and our social fate.”
Child welfare and cultural sensitivity

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Agenda

• The cost of child maltreatment
• Understanding the consequences (and signs) of child maltreatment
• Child welfare or welfare of the child?
• What do families ask of child welfare and what are the benefits?
• Beyond cultural knowledge; what cultural sensitivity adds to child welfare practice
• Examining our working language
• Lessons about sensitivity from Critical Race Theory
• The added value of reflection and reflexion
• Enough talk; what about skills!!!
• Implications
The cost of maltreatment

- Child abuse and neglect affects over 1 million children every year.
- Child abuse and neglect costs our nation $220 million every day.
- We paid a staggering $80 BILLION to address child abuse and neglect in 2012.
- Child abuse and neglect affects us all.

The real cost of child maltreatment – the crumbling foundation...
The immediate consequences (and signs) of child maltreatment – the child (and family) level...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loss of Safety</th>
<th>fearful, reckless, careless, vulnerable, exposed, distressed, helpless, hypersensitive, hyper-aroused, hyper-vigilant, avoidant, worried, doubtful, insecure, distorted thinking</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Trust</td>
<td>shame, guilt, discouraged, angry, aggressive, distrustful, humiliated, disrespectful / disrespected, inhibited, confined, intruded upon, invasive, irresponsible, diffuse boundaries, confused family identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loss of Support</td>
<td>Lonely, isolated, socially withdrawn, disconnected, excluded, intolerant, socially awkward (e.g., “overly social”), stigmatized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Hope</td>
<td>Lacks vision, hopeless, reactive, lacks planning, lacks meaning, undisciplined, uncommitted, disempowered</td>
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Child welfare or welfare of the child?

• ",,, I don’t have a medical child or a school child or a delinquent child or a foster child… I have a child; when are you going to worry about the welfare of my child and not just child welfare?"

• “Why do you only come around when I’m in trouble?”
What (non-abusive) families ask of child welfare...

• Strategies for coping with the situation and dealing with “the multiple systems”
• Expertise, consistency (re: no mixed messages; a stable workforce), and a “road map”
• Involvement / inclusion in the process
• Restorative parent / child relations especially in reunification
• Supportive, non-stigmatizing child welfare system responses and organizational environment
• Recovered family future
The benefits ...

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Promotes Safety leading to:</th>
<th>awareness, “instinct” thought-feeling-action balance, determination, security, positive development / growth, resilience, confidence, assertiveness, curiosity, exploration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Trust leading to:</td>
<td>reliance, dependability, encouragement, pride, respect, humility, confidence, competence, openness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Support leading to:</td>
<td>unity, positive social skills, connections, inclusion, involvement, acceptance, cooperation, communication, tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes Hope leading to:</td>
<td>Vision, planning, pro-action, discipline, commitment, strategic thinking</td>
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Cultural sensitivity and the child welfare work

- In child welfare, we are challenged to learn from the people with whom we work, reserve judgment, and bridge the cultural divide between our perspectives, in order to facilitate child safety, stability and well-being, and promote permanency.
...and then there’s the organization’s culture and climate!

“... every day I start my car up, sit in my driveway, and wonder how I’m supposed to know everything about everyone... and then I worry I’m going to get yelled at for not knowing!”

• Rejecting, resisting, engaging...
Beyond cultural knowledge...

- Cultural misembodiment, usually imposed by “outsiders” refers to the notion of embodying a wrong or mistaken cultural identity, affecting the psychological well being of the cultural subject resulting in higher levels of anxiety, shame, depression, and a heightened body awareness.

- We are challenged to recognize and sense how misrepresentation is inseparable from the misembodiment and misinterpretation of a marginalized identity;

Owning our self-knowledge and social identities augments our self-pride and offers a critical space from which we can challenge threats to biases, stereotypes, discrimination and marginalization.

Language of Inquiry

• The language of inquiry draws on actions, assumptions, motives, ways of thinking and feeling

• Inquiry extends beyond questioning about the world and about evidence; it must also be toward oneself, one’s own positionality, standpoint, and role in (re)producing evidence that then serves as the basis for one’s knowledge claims

• Inquiry, beyond rejecting interrogation, invites curiosity, uncertainty and engaged learning; interrogation alone shuts the door!

“The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said.” Anonymous

Critical race theory

- **What is CRT?** Embodies thoughts, *feelings* and actions directed toward socially unjust mechanisms and processes that disempower individuals, families, organizations, neighborhoods, communities and societies based on race.

- **Why CRT?** Emphasizes “race consciousness”; oriented toward anti-racism, anti-subordination, anti-oppression, marginalization, and inclusion.

- **What does CRT do?** Places importance on the narrative experience and “lends a voice” to different racial minority voices, including “voices of silence,” regarding their experiences of racial subjugation.

- **What does CRT hope to do?** The goal of CRT is to empower and include traditionally excluded views and see all-inclusiveness as the ideal because of a belief in collective wisdom.
CRT and Social Justice Practice Principles (cont.)

• CRT questions the traditional role of institutions in producing and reproducing racial, gender, sexual, class-based and other identity-based inequalities in society.

• CRT stresses that the problems of identity minorities cannot be understood in isolation from the material and ideological circumstances in which identity minorities find themselves.

• CRT questions pathological explanations of intimate social systems (e.g., the family or home environment) as answers as to why some individuals experience problems. Such explanations divert attention away from a critical analysis of the institutional structures within which the delivery of social services takes place.

CRT and Social Justice Principles

• The social effects of racial identities extends beyond biology

• The social effects of racial identities require an examination of the intersection of oppressive experiences accompanying one’s identities.

• Power, privilege and positionalities, and the rationale for socially unjust power, privilege and social position must be questioned. A CRT perspective requires an historical appreciation of a society’s development and the institutional processes and structures that maintain socially unjust power, privilege and oppression.

• Understanding the construction of social reality problematizes the marginalization of disadvantaged populations and questions the de-legitimization of the knowledge and experiences of underrepresented members of a society.
CRT and Social Justice Practice Principles (cont.)

- A holistic understanding and appreciation of the human experience, including social, racial, political, ecological and spiritual aspects is necessary; and an understanding of the self and how it relates to others is vital.

- How social identities are formed and the related individual and collective struggles are important to understanding social injustice.

- Combating social injustices acknowledges a pedagogical need to confront challenges of diversity and difference in society and begins by respecting the values and experiences of all members of society.
On Reflective and Reflexive Practice

- The pressures of the working day leave little room to take “time out” to reflect; reflective practice includes “in-the-moment” reflection – reflection within the immediacy of practice when one senses, from interrogation or “backtalk” one receives from the human and physical “materials” with whom or with which one is working, that things aren’t going the way one thought they should (Yanow, 2009)

- Considers *subsidiary* and *focal* awareness

- Respects the importance of engaging others as persons, with their unique experiences, not as scientific objects
Reflective practice...

• ...explores “other ways of seeing” (i.e., their “epistemic privilege”) including one’s “sensorial” responses and multiple sources of “wisdom”;

• ... adopts an attitude of inquiry rather than determining answers or solutions based solely on the notion of professional authority;

• ... requires setting aside the expectation of having all the answers;

• ... rests on the capacity to raise questions, including of oneself, even in the face of interrogation;

• ... is situational; attending and responding to “surprise” with unfolding processes.
Skills for bridging cultural perspectives:

- **Active listening**: focusing attention on what the person is saying and use head nods and utterances that indicate you are listening to them.

- **Reflecting**: using the client’s words to say back to them what it is you heard.

- **Reserving judgment**: Rather than “mind-guard” remain open to what the client is saying through remaining silent and letting their words sink in.

- **Enter their world**: Sometimes referred to as “joining,” consider yourself in the context of the client’s world (and as part of their culture and cultural experience).
Implications for culturally inclusive practice

• Encourage inquiry - move beyond interrogation and invite curiosity, uncertainty and engaged learning;

• Engage “evidence” with an attitude of analytic indeterminancy, that supports shared expertise; do not assume or judge feelings or thoughts based solely on “objective” knowledge;

• Support ownership of self-knowledge and multiple social identities and acknowledge intersectional subjective standpoints;
Implications (cont.)

• Lend voice to others about their culture and perceived consequences of their cultural differences;

• Recognize that each person is different regardless of shared identities.

• Maintain an awareness of our own cultural and social identity biases.

• Allow feelings of uncomfortableness, acknowledge our triggers and continuously reflect upon our helping experiences.

• Through cultural humility, relinquish a sense of control over the situation and over others and legitimize others’ local knowledge, whether of situations or of themselves.
The End

• Thank you very much!