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Understanding Culture in the 21st Century: Implications for Counseling & Psychotherapy

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Abstract

Culture governs a group's way of life that is passed from one generation to the next. It shapes what people make, think, value, and do to ensure their existence. It influences what we think is appropriate, what we eat, drink, wear, what we believe and much more. Culture is simple yet complex. It is static yet dynamic. Each generation acts upon it, causing modifications, even though the basic components such as language, religious practices, and system of government usually resist significant change. Like a river, culture has many sources [1,2]. Given the dynamic nature of culture, this article discusses an interpretation and reinterpretation of culture as the world moves into a modern era of globalization where cross-cultural exchanges are the norm. This paradigm shift creates a host of new challenges for organizations and mental health professionals as they seek to find new strategies to effectively address a new globalized world where self-expression, individualism and a re-invigorated awareness of interpersonal connection is upon us. This article seeks to address these issues and provide some strategies for effective cross-cultural awareness and mental health counseling.

Key Words: Culture, Multi-culturalism, Cultural Other, Self-System, Existentialism

Globalization and the Cultural & Multi-Cultural Problematic

The efficacy of culture is that it creates in people, a worldview that underscores a set of identities that reflect complex ancestral origins, tribal and communal associations, and varied ideological outlooks on common themes of existence including life, death, love, connection, meaning, freedom, and responsibility among others. It is no wonder that the impact of culture on people is complex, particularly in modern times such as the present. For instance, people do not generally change their ethnicities as a matter of effect; but in a world moving toward modernity because of technological innovation and globalization, they may emphasize different aspects of their culture and identity depending on their changing and evolving circumstances. This is why examining culture is so important in governments, organizations, communities and in therapy because it reflects the sum total of a person's beliefs and procedures for negotiating different environments within their existence [2].

Thus, the 21st century therapist must understand that culture not only emanates from many sources but also has both a resilient yet dynamic nature. As Strohzenberg (2001) argues,

"The concept of culture serves the basic need of naming such ineffable and inexplicable features of human existence like "meaning" and "spirit" and living together with others. Stop thinking of it as a name for a thing, and come to view it instead as a placeholder for a set of inquiries-inquiries which may be destined never to be resolved" (p.444).

One must not forget culture has a static or rather resilient sensibility as well. For instance, despite globalization, the more significant a cultural artifact is to a group, the more resistant it is to significant change. For these reasons, problems often arise when using the culture construct incorrectly in therapy, research and policy. Not only in how social scientists have defined it over the years, but how others have used it to label, judge, stereotype, belittle and indulge in what Edward Said (1978) warned against, defining things and people as a 'Cultural Other.' For culture is intimately associated with globalization because it illuminates *Otherness*. In other words, it ascribes qualities to a group they perceive as different from other groups by creating erroneous boundary markers that attempt to highlight what constitutes an *Us* and *Them* and subsequently emphasizes an *Us* versus *Them*.

Nonetheless, history has evidenced that ascribing *Otherness* and the *Othering* of people is integral to identity construction, identity salience and pride during intercultural encounters. Though studies like those by Emil Kraepelin in 1904 on the Java Island were concerned with "comparative psychiatry," or the study and treatment of mental diseases in various cultures and the significance of culture in diagnosis and treatment, those insights have largely been neglected in more contemporary studies of intersectionality, cross-cultural theory and counseling. I say this to highlight the constant presence of cross-cultural encounters despite a lack of its formal recognition in society and the social sciences until recently. The consequence of globalization however, forces *intercultural encounters* [4]. However, it also illuminates the interpersonal dichotomy of human relations. It highlights the "family and foreigners, native and exiled, friend and foe, insiders and outsiders, the West and the Rest" or the colonists and the colonized [5-7].

Hence, in applying existential and cultural principles to globalization and more specifically to counseling and psychotherapy, counselors must understand culture, multiculturalism, and the existential basis of existence in a rapidly globalizing world full of cross-cultural encounters, interpersonal unknowns, and an overall unpredictability. From the view of existentialism, culture is a given to existence.

Everyone is born into a culture. It contextualizes how one comes to understand and experience the world around them. Culture is the baseline of group cohesion and group differences; yet it is also illuminates the commonality among different groups of people from different walks of life. For no matter the origin of one's existence, there are universal givens and interpersonal needs that bounds humankind together as interpersonal beings including our experience of life, our ubiquitous fear of death, our need for connection and our pursuit of meaning [8].

The question of how globalization impacts culture and the givens of existence is central to adapting counseling techniques that are sensitive to the rise of modernity. This means accepting that the era of monocultural psychotherapy is ending [9], and if the field does not respond accordingly, a pervasive lack of "cultural sensitivity" [10] will guarantee poor and ineffective cross-cultural encounters, a lack of civil engagement and forms of therapy that are not sensitive to different groups of people, particularly with those considered ethnic minorities or viewed as *cultural others*.

The concept of "transcultural psychiatry" was introduced in 1965 by E.D. Wittkower. The fields of psychiatry and psychotherapy accepted the view of transculturalism as evidenced in many publications at the time. According to E.D. Wittkower, cross-cultural psychiatry deals with culture-emergence and in particular, the assessment and treatment of mental disorders in different cultures. This was not possible without a detailed analysis of "intercultural psychotherapy." Cumativley, these cultural analyses provided the greatest insights into the conflicts created when therapists and clients come from different cultural backgrounds. It also highlighted the need for overcoming the conflicts presented when applying "transcultural" apporaches to psychotherapy.

Hence, for their clients' sake, therapists must not only understand culture but also understand that the meaning of 'self,' in terms of identity, is fluid and includes dynamic acculturation processes that comprises a kind of symmetry between their clients' individual and group identities within a cultural context. Hence, any real notion of self as describe by patients always comprise those influences that are biological, cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, motivational, affective, narrative, as well as cultural [11]. However, prior to employing more advanced conceptualizations of culture and multiculturalism in therapy, therapists must understand the challenges inherent in the misuse of the concept and the problems they create as a result.

The Culture Problematic

Stocking (1968) wrote that culture is "the progressive accumulation of the characteristic manifestations of human creativity: art, science, knowledge, refinement-those things that freed man from control by nature, by environment, by reflex, by instinct, by habit, or by custom" (p. 201). However, the culture construct in postmodern, post-structural and postcolonial theories did not always hold such a progressive view. Though anthropology literally means the study of humankind and seeks to answer the fundamentally existential question, what does it mean to be human, the prevailing theories around culture in early views of Anthropology centered on evolutionism, race and ethnicity and were encoded as the basis for defining culture by the end of the 19th century [12].

The progression of human relating was understood in evolutionary stages not much different from Darwin's "survival of the fittest" paradigm. There was a prevailing understanding that culture or rather evolutionism by some, encompassed all dimensions of social living and existed on a hierarchy from simple (primitive) to highly complex [12]. This position relied heavily and erroneously on race and ethnicity. For example, Brinton [13] argued

"The adult who retains the more numerous fetal, infantile, or simian traits, is unquestionably interior to him whose development progressed beyond them…. Measured by these criteria, the European or white race stands at the head of the list the African or Negro at its foot….All parts of the body have been minutely scanned, measured and weighted, in order to erect a science for the comparative anatomy of the races" (cited in Gould, 1981, p. 116).

This view created a dangerous precedent for the culture construct as it became less about an organizing or socializing principle and more about power inherent in such an understanding.

Working against this current, the anthropologist Franz Boas argued against the unilineal progression of evolutionary stages and racial undercurrents of evolutionism as a definition for culture. In fact, Boas [14] and his conceptions of cultural pluralism, argued that culture was antithetical to the entire evolutionism paradigm. Through rigorous research, he argued that human behavior was conditioned not on biogenetic etiology, but rather, socialization within interpersonal living. Suggesting another psychosocial view of culture was Edward Sapir, an anthropologist from Yale University. He wrote, "The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals" and "in the world of meanings which each one of these individuals may unconsciously abstract for himself from his participation in these interactions." [15], (p.515). It seems that the dynamic nature of culture includes not only what one is exposed to, but what sense they make of that exposure and the meaning they derive from it. Hence, should any definition of culture include cognitive and relational processes as well?

With these types of matters to consider about the proper definition and utility of culture, the culture debate remains unsettled even though by the early 90s, the West had made a major paradigm shift toward the reality and significance of culture and multiculturlism in mental health assessment and treatment. Despite a clear consensus on the term, a movement occurred which called for an addition to the three traditional pillars in psychology and psychotherapy - psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and humanistic psychotherapy [16]. There was a call for multicultural psychotherapy to be considered - as a "fourth force." [17].

Many in the social sciences wrote both compelling but disparate views for what culture was or was not. Contemporary cultural views comprise arguments like dialogic emergence of culture, and distributive models of culture [18]. Given the broad misuse of the culture construct as evidenced by the "culture of poverty" and Moynihan Report debates in the 1960s, social scientists started to write conservatively about culture emphasizing its neutrality rather than its' implications. For instance, Abu-Lughod [19] suggested social scientists look "beyond" culture [20]. Marcus & Fischer [21] wrote about "Critiquing" culture while Keesing [22] suggested people "revisiting" culture [22] or putting "culture in motion" [18]. Bhabha [23] wrote about examining the interstitial space for "locating" culture. Finally, the "breakdown" of culture, the "demise" [24] of the culture concept; and "forgetting" culture [25] found a voice in the literature.

Globalization is not helping the matter in finding consensus on an appropriate definition or culture. For example, globalization can often exacerbate any attempt to properly define the construct. Moreover, rapid globalization, in terms of the expanse of colonization, technology and industry often results in cultural appropriation, which is an eminent threat to a group's culture or more specifically, its sacred, long standing, and valued beliefs, customs, traditions and artifacts. Consequently, some never stop to think if Cinco de Mayo is about free drinks and Latin cuisine or to commemorate the Mexican Army for defeating the French at the Battle of Puela in 1862. Historically, nonwestern cultures including their artifacts, traditions and people have only been of instrumental value vis-à-vis novelty or instrumentality.

As either a curio or showpiece to satiate the wonders and curiosity of colonists, culture has mostly been utilized in this sense. Based on this history, the danger of culture as a construct is that as the world becomes more interconnected and smaller, culture is commodified more often than ever before. Cultural artifacts such as songs, dance, rituals, and other cultural items are subject to theft, or the type of exploitation that dismisses the fact that they play a sacred and integral part to a groups' historical, relational, and personal identity [26].

Moreover, there are those who push towards a global, hybridized, cultural citizen of the world [6]. This too raises some concerns about how the culture construct should be properly defined and utilized. For example, will the misuse of culture and the inevitability of globalization, render it too difficult for the 'global human' to live an authentic life in an ever-changing world? How will meaning be derived from such a transition? What will be considered culturally sacred in the view of the cultural citizen of the world? Finally, will all those considered cultural citizens of the world, otherize those that are non-global cultural citizens? To be frank, will anything that is not of the Western ideology, axiology, epistemology, or ontology come to be considered non cultural? The last issue is one of moot points or needles redundancy and that is, is there even a need to be viewed as a cultural citizen of the world? This view in of itself poses a threat to the intent of culture as not only a concept but a way of life for groups around the world.

The Multi-Cultural Problematic

This concept of multiculturalism is attractive and persuasive. It is the aspirational bedrock of the United States of America. It suggests a person's identity and values transcend the boundaries of regionalism or nationalism and holds a vision of an equitable global community [27]. However, the term multiculturalism, like culture, has been a source of debate and effective utility. This difficulty has also led to a gross misuse of the term. This is particularly true relative to the globalization phenomenon. Rothkop [27] writes about the impact of globalization, saying,

"This is the first time in history that virtually every individual at every level of society can sense the impact of international changes. They can see and hear it in their media, taste it in their food, and sense it in the products that they buy" (p.1).

Hence, like globalization and multiculturalism certainly holds a pivotal role in many key aspects of established and emerging societies, not to mention their impacts on identity formation.

Through globalization, people are rapidly changing the views by which they understand culture, multi-culturalism and reality because per Goeudeverts' [28], "encounters with the unfamiliar, concrete experiences of difference, incongruities and inequalities will continue to increase, not despite, but because of globalization" (p.45). Globalization intersects with people's daily existence as people have prefixed the term global to words like politics, business, industry, crime, culture, education, community, environment communications, music and cuisine.

Though globalization and multiculturalism have moved civilizations to the forefront of modernity, it has created a sense of dread and concern about the future that seems unpredictable and uncertain. Nietzsche (1844-1900), echoed the perils to the human psyche of an unpredictable and uncertain existence in many of his writings. In his work "The Gay Science," under the "The Madman," he declared, "God was dead" so the world was left without order. Therefore, existence was left to each person to find his/her own meaning in it. Camus [29] further exclaimed that for some people, unpredictability and uncertainty arose from a loss of collective faith in religion and traditional morality, which in turn, creates in them, an existential crisis.

Presently, in the 21st century, modernity has rendered religious or spiritual beliefs and values to a matter of secularism and individual choice, hence evidencing the dynamic nature of culture itself. However, the trade-off seems to be that, people's ideas and values about 'God' often lack a clear connection to daily living. For example, globalization has created favorable conditions for cultural pluralism. The proliferation of New Religious Movements around the world is a token example. In other words, globalizing societies create cultural pluralism, which is a situation that gives rise to a multitude of worldviews in society that in turn fosters the emergence of new information, technologies, and industries [30]. However, what does this mean for culture or multiculturalism?

Existentialists view meaning, purpose and free will as core themes of existentialism. However, in a globalizing world of intercultural and cross-cultural exchanges, freewill can be a source of both *liberation* and *trepidation* as it relates to modernity. Free will is liberating because it reminds people that they can choose to pursue what they want in life. However, freedom inspires trepidation because it makes the changing world feel chaotic and potentially dangerous [31,32]. Culture, ironically would seem to have a calming stabilizing effect of this type of trepidation because it offers a somewhat grounded sensibility about how one should perceive the world around them. Nonetheless, many Americans living in the Midwest section of America have lost over 4 million jobs to automation. This industrial shift raises questions about how culture and multiculturalism role in modernizing societies. Left with skills applicable to careers that no longer exist, many Mid-westerners are afraid and angry at the uncertainty of finding new and gainful employment.

Globalization interconnects the world by pushing, economic development, information and cultural access to once isolated communities [33]. Hence, from the view of the existentialist, who believes in the transcultural nature of humanity and the inevitability of globalization as a source of meaning, comes a sense of both liberation and trepidation as it relates to the evolution of culture and multicultural societies. An unfortunate consequence of globalization is that it may disempower a people, a community, and a culture. Given their economic, social, and cultural capital, those in power may misrepresent the culture of indigenous communities and ignore the cultural appropriation and colonization practices taken under the guise of globalization [34]. As a result, many may dread or even abhor new interpersonal, economic, and cultural experiences. Their fear is easily justifiable as it lies in the possibility that their way of life may become victims to a depersonalized and inauthentic existence consumed by an unwavering push toward modernity [35].

The pivotal question that arises from such concerns is what properly or what should properly constitute multiculturalism? For its' misappropriation has a destructive tendency to label all things in a non-dominant culture, multicultural. Thus, in western culture, things like education, country music, Standard English and Christian beliefs are considered cultural. Yet, social staples like hip-hop music, alternative paths to financial success other than education, or holding religious views other than Christian values are 'multicultural." The consequence of multiculturalism in this way is a portentous one. One rather significant consequence is that it creates the debilitating view of different people as what Said (1995) referred to as the 'Cultural Other.' This view makes it easier for people to treat others as mere objects, a dire warning that Immanuel Kant [36] and Martin Buber [37] warned against because it allows people to treat others as less than human.

Multiculturalism in its current rendition encourages an inability or refusal to consider the Cultural other as an authentic existential being that is part of the human community. It is a dichotomous view of culture as majority and minority, significant and insignificant. It renders the cultural other simply is not like us who happen to be part of the majority. For those on the receiving end of this marginalization,

they begin to see, feel and respond to the bias and prejudice by experiencing systematic forms of discrimination in the form of an ominous 'They.' As the cultural other, overtime, it eats away at their individuality and cultural cohesion. It is a faceless and anonymous power that constantly wears away an individual's personal identity through deception and exploitation. They are often experienced as microaggressions, microinsults, or microtraumas, nested in forms of covert or institutional racism. For example, a black retired football player who accumulated more than 13 million dollars over his professional football career wanted to become an exclusive member at a large and well-known bank. Sensing his plans were not taken seriously, he eventually spoke with a bank representative who told him, "We're in Arizona. I do not have to tell you about what the demographics are in Arizona. They don't see people like you a lot." (New York Times, 2019). Living in a world that denies one's humanity is a difficulty one, yet, the cultural other will still be expected to strive for their own realization of morality, meaning and purpose in a globalizing world that forces cross-cultural encounters [38].

As an Existentialist, I believe the primary goal in therapy is helping clients find life balance, purpose and meaning in their lives. To do this effectively, therapists must understand that a client is a product of culture and that it is often the source of their views, their sense of reality and the basis for decisions they make about their lives that either create or solve their problems in living. Given the inevitability of globalization and the indefatigable human quest for meaning and purpose, freedom and self-expression, any reasonable definition of multiculturalism must work against the affirmation of the Cultural Other. It must emphasize the universality of the human condition while articulating a more inclusive sense of difference that, according to Moodley (2011), "empowers cultural traditions, facilitates economic development, respects ethnic customs and supports non-racist values" (p. 12).

The need for Cross-Cultural Understanding & Solutions

In a globalizing world, transcultural difficulties – in private life, work and politics – are growing increasingly important. Given the rapid pace of modernization, developing effective strategies to deal with transcultural problems will be a norm moving forward. While people of differing cultural circles used to be separated by great distances and only came into contact under unusual circumstances, technical innovations have dramatically increased the opportunities for contact today. Just by opening the morning paper or, their electronic device, people step out of their own living space and are exposed to the cross-cultural challenges of people from other cultural circles and groups.

Generally, we interpret these events in ways that we have grown up with. A common understanding in social psychological research is that individuals prefer people who are like themselves. They tend to be less favorably disposed to people different from themselves. The technical term for preferring like-minded people is in-group bias. Hence, when we perceive differences in others that do not align with our own way of life or values and beliefs, we are ready to criticize, judge or belittle "*Others*" because of their supposed backwardness, naiveté, brutality, or incomprehensible lack of concern. In the transcultural process we deal with the concepts, norms, values, behavioral patterns, interests, and viewpoints that are valid in a particular culture.

In order to create a space of sensitivity, awareness, and empathy within the cross-cultural diaspora, we must understand the makeup of culture in general. The content of culture, help us to contextualize existence and the acculturation process. In this sense, acculturation simply means the process of learning or adapting to a new culture through life experiences [39]. This essentially renders all of us cultural beings. We are all bound by the intricate DNA helix that determines are genetic make up but are final form is influenced by a mixture of genetics and life experience. As we are all born into a culture, nested within culture are seven cultural tributaries or filters that impact human existence.

Cultural Tributaries

There are at least seven tributaries of culture that interact fluidly and impact how we see and feel about ourselves and others. To avoid the cultural and multicultural problematic that has plagued our general understanding and sensitive to cross-culturalism, we must understand the existential basis of existence as it relates to humanity. The existential cross-cultural model helps us to achieve this understanding. The model comprises seven cultural tributaries that, when taken holistically provides us with a comprehensive framework for understanding culture and multiculturism in a globalizing world.

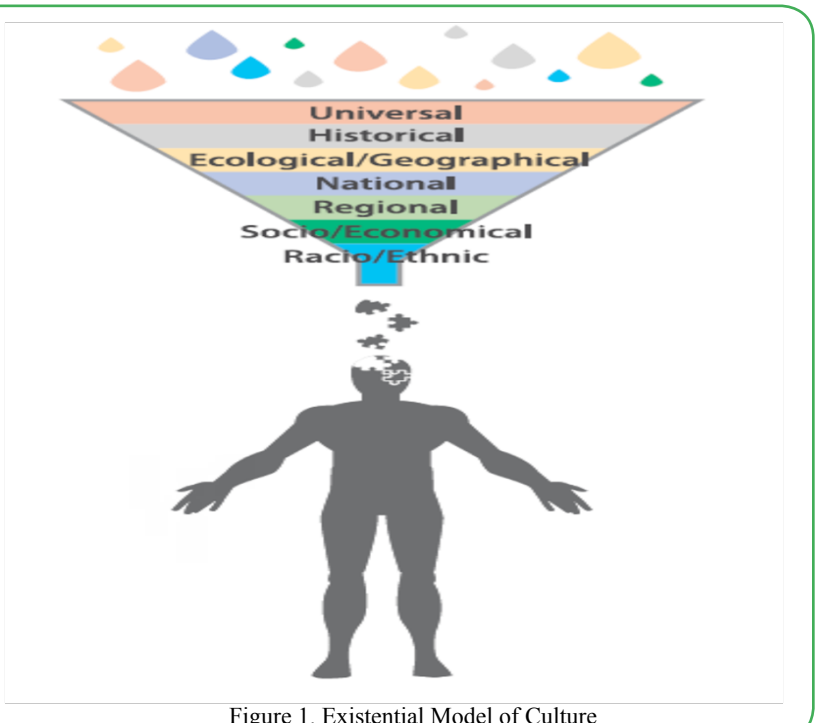

Figure 1. Existential Model of Culture

The first is the *universal* culture that comprises those things that make us human. They comprise our common biology, instincts, needs, capacities and impulses. It also comprises are interpersonal needs of connection, love, meaning and responsibility among others. The universal culture reminds us that people, no matter their origin, "our much more human than simply otherwise" [40]. For example, our genders and sexual attraction generate a host of human behaviors that cut across boundaries. A primary universal phenomenon is the family and the many behaviors it requires. Parents nourish, protect, and socialize their offspring to assume adult roles already defined by previous generations. As a part of nature, it is in human beings' best interest to go along with the rhythm of the natural world. They necessarily adjust their behavior to day and night, the seasons, and the processes of planting, germination, growth, and decay [41]. Since behavior is influenced by biology, it is reasonable to conceive of a biological, psycho-social dictated universal culture.

Second, is the *historical culture*. Rüsen [42] defines historical culture as "the complete range of activities of historical consciousness" (p.38). History contextualizes our temporal existence. In others words, meaning is derived from not only our experiences in culture but contextualizes by the beliefs, values, traditions that inform our past, present and future. Rusen [43] explained that historical learning has an outer and an inner side. The inner side refers to historical consciousness, which is individual (personal) and cognitive. The outer side is the historical culture, which comprises the institutions and organizations that form the infrastructure of historical learning, enabling the collective instruction for the acquisition of general and specialized historical knowledge [43,44]. For many, they find a sense of purpose in the identity of their loved ones and often benefit from their life.

The existential therapist must understand the significance of the clients' historical record. In many cultures, time orientation is far more significant than past, present and future orientations. Asian and African cultures that often view time in the "eternal" may make little sense to scholars of the West, though this conception is a fundamental part of reality for many cultures and religions around the world. For example, the existential therapist who believes he understands how ancient Islam may relates to her client without understanding the peculiarities of the history underlying it could result in naively presupposing one's own conception of history as universal rather than relative. Hence, therapist must take care to consider the relationship between time, history and their clients view of the world because it "opens up possibilities and the impossibilities of thinking beyond "modernity", and of trying to surpass the epistemic boundaries of one's own culture" (Adriaansen, 2015, p 4).

Third, is the *ecological culture*. Humans occupy a vast array of environments such as swamplands, mountains, deserts, forests and shorelines. Each setting has its own rhythm of nature to which they must adjust. Although "ecological culture" holds no real consensus of its meaning or proper utility. Generally, it is defined as "a set of norms, beliefs and attitudes that characterize the attitude of the society, its public groups and individuals to nature" [45]. Hence, people living in the cold of Greenland develop different ways of existing than people living in the warmth of Ivory Coast, West Africa or the mild and changing rural and urban landscapes of the United States. Understandably, people living in Alaska develop a different way of life than their counterparts in Senegal, West Africa.

Fourth, is the *national culture*. Usually, inhabitants of each country have their own language, belief system, style of government, values, mode of dress, communication network, and manifest a variety of behaviors that set them apart from people in other nations. Although the national culture may be invisible to natives, foreign visitors see, feel, hear, smell, and sense a culture that is strange to them. Indeed, the heritage and conduct of a nationality are an important source of culture. When people identify as American or Norwegian or Nigerian or Puerto Rican, they are displaying their national culture. Culture comprises a certain nationalism for groups of people. Vontress [39] explains that citizens of different countries have their own language, beliefs, values, style, faith, social networks that manifest into a constellation of attitudes and expressions towards life, death, birth, family, children, god, and nature.

Fifth, is the *regional culture*. Different from the national culture, the regional culture emphasizes group relations. Further, the regional culture also implies a constellation of characteristics that members of a given community share that transcend individual differences. For example, people residing in Manhattan will have cultural attributes unique to that regional culture. Even more so, people residing in Brooklyn or Staten Island will have cultural attributes unique to those Burroughs which are quite different in many ways to Manhattan but all part of New York. Differences in a country often contribute significantly to the national culture. Similarly, many Americans living in Louisiana, once owned by the French, retain traces of the French culture in language, music, food, dress, architecture, and in many other ways that are unconscious and invisible to local residents. People's values are communal and consequential in terms of their relations to a regional cultural community. The regional culture is a powerful cultural filter because it affects peoples' daily lives in very common and practical ways of existing both interpersonally and an all sorts of intrapsychic ways.

Sixth, *class/socio-economic culture*. Research in psychology, anthropology and sociology show that social class contexts shape decision-making in significant ways (e.g.,) [46]. Many researchers now argue that social class be incorporated into the larger dialogue about culture and diversity in addition to more common cultural features like race, ethnicity, and gender [47-49]. Regarding social class, therapists should understand the impact of status and socio-economics and how their clients' forms of various types of social, cultural and economic capital and how this capital forms the basis how they perceive the world, what they value and the decisions in relation to them.

Seventh, the *racio-ethnic culture* is the group into which individuals are born and socialized. According to Vontress [39] it is probably the most important and direct source of culture. The ethnic/racio filter can be homogenous or heterogeneous which can have a profound impact on how one may view the similarities and differences among people. This cultural filter is profound because newborns born into a culture usually acquire the ways of their forebears who first learned to cope with the other cultural environments already discussed the regional, national, ecological, and universal cultures. Consequently, the extent to which they absorb external cultures depends the diversity nested within their racio/ethnic filter and on their ability to participate in them. For example, nearly a century and a half after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves, many African Americans today manifest a culture somewhat different from that of the majority racial group in the United States. Therapists must understand when one speaks through a racio/ethnic filter, as if to say, "those people" or 'you know how they are," without exploring what is intended by such statements, it allows people to 'otherize' people, i.e., to create stereotypes and stereotype threats, develop unconscious biases, and engage consciously and subconsciously in different forms of racism and discrimination.

Although culture is a complex construct, it affects our entire existence. As noted in the existential model of culture, culture in is not a static predetermined set of characteristics that erroneously predict behavior. Simply culture does have some predictive value in terms of its impacts of one's beliefs, values, behaviors and decisions making. But despite this, culture, ironically remains organic yet

consistent. It is a complex nexus of universal, historical, national, regional, economic, and ethnic considerations. It is also a fundamental process of meaning-making and decision making that reflect one's culture based on their groups' shared beliefs, values, and circumstances. Yet, the pivotal questions to be considered in how one uses the cultural and multicultural construct are, what is the process by which cultural transmission occurs? How does culture shape personality and finally, how do we use culture and multi-culturalism more effectively in counseling?

Cultural Considerations in Counseling & Therapy

Cultural Intuition. According to Vontress, Johnson & Epps [39], cultural intuition is the mutual and immediate knowledge, sensation and rapport that occurs between counselors and their clients who are perceived to be from the same or very similar cultures. They client and counselor feel an unexplainable sense of empathy toward each other. Rapport building feels natural and easy. More broadly, cultural intuition [50] is used to highlight a theoretical sensitivity that extends personal memory into the collective and community experience and can empowers participants throughout a research process that includes engaging them in the data analysis for example. In the counseling session, and particularly in a cross-cultural encounter cultural intuition is possible if one can recognize and appreciate the commonalities among human beings. Further, while ethnic and racio cultures often provide an immediate recognition of sameness, people who present differently in appearance can often create cultural intuition based on universal, historical, national, regional, and class commonalities.

Cultural Chaffing. Cultural Chaffing is the opposite of cultural intuition. It is the energy discharge that takes place when two people coming together from different ethnic or racial histories experience anxiety at their initial encounter. The anxiety is underscored by feelings of distrust, dislike and even fear. This feeling may continue long after the first encounter. During the process of cultural chaffing, one may become very conscious of their mannerisms and appearance. There is a stark sense of unfamiliarity which often can augment a physiological response that may interfere with healthy interpersonal interaction (i.e., fight of flight response, high blood pressure, increased heart rate, perspiration). They feel anxiety and suddenly uncertain about their own abilities. Take for instance the black counselor who experienced racism as a child and meets his first white client.

Cultural Reasoning. Just as Cultural Intuition makes trust and rapport building easier, cultural reasoning makes trust and rapport building more difficult. It is the process of actively thinking through an awkward cross-cultural encounter. One does not necessarily think negatively or positively about the situation but feels no confidence about how to appropriately manage the cross-cultural encounter. In this moment, one may think of stereotypes they have heard about a group, or some advice about how to interact with a group or even remember warnings or other bits of information that they now readily consider in order to navigate the present situation.

The process of cultural reasoning is often sudden and uncomfortable. The space between the two people of different cultures feels awkward. It often feels like how one experiences their first encounter with strangers at the first day of school or work as they wonder how or can they connect with anyone. However, the difference is the differences are based on perceived cultural differences rather than mere unfamiliarity. As people, we all experience cultural reasoning. The white business owner experiences it when he has an unexpected influx of black customers he did not anticipate. The Ethiopian middle school teacher will experience it when she teaches her first 6th grade class in an American classroom. The African American senior citizen will experience it when she first meets her white home care taker. In many ways, it's a natural part of how people get along in their lives.

The reasoning can be a good thing because it evidences our ability to be self-aware and reflective. It tells us that we have a capacity to ask ourselves hard questions based on the interpersonal anxiety one experiences during a cross-cultural encounter, and consider it in relation to our own values, beliefs and sensibilities. Because we live in a multi-cultural world and anxiety is a natural reaction to the unfamiliar or unknown, cultural reasoning is an essential part the interpersonal exchange. However, the negative feelings, judgements and behavior one may experiences or conveys as a result of interacting with a person different from them do not promote harmony in interpersonal living.

Cultural abhorrence & cultural relishing. The process of cultural reasoning is a constant for most of us. Some people exist on different ends of the cultural reasoning spectrum. On one end there is cultural abhorrence and on the opposite end there is *cultural relishing*. One who abhors is one who has a severe intolerance of other cultures. There is little to no reasoning with this person. To the extent that reasoning does takes place, it is only to justify or validate hateful feelings. Culturally abhorrent people are racist or classist or both. Members of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan is an example of one who has abhorrent cultural reasoning. On the other end of the spectrum is cultural relishing. The individual who actually becomes happy or excited when having an authentic experience with someone from a different culture, ethnicity or racial background. Moreover, the relishing maintains a respect for the culture which is critical in avoiding the pitfalls of cultural appropriation. Most of us fall somewhere in the middle. As people meet people with different stories to share, if one can manage an open attitude, the uncomfortable feelings, the anxiety one often experiences can be ultimately extinguished. That is a goal of healthy interpersonal living.

Cultural Immersion. Cultural immersion is the act of actively integrating into an unfamiliar culture including learning the history, traditions, interacting with people, and seeking to understand the way others live in a community by engaging in daily life activities. Mezirow [51,52] found that people naturally function from a set of "habitual expectations" known as perspectives that they usually derive from the culture they are born into. From an existential perspective, these perspectives are also known as one's weltanschauung which comprises one's natural philosophy; fundamental, existential, and normative postulates; or themes, values, emotions, and ethics. Mezirow argues that people develop their weltanschauung/perspectives through a lifelong process of interaction and socialization with a cultural context. Hence, from a multicultural perspective, any real evolution of one's perspective not only requires a willingness to culturally immerse themselves but engage in intense and lengthy of cultural immersion.

The Mezirow's [51] perspective transformation theory argues that when people encounter an unfamiliar situation, it pushes them to alter their regular pattern of thinking, and this experience might lead to the development of new perspectives. This perspective is critical to how individuals adapt to globalization. It is also critical for counselors who desire is more multicultural approach to therapy. Hence, I believe that cultural immersion is a necessity to any real effort to develop an authentic multicultural perspective. As one immerses themselves in different cultures, the second most important dynamic in this process is reflecting upon those experiences. From the view of existentialism, true insights and learning come from engaging in the reflective, introspective process. Overtime, through immersion and reflection, one's multicultural view of existence becomes the frame that shapes their beliefs, values, ideas, and viewpoints. Through this reflection process, people can then develop new perspectives that become the pivotal point of relating to self, others, and society [52]. One just needs to have courage and be willing to step outside their zone of comfort.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Counseling

The Counselor as a Person. The culture in which counseling takes place determines who performs in the role of helper [1]. In oral societies where authority and wisdom are attributed to the oldest living men and women in the community, elders are usually sought out for advice and direction for almost every aspect of life. When counseling over and above what is provided by elders in the family is needed, people usually consult traditional healers, most of whom have learned their occupation by apprenticing themselves to recognized senior practitioners. They may or may not know how to read or write.

On the other hand, in Western societies in particular, the counselor is anyone, male or female of any age, who has met the academic preparation requirements set by the state or some other jurisdiction [53]. Entry into counseling and other psychotherapeutic professions depends on the individual's ability to obtain the requisite academic preparation and license to practice. However, their ability to be effective is dependent on their ability to connect with people, their confidence and awareness in themselves, and having an open attitude toward the variances of humanity, particularly as they relate to cross-culturalism. The counselor as a person benefits mostly from being genuine and authentic, aware and mindful, sensitive and humble. Lastly, the counselor should possess the ability to be harmonious. According to Vontress [39], harmony is the ability to establish and maintain rapport and balance with the world around them. This sounds simply but in the context of a globalizing world filled with inter cultural exchanges, this can be quite taxing.

The counseling relationship. The counseling relationship should be close. The client should feel connected to the therapist. The closeness overtime should resemble a feeling of love but not the kind that is reserved for children, family or a romantic partner. Rather, it is a kind of feeling that comprises according to Vontress [39] spontaneous unselfishness, respectfulness, and reverence for the each other's existence and uniqueness. This type of relationship is an existential one that is based on the unique love of a fellow human being, one that views love as the same type of love that one has for themselves. Boss (1963) described this type of love as the psychotherapeutic eros. It acknowledges and embraces the I-thou principle defined by Buber (1964) which recognizes individuals as unique beings beyond their role status, class, culture or attractiveness.

The counseling Session. The counseling session can take on many forms. Nonetheless, a counseling session where cultural intuition is involved or it is a dynamic cross-cultural encounter, the therapist must always be mindful of a few salient principles. First, the counselor must realize that they are an active participant and an informed observer in the counseling process [40]. Given this dynamic information exchanged in the session can never be completely objective. Second, psychological data is, to some extent, is always distorted by the counselors' data collection process because the counselor and client relationship is an artificial one. Hence, they must assume that there is always some degree of distortion in data they receive. In fact, they must always assume that the data is distorted to some extent by the mere fact that the counselor is involved in a therapeutic relationship with the client.

The common causes of this distortion are often attributed to emotional distress, shame, pride and distrust or a lack of awareness. Third, the counselor must accept that their presence will alter the client's behavior and emotional reactions. By simply forming the therapeutic relationship, this will happen and it is quite necessary to conduct any form of observation. For the counselor, these observations must be three dimensional. They must attend to the verbal, non-verbal (body language) and paraverbal (tone, pitch, cadence) cues the client conveys and not they symmetry or misalignment.

Fourth, the counselor must always be aware of their own dimensions of communication. They must be mindful of their own behaviors, emotions and thoughts as they may influence or bias the information that is received. They must be cognizant of their introduction, their choice of words and tone as examples. It makes a difference whether the counselor speaks in a tone of aloofness, or alert professionalism, genuine interests or frustration and short temperament. It is also important that the counselor consider whether they appear attentive or distracted, non-verbal gestures speak often as loud as verbal statements. All of which can introduce counselor bias and potentially skew the information the client conveys. This is particular harmful in cross-cultural exchanges or involves topics that may be sensitive and emotionally difficult for the client.

Conclusion

Though globalization is changing the cross-cultural milieu, what it does not do is change the universal basic needs of interpersonal living. Therapists should help clients living in a globalizing world, understand that they live in a world of many cultures and their culture is not a matter of better or worse, just different. Different is an opportunity for personal growth and more empathetic interpersonal living, a goal that should be the hallmark of a globalizing, multicultural world. Historically, culture and multiculturalism has been misunderstood and mis-used to the detriment of many people and communities.

Yet, because of globalization, the need for cross-cultural sensitivity is more important than at any other time in human history. Therapists open to this reality help clients living within a cultural, modernizing world understand that they are in a constant state of intercultural and cross-cultural situations that can become a bedrock of inner and interpersonal growth rather than an excuse to otherize and demean others different from them. For any cross-cultural solutions to be effective in a globalizing world, they must always comprise the fundamental elements of human interpersonal living that are common amongst all of us including our existential needs (love, connection, responsibility, accountability, freedom, etc.), are cultural tributaries, and our innate capacities to love and know.

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