

Cross-Cultural Encounters: Bridging Worlds of Difference

Course Description, Examination, and Self-Assessment

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Course Description:

Today, as never before, clinical practice, training, and research is conducted in diverse and multicultural settings. The American Psychological Association more than a decade ago mandated that multicultural courses and diversity training be a standard part of doctoral level curricula, but to date little has been done to address the pressing continuing education needs for multicultural understanding and cross-cultural communication in general clinical practice.

This course is designed to alert clinicians as well as academicians and researchers to the major issues being discussed in multicultural and diversity education, theory and research today. Of particular importance is the self-assessment of bias and prejudice, a critical consciousness-raising exercise designed to help each participant assess her/his cultural and ethnic points of view.

Learning Goals:

- To be able to specify how multiculturalism is coming to constitute the fourth force in the clinical disciplines
- To become able to formulate the major concerns of multicultural approaches to psychodiagnosis and psychotherapy
- To know what is involved when any two people attempt to bridge their worlds of cultural difference
- To develop an appreciation for a multi-ethnic approach to interpersonal relationships that denies the objective reality of race while honoring the subjective realities of diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic identities.
- To state how immigration, children of immigration, central city living, class and ethnic differences all have an impact on clinical ethics, diagnosis, and practice
- To be able to identify the ethnosexual frontier and how it manifests in the transference/countertransference matrix.
- To assess personal biases that affect cross-cultural and cross-ethnic encounters.

Curriculum Content:

Multiculturalism is rapidly becoming recognized as the fourth major force in psychology alongside the traditional psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioral, and humanistic psychologies (Pedersen, 1999). Central to this course is the idea that we can never know the fullness of anyone else's cultural identifications and orientations. In

this sense all relationships are cross-cultural encounters. How can each of us in our professional work learn to open ourselves to differences, to diversity, to ethnicity, to ethnosexuality, to our own prejudices and to prejudices and hatreds aimed at us? Ten perspectives for listening to multicultural and diversity issues in life and in psychotherapy are explored:

Perspective 1: Five Dimensions of Culture: Hofstede's (2001) overarching work involving teams of researchers working over 40 years in 80 multi-national corporations has yielded five general dimensions of culture along which any particular culture or the cultural orientations—the values, symbols, rituals and heroes—of any particular individual can be considered.

Perspective 2: The Mimetic Evolution of Culture: The ongoing research of Darwinian biologist Blackmore (1999) following Dennett and Dawkins has yielded the concept of "meme" as a cultural replicator analogous to the operation of DNA in the gene. The idea that anything that can be mimicked will be replicated, thus giving cultural ideas, symbols and behaviors a "life of their own" allows for a rich understanding of the diversity and tenacity of cultural practices and idiosyncrasies.

Perspective 3: Post-modern Social Constructionism: Berger and Luckman (1966) began a movement now saturating all academic research and theory contrasting the "modern" search for certainty with the "postmodern" quest to define perspectives—and along with this the realization that human realities are essentially constructed and passed down the generations as cultural learning (Hoffman 1998, D. B. Stern 1997).

Perspective 4: Ethnicity and Sexuality: Sociologist Nagel (2003) analyzes decades of sociological, anthropological, and psychological theory and research that demonstrates "the power of sex to shape the ideas and feelings about race, ethnicity and the nation...and how sex matters insinuate themselves into all things racial, ethnic and national."

Perspective 5: Urban Life: Poverty, Adversity, Immigration, Exposure to Racism and Post-Traumatic Stress: Research and evolving theory in diverse urban issues is presented by Altman (1995), Suárez-Orosco & Suárez-Orosco (2001), Franklin, N.B. (2003), Franklin, J. A. (2002), hooks (1995), Loo (1998), Rodriguez (1993), Roland (1988), West (1993/2001) and Young-Bruehl (1998).

Perspective 6: Transgenerational Transmission--Individual, Positional and Transgenerational Ghosts: The theoretical and research bases for internalization and transgenerational transmission of trauma are provided by Abraham and Tarok (1994), Cortina and Marrone (2003) and Volkan (2004).

Perspective 7: Difference, Hatred, and Discrimination: A series of themes regarding difference are reflected in the multicultural and diversity literature: Allen (1997), Arana (2002), hooks (1995), Moss (2003), Ridley (1995), Sue (2003), West (1993/2001), Nagel (1996) and Young-Bruehl (1998).

Perspective 8: Cross-cultural Diagnosis and Therapy: Studies in cross-cultural understanding and communication mandate special considerations for ethics, diagnosis and therapy: Altman (1995), Cushman (1995), Franklin, N.B. (2003), Mishne (2002), Moss (2003), Pack-Brown & Williams (2003), Perez-Foster, Moskowitz & Javier (1996), Sue (1998), Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen (1996) and Young-Bruehl (1998).

Perspective 9: Intersubjectivity, Attachment and The Present Moment: Contemporary research points toward the drive quality involved in mutually regulated intersubjective attachments in the present moment early in child development and later in all encounters, manifested differently in diverse cultural contexts: Stolorow and colleagues (2002), Cortina and Marrone (2003), Stern, D. N. (2004)

Perspective 10: Relational Psychotherapy and Thirdness: A relational approach to theory and practice particularly suits cross-cultural psychotherapy as advocated by Mitchell (1988), Benjamin (1998), Hedges (2003, 2005), Aron (1996), and Ogden (2005).



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