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THE CLIENT AS CHANGE AGENT AND MULTICULTURAL AMBASSADOR

Multicultural Psychotherapy

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The principal goal of the fourth and final phase of multicultural therapy is to complete the task of client empowerment. The specific objective of this stage of therapy is to encourage the client to become an active participant in the development of a multicultural society.

FINAL PHASE OF THERAPY

This final phase of therapy addresses an issue of major concern to the "different"—the fear that psychotherapy will be used as a tool to encourage client conformity and assimilation to the values and lifestyles of the power structure. The African Martiniquean psychiatrist Franz Fanon (see Bulhan, 1985) exposed this perspective in traditional psychoanalytic personality theories and therapies. Bulhan, in his book *Franz Fanon and the Psychology of Oppression*, wrote:

How can an intervention liberate the patient from social

oppression when the "therapist-patient" relationship itself is suffused with the inequities, nonreciprocity, elitism, and sadomasochism of the oppressive social order? Can there be realistic grounds for changing self-defeating behaviors and a negative self- concept in a context in which only the "doctor" initiates and the "patient" accommodates, where one is powerful and the other powerless? (p. 272)

Ryan (1971) has also criticized the "blame the victim" orientation of many of the traditional personality theories and psychotherapies. The client-as-activist phase of multicultural therapy, then, represents a radical departure from traditional forms of psychotherapy and counseling.

Role of Client

Multicultural psychotherapy encourages the client to play four roles:

> 1. *Change agent*. In this role the client helps to create changes in the institutions and agencies that have had a significant impact on him. For Imelda, the focus was on the school she attends; while for Harold, it was on his workplace.

> 2. *Educator*. In this capacity the client introduces people who have the power to influence the policies and practices of institutions and agencies to the concepts of the flex theory of personality and to the multicultural model of

psychotherapy. The objective is to encourage "power holders" to better understand and to attempt to resolve problems of mismatch.

3. *Peer counselor.* The client provides emotional support and facilitates change and empowerment in those of his peers who are victims of mismatch shock.

4. *Multicultural ambassador.* As an ambassador, the client promotes the development of multicultural environments that encourage understanding and cooperation among different people and groups.

As the therapist encourages clients to learn concepts, techniques, and procedures by which they can change the environment and influence others, he also warns against using these as tools to manipulate others. The therapist points out that the knowledge possessed by the client is potentially damaging and carries responsibilities. The client is encouraged to keep the principal goal of environmental change in mind and to help make society sensitive to the cultural and individual differences of all its citizens.

Imelda as Change Agent. Gender roles are usually separated in traditional societies, resulting in pressures for female athletes to conform, because athletics are usually seen as the exclusive domain of

men. Imelda faced this problem. Having experienced the disapproval of parents, grandparents, and other authority figures in her traditional community and having realized that other players and coaches faced similar conflicts, Imelda became interested in doing something about this problem. She proposed a program that the athletic and counseling departments of her school could develop to help women athletes with the value conflicts they experienced as a consequence of these pressures.

Imelda's goal was to encourage the coaches and counselors to help female athletes experiencing value conflicts in a traditional community to conceptualize these conflicts. In addition, Imelda proposed that coaches and counselors develop plans to intervene with parents and other members of the athletes' families to lessen value conflicts.

The therapist asked Imelda to identify someone in her social environment who might be interested in working on the problem with her. Imelda decided on one of the Latina coaches whom she had gotten to know well during the match homework assignment. Imelda remembered the coach telling her that she had also faced opposition

from parents and grandparents when she first showed interest in sports.

The therapist asked Imelda to consider what the majority of those coaches and counselors who could play an important role in intervention with women athletes in conflict wanted out of life. Imelda could speculate about her coaches' goals, but since she only knew two of the four counselors, she was limited in her knowledge about their life objectives. She said:

> I know most of the coaches want us to concentrate and keep our minds on the game. They always talk about how being distracted hurts our game plan. I know all of the assistant coaches would like to become head coach in a school; some of them would even like to be coaches in college some day. The two counselors are great fans of the women's teams; they always come to our games. I know one of them is working on her doctorate degree; the other one likes to read a lot about sports sociology and psychology and stuff like that, because she helped me out with a term paper that I did on women in sports.

Imelda thought of ways to encourage the coaches and counselors to work together to develop a program of lectures and workshops addressing value conflicts often faced by female athletes in a

traditional community and of intervention with the athletes and their families. She decided to approach the coach she had chosen as her ally to see if she would be willing to work on this with her.

Imelda would prepare a script that she would use to enlist the support of her coach. The therapist and Imelda discussed the content of the script and the broad outline of the presentation to be made to the coaching staff and to the head counselor. Because Imelda was working on developing her field independent learning/problem-solving and communication styles, Imelda and the therapist decided that she would prepare the script on her own and bring it to the next therapy session, when they would discuss and role-play it. After the role-playing exercise, she would modify the script as necessary. She followed the details for the implementation of her homework assignment, empathy projection, and feeling awareness-exercises as discussed in the chapters beginning with Chapter 5.

Once she gained the support of her coach, Imelda and the coach developed a plan for approaching the coaching staff. The head coach, in turn, approached the head of the counseling department for the final development and implementation of the intervention program.

Harold as Educator. A source of great frustration for Harold and his partners was the employee turnover problems at their branch plant in Southern California. This was one of the reasons Harold had not felt confident that his company was on solid financial footing. After gaining familiarity with the cultural styles component of the flex theory, Harold concluded that the on-site observations he had made, along with the reports from managers at the plant, could be explained in terms of cultural and cognitive styles conflicts between a predominantly Anglo supervisory staff and employees who were mainly Hispanic in origin.

Harold's goal was to help his partners conceptualize the turnover problem at this plant as a result of cultural and cognitive conflicts between the managers, the supervisory staff, and the employees. Harold identified a friend from college who was a professor in the business school of an East Coast university. When Harold asked him for advice, his friend suggested a number of references in the management literature addressing employee satisfaction problems relating to mismatch of supervisor and worker styles.

The therapist asked Harold to consider what his partners wanted

out of life. Harold said, "Right now it's stabilizing things in the Southern California plant. We can't move on to decide on new product development until things settle down there. They are all upset because they don't understand what is happening over there."

Harold suggested developing a presentation for a directors' meeting at which he could discuss the issues described in the references his friend had recommended. He would try to get his partners' backing to hire a consultant who could assist them in resolving the problem. Because Harold was learning how to use a field sensitive approach to learning and problem-solving, he and the therapist worked on the script together. The script they developed used a field independent approach to communication and teaching to match the preferred cognitive style of Harold's partners. The script included identifying and defining the problem and reviewing the literature Harold had read at his friend's suggestion. Further, the script called for Harold to share copies of some of the references he had read.

Harold then presented a plan for training supervisors to be aware of preferred cultural and cognitive styles in those they supervise, and

he volunteered to direct the training efforts. Assuming the role of educator includes the following ten techniques and procedures:

1. Identifying an individual or institutional change goal.

2. Identifying an ally.

3. Presenting the idea to the ally.

4. Changing the idea as suggested by the ally and discussed with the therapist.

5. Projecting empathy.

6. Developing a script.

7. Role-playing the script with the therapist.

8. Enacting the script.

9. Implementing and evaluating the script.

10. Discussing the results of assessment with the therapist.

Rose as Multicultural Peer Counselor. In the process of going through multicultural counseling, Rose became very conscious of the problems facing Latinas who have impaired vision. With the encouragement and help of friends she had met through an interfaith

community group, she started a support group for women who had lost their vision as adults. The group concentrated on the following issues:

1. *How the vision-impaired woman is treated by the extended family*. Is she, in particular, an object of pity and overprotection? They entitled this set of issues "*pobrecita esta ciega*" (I feel so sorry for her because she is blind)—a phrase often used by members of the traditional Latino community to describe an adult woman who is vision impaired. Rose recalled that her siblings and parents had become so overprotective of her that they were opposed to her attending a state rehabilitation center for the vision impaired where she would receive training in mobility, in independent living skills, and vocational skills.

2. *How children perceive a vision-impaired parent*. Rose felt that her children resented her inability to do as many things with them. Now she also felt that they resented the drop in income because she had been unable to continue her work as a teacher. Some of her children refused to accept her blindness. They would say, "You could see if you really wanted to, but you just don't want to take care of us

anymore." The women also felt that some of the issues in their changing relationship with their children concerned the fact that they were embarrassed to be seen in public with a blind mother. In Rose's case, her children had helped her before she learned mobility skills, only to leave her side and forget about her when they saw someone they knew.

3. *How spouses change, particularly with respect to sexual relationships*. Many visually impaired women in the group believed their husbands were resentful that they were unable to do the many things they had done around the house before. Rose's husband would even say to her, "*Ya no sirves para nada*" (You are no longer useful). Rose was sensitive to the fact that while they had enjoyed a good sexual relationship before she became blind, her husband avoided intimacy now.

In addition to providing support to each other about these issues, the members made themselves available for discussions and presentations to community groups. The clergy of different churches agreed to tell their congregations about the support groups and to discuss some of the issues of concern to them in their sermons and

church bulletins.

Harold as Multicultural Peer Counselor. Harold's involvement in area professional societies led him to realize that many of his colleagues were in crisis because they felt burned out and bored with their jobs. These were professionals in their late twenties and early thirties who, despite the fact that they had achieved success in their professions, had become increasingly disillusioned with their work. Most were experiencing stress and confusion, and several of them were considering returning to college to pursue career interests they had abandoned earlier in their lives.

This struck a familiar chord in Harold, and he decided he wanted to do something about it. His preliminary conversations with some of these colleagues indicated that most of them did not want to go into psychotherapy or counseling, partly because of the stigmas of seeking help and partly because they felt this was something they should do on their own.

When Harold discussed his observations with the therapist, they arrived at the idea of having Harold look into the possibility of forming

a support group of technical professionals suffering from burnout. Specifically, the goal was to form such a group for professionals who were considering career changes because of burnout or because of a perceived lack of meaning in their lives.

The therapist suggested that Harold contact a local medical school professor who had developed such a support group for his colleagues. After talking to the professor, Harold refined his ideas and enlisted the support of two of his closest friends in one of the professional organizations in which he was a member. Together they approached the governing board of the organization for sponsorship and financial support for their ideas.

The next step was for Harold to develop a script for presenting the idea to the officers of the organization. Since Harold was developing a field sensitive learning/problem-solving style, the therapist encouraged him to develop the script in cooperation with his friends in the organization. Through discussions with his collaborators, Harold learned that the preferred styles of the officers of the organization were modern with respect to culture, but mixed with respect to cognitive styles. Harold and the therapist decided to

modify the script to reflect this knowledge.

The therapist alternated between playing an officer who was field independent and one who was field sensitive in order to allow Harold to prepare answers to questions emanating from either perspective. Harold's homework assignment was completed in cooperation with his two friends. A final step was to implement and evaluate the script.

Encouraging the client to assume the role of multicultural peer counselor includes the following nine techniques and procedures:

1. Identifying the individual change goal.

2. Developing a preliminary plan with therapist.

3. Identifying resource people or institutions.

4. Identifying allies, discussing the plan with them, and making changes they suggested.

5. Developing a script for presentation of the plan to "power holders."

6. Role-playing the script with the therapist.

7. Making plans for enacting the script.

8. Enacting the script and assessing its effectiveness.

9. Discussing the results of assessment with the therapist.

Alex as Peer Counselor and Change Agent. Because one of the homework activities related to multicultural therapy, Alex began to do volunteer work with a community agency that offered support services for adolescents and young adults who are homosexual. Alex became aware that few members of traditional cultural ethnic/racial groups and multiracial people would take advantage of the services offered by this agency because they felt these were not relevant to their traditional values. With the support of the director and associate director of the agency, Alex was given a small budget to begin a hot line for lesbians and gays who were members of traditional cultures. The contacts he made through this effort led him to initiate support groups for homosexuals from traditional cultures, addressing the following issues:

- *The unique needs of Traditional homosexuals related to coming out*. Homosexuality in traditional cultures is often a greater stigma than it is in modern cultures.

- *Issues related to the family*. Many traditional families feel as if they are losing face in the community—getting married

and having children to carry on family traditions are so important in traditional families.

- *Issues related to rejection by members of the Traditional culture-of-origin*. These people may tend to see the homosexual as disloyal to the group because they tend to view the lesbian/gay movement as dominated by whites.

Tara as Multicultural Ambassador. As she identified allies who could help her become more flexible, Tara thought about some of her teammates in her city basketball league—some were African American, some Latina, and others Native American and Asian. They realized that the concept of "midnight basketball," which was being implemented with adolescent males in poor ethnic neighborhoods, was not being extended to females. They applied for and received a grant from a community development agency to begin a multicultural basketball league. They ensured that the members of the teams would be of different ethnic/racial groups, and they combined cultural celebrations such as Juneteeth (date of implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas), Cinco de Mayo, and powwows. Through movies, videos, music, and art, as well as informational shows, they were able to involve different generations—grandparents,

parents, and other members of the extended family—and the community in their activities.

SUMMARY

The final phase of multicultural therapy completes the task of the client's empowerment begun during the initial phase of counseling. In this phase of therapy, the client has a role in changing institutions, in helping others, and in educating people in the concepts of personality flex and in the strategies of multicultural psychotherapy. Most important, this phase introduces clients to the role of ambassador for a multicultural society of peace and cooperation.

GLOSSARY

Attitude of Acceptance a nonjudgmental, positive, accepting atmosphere devoid of conformity or assimilation pressures. In therapy this enables the client to express his unique, or true, self.

Bicognitive Orientation to Life Scale (BOLS) a personality inventory composed of items that reflect the degree of preference for field sensitive or field independent cognitive styles in different life domains. Assesses cognitive flex by determining the degree of agreement with items that reflect preference for either field independent or field sensitive cognitive styles. A balance or bicognitive score is also attained.

Bicognitive Style a cognitive style characterized by an ability to shuttle between the field sensitive and field independent styles. Choice of style at any given time is dependent on task demands or situational characteristics. For example, if a situation demands competition, the bicognitive person usually responds in a field independent manner. On the other hand, if the situation demands cooperation, the bicognitive individual behaves in a field sensitive manner. People with a bicognitive orientation also may use elements of both the field sensitive and field independent styles to develop new composite or combination styles.

Bicultural/Multicultural Style a cultural style characterized by an ability to shuttle between the traditional and modern cultural styles. Choice of style at any given time is dependent on task demands or

situational characteristics.

Change Agent a person who actively seeks to encourage changes in the social environment in order to ensure acceptance and sensitivity to all cultural and cognitive styles.

Cognitive and Cultural Flex Theory (or Theory of Multicultural Development) the theory that people who are exposed to socialization agents with positive attitudes toward diversity, participate in diversity challenges, interact with members of diverse cultures, maintain an openness and commitment to learning from others, and are more likely to develop multicultural patterns of behavior and a multicultural identity. People who have developed a multicultural identity have a strong, lifelong commitment to their groups of origin as well as to other cultures and groups.

Cognitive Style a style of personality defined by the ways in which people communicate and relate to others; the rewards that motivate them; their problem-solving approaches; and the manner in which they teach, socialize with, supervise, and counsel others. There are three types of cognitive styles: field sensitive, field independent, and bicognitive.

Cultural and Cognitive Flex (Personality Flex) the ability to shuttle between field sensitive and field independent cognitive styles and modern and traditional cultural styles.

Cultural Democracy (1) a philosophy that recognizes that the way a person communicates, relates to others, seeks support and recognition from his environment, and thinks and learns are products of the

value system of his home and community; (2) refers to the moral rights of an individual to be different while at the same time be a responsible member of a larger society.

Cultural Style an orientation to life related to or based on traditional and modern values or a combination of these values. Assessed by the Traditionalism- Modernism Inventory and the Family Attitude Scale.

Diversity Challenges a catalyst for multicultural development such as cultural and linguistic immersion experiences, new tasks, and activities that encourage the process of synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks learned from different cultures, institutions, and peoples.

Empathy Projection the process whereby a person tries to understand the point of view and feelings of others whose cognitive styles and values are different from his own.

False Self the identity developed as a result of attempts to conform to cultural and cognitive styles of authority figures, institutions, and majority cultures.

Family Attitude Scale a personality inventory to assess a person's degree of agreement with traditional and modern family values.

Field Independent a cognitive style characterized by independent, abstract, discovery-oriented learning preferences, an introverted lifestyle, a preference for verbal communication styles, and an emphasis on personal achievement and material gain. People with a preferred field independent orientation are likely to be analytical and

inductive and focus on detail. They also tend to be nondirective and discovery-oriented in childrearing, and in teaching, supervising, and counseling others.

Field Sensitive a cognitive style characterized by interactive personalized learning preferences, an extroverted lifestyle, a preference for nonverbal communication styles, a need to help others. People with a preferred field sensitive orientation tend to be more global, integrative, and deductive in their thinking and problem-solving styles, and they tend to be directive in childrearing, and in teaching, supervising, and counseling others.

Life History Interview focuses on the development and expressions of cultural flex during different periods of life: infancy and early childhood, early school and elementary school years, middle school years, high school years, and post- high school period. The life history interview also focuses on the extent of an individual's actual participation in both traditional and modern families, cultures, groups, and institutions. The life history identifies the type of cultural flex by examining the degree to which a person has been able to combine modern and traditional values and belief systems to arrive at multicultural values and worldviews.

Match and/or Mismatch refers to person-environment fit with respect to the degree of harmony or lack of harmony between cultural/cognitive styles and environmental demands. Two types are cognitive mismatch and cultural mismatch.

Mismatch Shock an extreme case of the mismatch syndrome.

Mismatch Syndrome a lack of harmony between a person's preferred

cultural and/or cognitive styles and environmental demands. This occurs when people feel at odds to the important people and institutions in their lives. They feel alone, hopeless, and misunderstood; they may exhibit a number of symptoms, including self-rejection, depression, negativity, rigidity, and attempts to escape reality.

Model a person whom the client admires and who is dominant in the cultural/ cognitive styles the client wants to learn.

Modeling the process whereby people learn unfamiliar cognitive and cultural styles through imitation and observation of others, through reading and through travel.

Modern a value orientation that emphasizes and encourages separation from family and community early in life. It is typical of urban communities, liberal religions, and of North American and Western European cultures. People who are identified as having a modern value orientation tend to emphasize science when explaining the mysteries of life; they have a strong individualistic orientation; they tend to deemphasize differences in gender and age roles; and they emphasize egalitarianism in childrearing practices.

Multicultural Ambassador a multicultural person who promotes the development of multicultural environments which encourage understanding (multicultural education) and cooperation among different people and groups.

Multicultural Educator a multicultural person who educates others about the advantages of cultural and cognitive diversity and

multicultural orientations to life.

Multicultural Experience Inventory (MEI) an inventory that assesses historical and current experiences. It focuses on personal history and behavior in three areas: demographic and linguistic, socialization history, and degree of multicultural participation in the past as well as the present. The MEI consists of two types of items: historical (reflecting historical development pattern—HDP) and contemporary functioning (reflecting contemporary multicultural identity—CMI). Includes items that deal with degree of comfort and acceptance.

Multicultural Model of Psychotherapy a model of therapy that emphasizes multicultural development by maximizing the client's ability to flex between cultural and cognitive styles when faced with different environmental demands and development of a multicultural orientation to life characterized by serving as a multicultural educator, ambassador, and peer counselor.

Multicultural Peer Counselor a multicultural person who provides emotional support and facilitates change and development of empowerment in those of his or her peers who are suffering from mismatch.

Multicultural Person-Environment Fit Worldview a worldview that is based on the following assumptions: (1) There are no inferior people, cultures, or groups in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, economics, religion, physical disabilities, region, sexual orientation, or language; (2) problems of maladjustment are the result of mismatch between people, or between people and their

environments rather than of inferior people or groups; (3) every individual, group, or culture has positive contributions to make to personality development and to a healthy adjustment to life; (4) people who are willing to learn from others and from groups and cultures different from their own acquire multicultural building blocks (coping techniques and perspectives), which are the basis of multicultural personality development and multicultural identity; (5) synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks acquired from different people, groups, and cultures occur when the person with multicultural potential works toward the goals of understanding and cooperation among diverse groups and peoples in a pluralistic society; and (6) synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks from diverse origins contribute to the development of multicultural personality development and psychological adjustment in a pluralistic society.

Preferred Cultural and Cognitive Styles Observation Checklists observational rating scales that list field sensitive and field independent behaviors in five domains: communications; interpersonal relationships; motivation; teaching, parenting, supervising, and counseling; learning and problem solving. The checklists can be used to assess modern and traditional cultural styles and values.

Preferred Styles the dominant cultural and cognitive styles of a person.

Scriptwriting a therapy strategy used, along with role-playing, to promote cultural and cognitive flex development by matching the cultural or cognitive styles of a person or institution.

Theory of Multicultural Development see Cognitive and Cultural Flex Theory.

Traditional a value orientation that emphasizes close ties to family and community throughout life. It is typical of rural communities, conservative religions, and of minority and developing cultures. People identified as having traditional value orientations tend to have a spiritual orientation toward life, are strongly identified with their families and communities of origin, usually believe in separation of gender and age roles; and typically endorse strict approaches to child- rearing.

Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory (TMI) a personality inventory that assesses the degree of identification with traditional and modern values and belief systems. The instrument yields scores indicating the degree of agreement with items reflecting traditionalism or modernism. The degree of flex can be determined by examining the differences between the total traditionalism and total modernism scores (balance score) as well as by looking at the degree of agreement with the traditional and modern items across the different domains of life: gender-role definition; family identity; sense of community; family identification; time orientation; age status; importance of tradition; subservience to convention and authority; spirituality and religion; attitudes toward issues such as sexual orientation, the death penalty, the role of federal government in education, benefits to single mothers and noncitizens, and abortion. Type of flex can be determined by examining the degree of flex within each domain.

Tyranny of the Shoulds an individual's perception of the self based on what

she believes others expect the person to be like. The pressure to conform could contribute to psychological maladjustment—the individual develops a false self based on the "shoulds" of parents, important others, and societal institutions.

Unique Self a person's preferred cultural and cognitive styles before he has been subjected to the pressures of conformity.

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