

**Cultural Genograms:
Promoting Cultural Humility, Awareness of
Intersecting Identities, and Transformative
Complicity as Prerequisites To Culturally-
Responsive Health Services**

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**Relevance of Critical Theories to the Cultural
Genogram**

- **Critical Theories**
 - Seek to attain human emancipation
 - Identify levels of domination in society
 - Attempt to decrease domination and increase social justice
 - Identify what is wrong and who is responsible
 - Set goals for transformation

Cultural Humility (Ortega and Faller, 2011)

- **Origins of Cultural Humility:** The field of nursing
- **Ortega Promotes Paradigmatic Shift in Social Work**
 - Emphasis moves away from cultural competence (expert knowledge and assumed power and authority) to cultural humility (the worker's ability to enter cultural understanding from a position of "not knowing" (Ortega & Faller, 2011)

**Theoretical Concepts within Cultural
Humility**

- **Transcendence:** (Appears counterintuitive, but not really)
 - The ongoing awareness that what we know is only a very small part of what there is to be known, and that there is no possible way for us to know everything.
- **Epistemic privilege:** (Influence by critical theories) The awareness that our knowledge of ourselves and others is limited and influenced by our experiences. If there is expertise about culture, the consumer is the expert, not the worker.
- **Intersectionality:** (Influenced by critical feminist theories) The awareness that each one of us has intersecting identities and it is the consumer who is able to establish their meaning of self. The worker and consumer's intersecting identities can have a mutual influence through a process of engagement and social construction, within differential power relations.

Transformative Complicity (Duntley-Matos, 2011)

- The awareness that as participants of global capitalism we are all responsible and complicitous in the oppression of others through our privilege.
- The awareness that everyone has varying and intersecting levels of power and privilege.
- The awareness that discursive and practice contradictions in our socio- economic and ideological systems create spaces that allow for limited change within the system
- The possibility that through "calculated risk-sharing" between worker and consumer, limited changes for social justice can be made. This promotes greater positive transformative power while decreasing complicity.

**Relevance of Cultural Humility and Transformative
Complicity to the Cultural Genogram**

- **The cultural genogram:** Hardy and Laszloffy
 - Points to issues of pride and shame that are associated with our various identities.
 - Our sense of pride and shame can affect the nature and quality of care we give to our consumers. Cultural humility promotes this kind of awareness in an ongoing way. The cultural genogram is a kinesthetic and graphic exercise that promotes cultural humility while revealing complicity and transformation.
- **Cultural Humility and Transformative Complicity**
 - Through an awareness of epistemic privilege and transcendence we are continuously reminded of the limits in our ability to understand others.
 - Through openness, we engage our own complicitous participation in the oppression of our consumers and that of consumers towards others. This helps us address the impact of feelings of shame, pride and privilege in our relationship.
- Awareness of pride/shame/privilege and complicity within the contradictions of the system, allows for spaces of transformative agency.

A Rose by Any Other Name... (Not Really!)

- Cultural competence advocates for empathic skills such as active listening, reflecting, reserving judgment and entering the client's world, but it implies expert knowledge of others and risks the imposition of stereotypes.
- Cultural Humility and Transformative Complicity use the "same skills," but function as a greater buffer against stereotyping given their underlying philosophy of "not knowing" the cultural "truth" of consumers while validating the latter as cultural expert of self.

Genogram Preparation

- Draw family members by generation
 - You and your sibs/partners
 - Parent/aunts/uncles
 - Grandparents
 - Children
 - Other important "informal" family members
- Colors for national origin/ethnicity/racial identity
- Put symbols next to family members
- Provide legend showing symbols you used

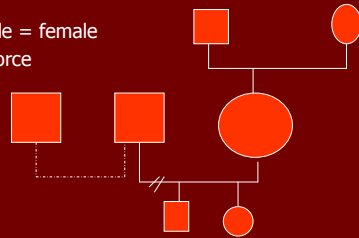
Brief Sample Genogram

Legend (additional symbols on handout):

Line = covenant relationship; dotted = uncovenanted relationship

Square = male; circle = female

2 hash marks = divorce



Genogram Reflection Discussion

What aspects of your culture of origin do you have the most comfort "owning"? The most difficulty "owning"?

What groups will you have the easiest time working with? The most difficult?

What did you learn about yourself and your cultural identity? How might this influence your tendencies as a professional/helper?

To what extent was the exercise helpful for you? In what way?

What impact will these pride/shame issues have on your work with clients from both similar and dissimilar cultural backgrounds?

Quoted, and adapted from Hardy & Laszloffy (1995, p. 234)

Caution! The Genogram and Further Exploration

- Cultural Humility and Transformative Complicity are on-going processes of self-exploration. The genogram is a tool to do this. **It is not a one time-thing.**
- If we reach a point where we can say: "Yes, but their experience doesn't mean anything to me." Or, "I don't know anything about it, so it is unimportant," there is a problem.
- We need to **explore this further.** What we take for granted can have negative consequences in our relationships with consumers. It may be a reflection of implicit bias and a denial of our own complicity.

References

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