

# **When Race Matters . . . In the Treatment of Mental Illness in Indigenous Blacks in Nova Scotia**

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# Overview

- Confronting the “Myth of Sameness”
- Propositions of Cross Cultural Counselling
- Philosophical perspective on Cultural Difference
- Racial Identity Development
- Final Considerations

# The Myth of Sameness

- Enslavement based on belief of Blacks as non-persons
- Emancipation/Non-citizen - lesser person
- Segregation - separate but equal
- Integration - we're all the same . . . .  
enlightened in its time
- Equitable treatment vs. Equal treatment

# 2 Propositions of Cross Cultural Counselling

Adapted from Sue & Sue, Counselling the Culturally Different

- 1. Effectiveness is enhanced if counsellor and client share same worldview
- 2. Effectiveness is enhanced if modality and goals of counselling are consistent with client's life experience and cultural values
- Many implications flow from these propositions

# Some Implications

- The counsellor must understand culture and be culturally aware
- The counsellor must understand the socio-cultural reality of the client

## **Some Implications (cont.)**

- The counsellor must possess specific knowledge about the group they work with
- The counsellor must be able to generate a wide variety of verbal and non-verbal responses

# Nichols' Model for Understanding Cultural Difference

Philisophical Perspective on Cultural Difference, Edwin Nichols (cf work of Jung)

- Different world cultures developed out of differing physical environments
- These world views have differing constructs:
  - ▶ Axiology (values)
  - ▶ Epistimology (way of knowing)
  - ▶ Logic (principle of reason)
  - ▶ Process (practice of reason)

Ethnic Groups/ World View	Axiology (Values)	Epistemology (Knowing)	Logic	Process
European	Member - Object The highest value lies in the object or in the acquisition thereof	Cognitive One knows through counting and measuring linear sequential	Dichotomous Either/or	Technology All sets are repeatable and reproducible
African	Member - Member The highest value lies in the interpersonal relationship between people	Affective One Knows through symbolic imagery and rhythm wholistic	Diunital The union of opposites	Ntuology All sets are interrelated through human and spiritual networks
Asian	Member - Group The highest value lies in the cohesiveness of the group	Conative One knows through striving toward the transcendent.	Nyaya The objective world is conceived independent of thought and mind	Cosmology All sets are independently interrelated in the harmony of the universe
Aboriginal	Member - Great Spirit The highest value lies in oneness with the Great Spirit	<i>Intuitive</i> <i>One knows by generational trial and error that has developed a keen instinct in of the natural world</i>	<i>Traditional</i> <i>All things are connected to fate or the will of the Great Spirit. What is . . . is. New phenomena not readily integrated</i>	<i>Continuity/Perpetuity</i> <i>All sets are the same; part of the unbroken continuum</i>



# Nichols' Bottom Line

- People differ
- Counsellor must be able to understand and communicate across cultural difference
- There are concrete sets of knowledge and skills necessary

# Socio-Cultural Understanding

Addictions as an Example: Social Construction

- Addiction treatment models grew out of industrialization and concern for disruptions in productivity
- Drugs and alcohol have historically had positive impacts on the economy of Black communities

# **Socio-Cultural Understanding (cont.)**

Addictions as an Example: Social/Clinical Consequences

- Use of drugs/addiction is met with a treatment response . . . trafficking drugs is met with a policing response
- African Nova Scotians under-represented in drug treatment programmes/over-represented in jails

# How does racial identity develop?

A working model based on Erickson

- Racial identity develops in stages across the life span
- Each stage has a critical issue, a process for resolution and a significant relationship and/or resource

# **Critical Stages of Development:**

- Pre-school (Age 0 - 5 years)
- Early School (Age 5 - 9 years)
- Early adolescence (Age 11 - 14 years)
- Middle adolescence (Age 15 - 18 years)

# Pre-school Stage

(Age 0 - 5 years)

- **Critical Issue:**
  - Comfort with visible racial differences
- **Process for Resolution:**
  - Adequate and enlightened physical care
- **Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:**
  - Primary physical caregiver

# Early School Stage

(Age 5 - 9 years)

- **Critical Issue:**
  - ▶ Understanding of personal equality and competence
- **Process for Resolution:**
  - ▶ Facilitated success in social and academic pursuits
- **Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:**
  - ▶ Extended family members/school personnel

# Early Adolescence Stage

(Age 11 - 14 years)

- **Critical Issue:**
  - ▶ Ability to appropriately negotiate racial issues with peers
- **Process for Resolution:**
  - ▶ Knowledge of history and politics of race
- **Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:**
  - ▶ Same race role models/culturally specific and anti-racist education



# Middle Adolescence Stage

(Age 15 - 18 years)

- **Critical Issue:**
  - ▶ Comfort with personal choices in context of race
- **Process for Resolution:**
  - ▶ Knowledge of family values re: race, sex, reproduction, education and vocation
- **Significant Relationship(s) & Resources:**
  - ▶ Peer group, same race role models, community censors and informal agents, exposure to diversity within ethnic community

# Clinical Implications

- Counsellors must be aware of peculiar psycho-social developmental needs of African Nova Scotian clients accross the whole life span.

# Final Considerations

(Time does not permit us to pursue discussion of unique mental health consideration of African Nova Scotians)

- Cultural Pain
- Racial Self-hatred
- Confusion of Black Identity with Hip-hop culture
- Cultural Intimidation
- Non-achievement as political resistance

**End**

■ Discussion

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