Crossing Worlds – Intersecting Services:

Multicultural Issues in Service Provision: Toward an Interactive Approach

Hawthorne Smith, Ph.D.
Clinical Director
Bellevue/NYU Program for Survivors of Torture
Philosophic Framework

• Not a “cookbook” approach
• Not a simple study of the “cultural other”
• Relationship of people who are culturally different
  • Also consider assumptions of similarity and understanding
“Everyone is a prisoner of his own experiences. No one can eliminate prejudices – just recognize them.”

- (Edward R. Murrow)
Real World Relevance

• Categorizing and pre-judging are part of the human experience
• Being cognizant of these processes is a crucial beginning step
• Getting beyond resistance
• What role do we play?
Complex Cultural Beings

Multiple Reference Group Identities:

Race; nationality; ethnicity; social class; religion (or lack thereof); gender; age; SES; “developed” v. “developing” world; level of education; sexual orientation; urban v. rural; physical (dis)ability; linguistic group; professional identity; trauma history?
Dynamic Cycle of Cross-Cultural Communication

Person

Assumptions

Behavior

Perceptions

Assumptions

Behavior

Perceptions

Person

Hawthorne Smith, Ph.D.
Bellevue/NYU PSOT
External Salience

The impact one’s identities have on their history and experience of the world

– Examples:
  • N. Ireland
  • Mauritania
  • Tibet
Personal Salience

It is more important to know what sense someone makes of their reference group identities than to simply know what those identities are.

Hawthorne Smith, Ph.D.
Bellevue/NYU PSOT
Assumptions of Similarity

- Not always best to assign refugees to clinicians from their home country or culture;
  - Potential for a “Collusion of Silence”
  - Stigma; or negative beliefs about the quality of services
  - Differing views by people from similar backgrounds
  - Safety issues
Mediating Factors

- Role and history
- Perceived opportunities and hierarchies
- Immigration
- Political strength of the community
- Acculturation
- Trauma
The Power to Define

• Important in all areas of functioning and service provision
  – Adaptational and security behaviors
  – Educational choices
  – Career choices and behaviors
  – Decisions regarding substance use/abuse
  – Sexual risk-taking behaviors

• Personal v. Societal Conceptions
Self-Knowledge as Service Providers

• Complex racial/cultural beings;
• Multiple reference group identities
• Our baggage, strengths, preconceptions are brought into the room
• “Cultural Competence” is more of a process than a place
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