5-1-1999

Cross-Cultural Education

Elizabeth Huss

Cross-Cultural Education

Elizabeth Huss

Clinical Director
Interfaith Pastoral Counselling Centre,
Kitchener, Ontario

Acknowledging the Canadian Mosaic

Multiculturalism in Canada is growing stronger. It offers a paradigm shift for re-imagining how substantive issues related to minority—society relations can be conceived, constructed, expressed, challenged or transformed. Do we promote the myth of sameness while attempting to train pastors and counsellors in respecting diversity? Many professional associations encourage training programs to recruit students from racial and cultural diversity. This means that we need to structure the educational experience differently. As the dominant culture, we cannot be so sure that the way we view relationships and human development is the right and only way! Our definition of human development is culturally based. Our interventions are political.

As educators we need opportunities to dialogue about the traditional theories and training techniques used in pastoral counselling and family therapy training programs. Supervisors and students can explore differences and expectations in cross-cultural training. We can address the challenge of the minority counsellor in adapting to the differences between cultures. Students who are not of the dominant culture often feel pressured to give up their values and conform to the theories and norms of the more powerful group. Many students have compromised their beliefs and behaviour to "pass" and fit into programs. Programs can be designed to develop multiple perspectives of reality. We cannot deny or pathologize difference. Teacher and student can function as part of a team working together

to develop a context for growth and learning in which critique and examination of assumptions go in both directions.

My name is Elizabeth Huss. I was born in Ontario. I have lived all of my 55 years in Canada. I am a WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant). I am of the dominant culture in this country and particularly in the province of Ontario. Huss is my married name—my ethnicity is Scottish, Irish, German and French. I identify with Scotland, my father's line, and the name Campbell, full of bagpipes, tartans, heather and malt Scotch. I have never felt discrimination for who I am culturally—my appearance, my language or my behaviour.

The legal foundation for racial equality in Canada is Section 15 of the Canadian Constitution's Provincial Human Rights Commission (oversee implementing the law/policies/professional ethics) to fight against racism. Twenty-five years ago, 8 October 1971, Canada was officially proclaimed a multicultural society. The three objectives were: ethnic identity, social equality and national interests.

Canada is the world's first and only official multicultural country, established with the Multiculturalism Act in 1988. Diversity is manageable as long as differences conform to core values, respect individual rights, and uphold the laws of the land. There is a political ideal of "unity within diversity" which establishes space for diversity to flourish while equipping minority women and men with levers of power for social change.

In the Interfaith Pastoral Counselling Centre Post-Degree and D.Min. programs, diversity is represented by many languages from countries as diverse as Austria, Poland, the Netherlands, Italy, El Salvador, Hong Kong and Singapore. But what is diversity? It includes ethnicity but also gender, cultural background, language, religion, age, economic and social status, sexual orientation, family composition and physical, emotional and mental challenges. To be diverse, an educational program would integrate all possible diversities throughout teaching, training and supervision. This mandate is a tall order.

Interfaith provides a comfortable place of counselling for minorities—wheelchair accessible, decorated with friendly pictures and symbols which reflect cultural and religious diversity, and surrounded with art, magazines and notices. We attempt to have more than one

minority person in the program so people do not feel marginalized. As educators we are challenged to incorporate the skills of students in discussing issues of diversity and to adjust our teaching styles to adapt to the differences if we are to avoid ethnic, racial and gender blindspots.

I want to be sensitive to the paradox of similarity and difference. I am searching as a professional to be able to understand and teach. This has become a personal quest. I am a world traveler. Along with my life partner, we have visited many countries to experience the lives of people. As a supervisor I am "in process"—searching for appropriate methods to teach diversity in family therapy. In my search, I discovered much writing on training North Americans to work with diverse groups but little on training minority therapists in working with North American populations!

My most recent experience in cross-cultural education has been with Yuk Chun Wong who introduces herself as Gladys. She worked for many years in Hong Kong as a social worker. She came for further clinical education to the Interfaith Centre, aware that the program endorsed "cultural awareness and gender sensitivity" with both clients and students. Language was a major problem for her as she struggled to understand others and express herself. She wondered about her clients, whether barriers of discomfort or even prejudice caused some prematurely to terminate with her, and also at times questioned her own competence in bridging cultural differences. In supervision I followed a consultation model which Gladys experienced as being "on equal footing" with her supervisor. Coming from a culture where the teacher is one of authority to be treated with the utmost respect, this presented a challenge to both of us. We learned that cross-cultural collaboration holds many surprises.

We need "maps" from people of diversity to assist us in providing education and training. We need to understand the history and sociopolitical events that shape each family's life experience. The risk of stereotyping and oversimplifying a complex reality is considerable. Most educators seem to prefer to believe that human similarities draw people together across cultural lines. It has been said that we can all read Shakespeare and relate to it even if we're not Elizabethans. In response to textbooks on "healthy families" reflecting the ideals of the dominant culture, *Just Therapy* proponents in New Zealand have

argued that all cultures have psychological knowledge of their own—
their own concepts of a normal life cycle, their own paradigms for
healthy family functioning and appropriate child behaviour.   What
makes us think ours should be the ascendant model?"

Assumptions of Diversity Educators

Many of our theories for counselling assessment are North Ameri-
can based. If we follow this myth of sameness, our clinical and edu-
cational model is inadquate. In order to make the invisible visible,
we need to focus on the specific life context of the student. In at-
tempting better to understand their world view and their ways of be-
ing, we search for the significant markers which punctuate the mean-
ings of their lives:

Is it their cultural rituals?

Is it the familiar landscape?

Is it feeling invisible because of the skin colour, or the shape
of the eyes?

Is it feeling locked out because of physical or mental chal-
lenges?

Is it a language difference with an accent that evades your
best efforts?

Is it the loss of privacy and the need to rely on social agen-
cies?

Is it being homosexual, not being able either to marry your
life partner or adopt a child?

If educators minimize difference, it impacts on the learning/teach-
ing relationship: 1) there is differential power and authority, 2) some
teachers and supervisors react out of sympathy, guilt, fear or nega-
tive prejudice in evaluating minority trainees, 3) there may be im-
peded ability to offer criticism. A dominant culture educator and a
minority student deal with issues of trust, knowledge of cultural dif-
ferences, communication patterns and differing expectations.

The process of becoming a pastoral counsellor or therapist ex-
poses a trainee's vulnerability and challenges the trainer to examine

his or her own personal themes. Supervision should be a safe place for both trainer and trainee to explore their differences. Value and meaning are assigned to difference. Ministry and the helping professions emphasize identification and amplification of human strengths. Questions to explore with students to facilitate ways to understand culture, include:

1. What values do you see as of great importance in your culture?

2. How are the values of the mainstream culture different from those of your own culture? Would you share conflicts or stress that this has caused you?

3. What is the relative importance of self and your family or other groups in decision making in your culture? Are decisions made on a collective or on an individual basis?

4. How important is the role of history in your culture and in your family?

5. When people in your culture have problems, where do they go for help?

6. What kind of help would they be looking for when they go for help?

7. What kind of personal qualities would the people of your culture expect in the person they go to for help?

8. How might religious beliefs influence the helping process in your culture?

9. How much is it of concern to your family if you go for help outside of the family?

10. Have you been in the role of helper in your culture? If so, would you describe this for us?

11. What other things do you think we need to know about your culture so that we can be better helpers?

This is a dynamic, collaborative process. What impact has studying in Canada had on students? What myths and stereotypes have

Canadians developed about the student's culture? Issues of power, gender and race need to be identified to provide the trainee with a safe and supportive environment to risk new behaviours. Training and education require a context for change. Together, we critique, explore and examine the assumptions each has learned.

Unfinished Business

Over the last 10 years, I have struggled to restructure our program to meet the needs of students from other countries, cultures, and minority groups including sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual). One lesson I have learned very clearly is that I cannot take students further than I have gone myself in the diversity awareness journey.

If we accept that a mature, connected identity is fundamental to acceptance of self and others, then we need to revisit the meaning of identity and to discuss how those who are "identity achieved" tend to include and accept others who hold different views and perspectives. If we as helping professionals believe in the universality of human rights, a diversity model of education is needed that includes personal identification. The challenge in diversity education and training is to understand better the stages in the student's personal and professional development and to determine what interventions will engage the student at various levels of development and maximize optimal growth.

Popular Resources

Asian

Books: The Concubine's Children (Canadian)
        The Joy Luck Club
        The Kitchen God's Wife

Films: Double Happiness (Canadian)
        The Scent of Green Papaya
        The Wedding Banquet
        Eat, Drink, Man, Woman

Black

Books: Roots - Alex Haley
          The Colour Purple
          Tar Baby/Beloved - Toni Morrison
          I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings - Maya Angelou

Films: Boyz in the Hood - Spike Lee
          Waiting to Exhale

Latino

Books and Films: Like Water for Chocolate
                   House of Spirits
                   I am Cuba

Homosexuality

Films: Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (Australia)
          Maybe, Maybe Not (German)
          Lilies (Canadian)
          Philadelphia (U.S.)

References for Cross-Cultural Education

Berg, I.K. and A. Jayna, "Different and Same: Family Therapy with Asian-American Families," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 31-38 (1993).

Berry, J., Y. Poortinga, M. Segall and P. Dasen. *Cross Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Bolaria, B.A. and P.S. Li, *Racial Oppression in Canada* (Toronto: Garamond, 1988).

Burgest, D.R. (Ed.), *Social Work Practice with Minorities* (New Jersey: Scarecrow, 1982).

Boyd, Franklin N., *Black Families in Therapy: A Multisystems Approach* (New York: Guilford, 1989).

Chave, Herberg D., *Frameworks for Cultural and Racial Diversity: Teaching and Learning for Practitioners* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars'

Press Inc., 1993).

Chin, J.L. and J.H. Liem, *Transference and Empathy in Asian American Psychotherapy* (London: Praeger, 1993).

Christensen, C.P., "Cross-cultural Awareness Development: A Conceptual Model," *Counselor Education and Supervision*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 170-287 (1989).

Comas, Diaz L. and E. Griffith (Eds.), *Clinical Guidelines in Cross-cultural Mental Health* (New York: Wiley, 1988).

DeHoyos, G., A. DeHoyos and C.B. Anderson, "Sociocultural Dislocation: Beyond the Dual Perspective," *Social Work*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (1986).

Devore, W. and G. Schlesinger, *Ethnic Sensitive Social Work Practice* (Columbus: Merrill Publishing Co., 1987).

Felicov, C.J. (Ed.), *Cultural Perspectives in Family Therapy* (Aspen, Rockville, MD, 1983).

Felicov, C.J., "Learning to think Culturally," in Liddle, H. (Ed.) *Handbook of Family Training and Supervision* (New York: Guilford, 335-356, 1992).

Ho, M.K., *Family Therapy With Ethnic Minorities* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987).

Jenkins, S., *The Ethnic Dilemma in Social Services* (New York: Free Press, 1981).

McGoldrick, M., J.K. Pearce and J. Giordano (Eds.), *Ethnicity and Family Therapy* (New York: Guildford Press, 1982).

Pedersen, P., *Handbook of Cross-cultural Counselling and Therapy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).

Pinderhughes, E., *Understanding Race, Ethnicity and Power: The Key to Efficacy in Clinical Practice* (New York: The Free Press, 1989).

Saba, G.W., B.M. Karrer and K.V. Hardy, *Minorities and Family Therapy* (New York: Haworth, 1990).

Shorris, E., *Latinos: A Biography of the People* (New York: Norton, 1992).

Sue, D.W., *Counselling the Culturally Different: Therapy and Practice* (New York: John Wiley, 1989).

Tyler, F., D. Brome and J. Williams, *Ethnic Validity, Icology and Psychotherapy* (New York: Plenum, 1991).

Tseng, W.S. and J. Hsu, *Culture and Family Problems and Therapy* (New York: Haworth, 1991).

Wehrly, B., *Pathways to Multicultural Counseling Competence: A Developmental Journey* (Boston: Brooks/Cole, 1995).

Wong, N., *Asian and Pacific American Patient in Psychiatric Residency Training Programs in Mental Health and People of Colour* (Washington: Harvard University Press, 1983).