Humanism and Multiculturalism: An Evolutionary Alliance

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Humanism and multiculturalism are partners in an evolutionary alliance. Humanistic and multicultural psychotherapies have historically influenced each other. Humanism represents the third force in psychotherapy, while multiculturalism embodies the fourth developmental stage. Multiculturalism embraces humanistic values grounded in collective and social justice contexts. Examples of multicultural humanistic constructs include contextualism, holism, and liberation. Certainly, the multicultural–humanistic connection is a necessary shift in the evolution of psychotherapy. Humanism and multiculturalism participate in the development of an inclusive and evolutionary psychotherapy.

Keywords: humanism, multiculturalism, psychotherapy, liberation

Multicultural psychotherapy is embedded in humanism. Similar to humanistic psychology, multicultural psychotherapy fosters people's capacity for choice, freedom, and transformation. Although some scholars of color have questioned the relevance of humanistic psychotherapy for people of color (Carter, 1995), others have recognized that humanism is compatible with multiculturalism (Jenkins, 2001). In principle, humanism is an aspect of multiculturalism because most multicultural healing traditions promote individuals' strengths and development. Analogous to positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), multicultural psychotherapy aims to go beyond healing to nurture what is best in clients.

Janus, the double-faced Roman god who looks in opposite directions (*http://www.pantheon.org/articles/j/janus.html*), offers an apt metaphor for the humanism and multiculturalism alliance. In other words, Janus simultaneously looks into the future and the past. Likewise, while humanism represents the third force in psychotherapy, multiculturalism is the fourth evolutionary development in psychotherapy (Pedersen, 1991).

Consequently, I argue that the humanistic–multicultural connection represents a necessary shift in the evolution of psychotherapy. First, I present a brief historical account of the multicultural influences on humanism. Afterward, I discuss humanistic values within a multicultural context. I then focus on three multicultural values infused with humanism, namely, contextualism, holism, and liberation. Finally, I conclude with a brief comment about the evolutionary adaptation of psychotherapy.

Humanism as a Multicultural Construct

White European men are not the sole architects of humanism. Indeed, humanism can be considered a multicultural construct because multiple cultural influences have contributed to the development of humanism. Multicultural traditions have historically provided humanistic ways of shaping identity, agency, and freedom. Moreover, these traditions encase behavior in a collective context. For example, most Asian traditions embody humanism through their values of respect and care toward others. While Taoism and Confucianism have included strong humanistic elements within their codes of ethical behavior, Buddhism has advocated for individuals' awakening and engagement of their humanity (Hanh, 1998).

Along these lines, Native American traditions emphasize humanist interconnectedness through the "All my Relations" principle, ethical codes of behavior, and a sacred relationship with the cosmos (Trujillo, 2000). Similarly, Islamic traditions, particularly Sufism, promote humanism, especially through its sensual-mystical literature (i.e., Rumi's poetry). Moreover, the African Ubuntu philosophy highlights the essence of being human through the recognition of the humanness of others (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_%28philosophy%29). Indeed, Africans have used the Ubuntu collectivistic perspective ("I am because we are,") to combat colonization (Swanson, 2007). Likewise, humanism flourished in Latin America as a collective struggle against colonization and oppression (Comas-Diaz, 2008). Moreover, the Latin American humanistic value of *misericordia* prescribes compassion, mercy, charity, and love toward others. Likewise, the humanistic value of meaning making is a source of healing and liberation among many Latinos because this value advances the reconnection with cultural beliefs and traditions (Harwood, 1981).

Many multicultural orientations foster the humanistic value of living life with meaning. Recognizing that meaning is a primary force in life (Frankel, 1984), multicultural psychotherapists examine meaning making within their clients' situated context. Self-meaning—the perceived effect of an event on identity and contextual meaning—the perceived relationship of an event to its context (Fife, 1994), are dimensions consistent with a multicultural collectivistic orientation. From a multicultural worldview, meaning making involves the development of a relational identity encased in a cultural context. Accordingly, contextualism, holism, and liberation are multicultural humanistic constructs.

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Contextualism

Multicultural individuals who contextualize have a propensity to be context-bound, and, thus, to use their own perspective to understand their reality. As a construct, contextualism refers to the tendency to describe self and other using more contextual references and fewer dispositional references (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999). When multicultural psychotherapists recognize the relevance of context, they listen to their clients' perspectives, rather than imposing an ethnocentric psychological theory to interpret their clients' lives (Butler, 2006). In other words, psychotherapists listen to their clients' voice, rather than imposing their own interpretative voice (Hurtado, 2010).

To promote healing and development, multicultural psychotherapists inquire about clients' perspectives through the use of narratives. Indeed, narrative therapy shares common elements with humanistic psychotherapy, such **as** placing clients at the center of therapy, and recognizing them as existing in a context (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001). Within a narrative approach, the multicultural clinician considers her own story in parallel with her client's narrative (Behar, 1993). This healing approach is congruent with multicultural psychotherapy's value of reflexivity.

A power differential analysis is a clinical multicultural tool that aids psychotherapists' reflexivity. A reflexive method examines the psychotherapist's areas of power and oppression and compares them with the client's areas (Worrell & Remer, 2003). As a clinical process, a power differential analysis enhances clinicians' reflexivity, increasing their awareness of oppression and privilege, as well as the internalization of these areas.

Consider the example of Dr. Carr and his client Tomas. Due to their cultural differences, Dr. Carr, a White American psychologist, decided to conduct a power differential analysis with Tomas. The analysis revealed that Tomas' areas of oppression included dark skin, mixed race, immigrant family of origin, working class family background, Latino (Brazilian) ethnicity, and depression (mental health). On the other hand, Tomas identified his areas of privilege as being a male (gender), tall athletic phenotype (appearance), heterosexual (sexual orientation), married (marital status), maitre *d'* (profession), practicing *capoeira* (an African Brazilian artistic expression that combines martial arts, dance, and music), being in good physical health, and practicing *Umbanda* (religion/spirituality). *Umbanda*, an Afro-Brazilian syncretistic religion and healing, combines African beliefs with Kardecian spiritism, in addition to indigenous and esoteric traditions (Zea, Mason & Murguia, 2000).

In contrast, Dr. Carr identified his areas of privilege as upper-middle class, male gender, White European ancestry, heterosexual orientation, PhD education, psychology practice, fatherhood (two daughters), and professing agnosticism (religion/spirituality). Moreover, he identified his areas of oppression as his divorced marital status, and a mild back injury (physical health). In comparing his areas of oppression with his client's, Dr. Carr "remembered" being raised Catholic in a United States' southern Baptist town. The power differential analysis helped Dr. Carr to recognize his experience as a past member of a religious minority. As a reflexive tool, the power differential analysis facilitated the development of a positive therapeutic alliance.

Since, contextualism is anchored in an interdependent foundation, identity is developed within an interconnected relational matrix involving family, significant others, ancestors, groups, community, and cosmos. Simply put, multicultural psychotherapy highlights the relational self-in-context. As a result, psychotherapists use clinical approaches such as cultural genograms, culturagrams, ecomaps, and community genograms (Comas-Diaz, 2012; McGoldrick, Gerson, & Petry, 2008; Rigazio Di Giglio, Ivey, Kunkler-Peck, & Grady, 2005).

Certainly, spirituality is an important element in many multicultural individuals' relational matrix. Indeed, the relational and contextual self is enshrined in a holistic temple. In the next section, I discuss holism as a multicultural value embracing humanism.

Holism

A collectivistic worldview is infused with holism. Contrary to a Western concept of curing, where clinicians treating a diagnosed disease ignore the clients' subjective experience of illness; holistic practitioners heal by treating the clients' subjective experience of distress in conjunction with their illness (Kleinman, 1988). Moreover, holism entails a mind, body, and spirit unity for many multicultural individuals. To illustrate, people of color tend to express their relationship with spirit in a highly personal and humanistic way (Castillo, 1994). Spirit, a colored spirituality, predicates collective humanist values. According to Comas-Diaz (in press), a colored spirituality is a culturally relevant syncretistic practice that helps ethnic minorities to struggle against oppression by focusing on cultural resilience, consciousness, and liberation. Besides promoting resistance and affirmation, a colored spirituality fosters redemption among oppressed individuals of color (Comas-Diaz, in press). As a result, spirituality provides a sense of purpose and an existential anchor for people of color who struggle with historical and contemporary oppression.

A relationship with spirit mirrors the process of awakening the higher self within. To address the centrality of spirit among many people of color, multicultural psychotherapists favor clinical approaches that honor holism. Some of these approaches include spiritual genograms, psychospiritual assessments, life reviews, and ethno-indigenous approaches to healing. Moreover, psychotherapists working with spiritual-oriented clients examine existential questions (Comas-Diaz, 2012; McGoldrick et al., 2008; Remen, 1989) such as: "Do you have a purpose in life? When do you feel most alive? Who are you in relation to your ancestors? What life lessons did your parents provide you? What are your sources of strength and or hope? What are your gifts? What are your burdens? What is your location in your family, community, and society? What is your place in the universe?"

Along these lines, a syncretistic colored spirituality combines ethno-indigenous traditions with dominant religious beliefs for healing and liberation (Comas-Diaz, in press). When deemed appropriate, multicultural psychotherapists use ethnic specific forms of healing to address clients' psycho-spiritual needs in a culturally competent manner (American Psychological Association, 2003).

The mainstream psychotherapy and indigenous healing paradigms share common elements, such as (1) a trained healer/therapist whose healing powers are accepted by the client/sufferer and his or her relationships, (2) a client/sufferer who seeks assistance from the healer/therapist, and (3) systematic contacts between the healer/therapist and client/sufferer in which the practi-

tioner attempts to reduce client/sufferer's distress (Frank, 1973). Notwithstanding these similarities, there are salient differences between mainstream psychotherapy and indigenous healing. Table 1 illustrates some of the differences between the two worldviews.

As we can see in Table 1, many ethno-indigenous healing elements are embedded in humanism. The movement of indigenization promotes the recovery of ethno-indigenous traditions in the healing process. Indigenization attempts to raise individuals' consciousness, heal within a culturally congruent framework, and rescue cultural identity (Sinha, 1997). As such, indigenization attempts to foster cultural strengths and traditions in order to address internalized colonization and oppression. Clients' reconnection with their ancestry allows them to ground their identity into a collective self (Comas-Díaz, Lykes & Alarcón, 1998).

Table 1

Comparison of Western Psychotherapy and Ethno-Indigenous Healing

Area of emphasis	Western psychotherapy	Ethno-indigenous healing
Foundation	Individualistic	Sociocentric
	Dominant/mainstream	Indigenous/ethnic
	Evidence/clinical based	Spiritual/ancestral
Agency	Personal	Communal, cosmic
Development	Individuation	Integration
	Separation	Union
Consciousness	Externalization	Internalization
	Focal	Diffuse
	Sequential	Simultaneous
Self	Separate	Connected
	Independent	Interdependent
Identity	Individual	Collective
Cognition	Inductive/deductive	Inferential/connective
Communication	Low context	High context
	Direct, specific	Indirect, nonverbal
	Explicit	Tacit
	Sequential	Simultaneous
Problem/disease	Reductionism	Imbalance, fragmentation
	Individually based	Multidetermined
	Lack of control	Disconnection
Roles	Clinician	Healer
	Therapist	Teacher
	Expert	Guide
	Change agent	Catalyst
	Patient	Sufferer
	Client	Seeker
	Customer	Brother/sister
Orientation	Analytic	Holistic/gestalt
	Logical	Affective
	Rational validity	Self-evident validity
	Argument	Experience/emotionality
	Intellectual	Intuitive
Goals	Insight	Wisdom and compassion
	Reconstruction of self	Deconstruction of self
	Problem resolution	Harmony and unity
	Control over problem	Connection
	Therapeutic/existential	Spiritual/liberating
Culture	Nonspecific	Specific
	Absence of spirituality	Presence of spirituality
	Monocultural/lingual	Pluralism
	Ethnocentric	Contextual

Note. Adapted from *Multicultural care: A clinician's guide to cultural competence* by L. Comas-Diaz, 2012. Copyright by the American Psychological Association.

Certainly, the humanist elements in ethno-indigenous traditions promote personal and collective healing and liberation. I draw my attention to liberation in the next section.

Liberation

Freedom and liberation constitute inherent humanistic values. Within a multicultural psychotherapy, practitioners promote freedom at both personal and collective levels. In other words, liberation is a collective endeavor: *You liberate yourself by liberating others* (Walker, 1983). Many multicultural psychotherapists ground their liberation approach in spiritual-social justice actions congruent with Black and Latin American liberation theology, pedagogy of liberation, liberation psychology, and African American psychology (Alsup, 2009; Comas-Diaz, 2007). Consequently, commitment to social justice is an integral component of healing and liberation. Following such lineage, multicultural psychotherapists use liberation methods.

Conscientization or critical consciousness is a liberation approach. A process of personal and social transformation, *conscientization* aims to foster individuals' awareness of their oppressive circumstances, helps them to critically analyze the causes of their oppression, and engages them in transformative actions (Freire, 1973). According to Paulo Freire (1973), mainstream methods of education reinforce and maintain social inequities, and thus, are instruments of oppression. As a consequence, oppressed individuals develop an oppressed mentality. A most virulent product of domination, an oppressed mentality fractures identity, and thus, separates the person from his or her self. Such separation includes distortions in the sense of self, others, and their world. Reconnecting with one's true self involves a cultural archeology. Simply put, the reconnection with ancestry, ethnic heritage, and empowering cultural traditions foments individuals' humanism through self-recognition and affirmation.

Most multicultural healing traditions teach individuals to embrace what is ambiguous without trying to understand it (Lam & Zane, 2004). Such a perspective fosters creativity. Aware of the connection between multiculturalism and enhanced creativity (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, Chiu, 2008), psychotherapists facilitate clients' creative expression as a method of self-realization. Many oppressed individuals have developed creative forms such as flamenco, Spoken Word, *capoeira*, urban paintings, graffiti art, among others, to transcend trauma. Since a significant number of people of color have used creativity to struggle against oppression, multicultural psychotherapists frequently use mind body approaches, such as creative visualization, and artistic expressions to work with traumatized clients (Cane, 2000; Comas-Diaz, 2012). As an illustration, Tomas, the mixed race man in therapy with Dr. Carr, attributed his cultural resilience and stamina to his capoeira practice. Notably, a psychotherapist nurtured Tomas' creative expression through capoeria while Tomas was living in Brazil.

Paulo Freire (1973) developed critical consciousness to combat individuals' oppressed mentality by teaching them to *read* their surrounding circumstances in order to *write* their own reality. When psychotherapists engage in a critical consciousness dialogue, they ask questions such as "What? Why? How? For whom? Against whom? By whom? In favor of whom? In favor of what? To what end?" (Freire & Macedo, 2000, p. 7). This dialectical dialogue fosters clients' awareness of their oppressive circum-

stances. In this process, psychotherapists collaborate with clients to develop a critical analysis and engage in transforming actions. The emancipatory actions foster self-healing and collective well-being. Moreover, a liberation approach aims to consolidate identity by healing the split between the relational self and the environment. Furthermore, this approach aspires to achieve transformation at personal, collective, and societal levels. In summary, multicultural liberation fosters the integration of mutually contradictory aspects of the relational self embedded in a context.

Conclusion: Reconnection and Evolution

Similar to Janus, the evolution of psychotherapy entails looking forward and backward. The humanism–multiculturalism alliance may represent the latest paradigmatic change in psychotherapy. To illustrate, Ken Wilber (2001) identified the goals of Western psychotherapies as healing clients' split between the conscious and unconscious to create a healthy strong ego. Moreover, he argued that while humanistic approaches attempt to heal the ego and body split to reveal the total organism, Eastern and indigenous approaches attempt to heal the split between the total organism and the environment, to attain a unity consciousness through the unfolding of a supreme identity with the cosmos.

Following this analysis, a humanism and multiculturalism renew themselves through the recognition of original sources and the unification of diverse elements. Through this process, humanism drinks from multicultural fountains and multiculturalism reaffirms its humanist core. Likewise, the evolution of psychotherapy requires a renewal of both its humanistic and multicultural origins. As midwives, humanism and multiculturalism witness the birth of an inclusive evolutionary psychotherapy.

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