Multicultural Issues in Service Provision:

Toward an Interactive Approach

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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
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?
External Salience

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

– Examples:
  • Rwanda
  • N. Ireland
  • Mauritania
  • Myanmar?
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.

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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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