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ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN FLEX DEVELOPMENT



Multicultural Psychotherapy

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ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN FLEX DEVELOPMENT

Once the mismatch phase of multicultural psychotherapy is well underway, the therapist should reassess the client in order to gauge the client's progress in the various areas and domains of cultural and cognitive styles and flex development. The information obtained can be compared with the data obtained from the initial assessment. The comparison helps the therapist determine the need to make changes in the therapeutic plan and should answer two principal questions: How many and which of the goals have been met? Which domains or areas of cultural and cognitive styles will require additional work? For most people this reassessment can be done in Session 11 or 12, depending on the progress made by the client. For others it may be done earlier. The therapist is the best judge of when it is best to assess progress.

The assessment phase of multicultural psychotherapy also is the time for the therapist to conduct a self-evaluation. This evaluation will

focus on whether the therapist is matching and mismatching the client effectively, on whether to give additional emphasis to certain strategies, or to certain domains of cultural and cognitive styles; and on whether the therapist's cultural and cognitive style preferences are in any way interfering with the development of client flex.

Client and therapist assessment is multimodal. It involves the use of personality and value inventories, behavioral (verbal and nonverbal) ratings, and the evaluation of the degree of progress made in homework assignments. This chapter reviews both the assessment procedures for clients and therapists and the feedback procedures used with the client after the assessment results have been evaluated.

ASSESSING CLIENT PROGRESS

The therapist introduces the assessing progress phase of therapy by emphasizing the need to review the degree of change made with regard to the therapeutic plan established in Session 2 or 3. The therapist then readministers the instruments used during the initial session.

To evaluate cultural style, the therapist again uses the Family

Attitude Scale (FAS), the Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory (TMI), the Preferred Cultural Styles Observation Checklist, and the Multicultural Experience Inventory (MEI). After readministering the FAS and the Traditionalism- Modernism Inventory, the therapist focuses on each of the three scores: the total traditionalism score, the total modernism score, and the traditionalism-modernism balance score. The new total traditionalism and the total modernism scores are compared to the scores from the initial administration of the instruments.

The changes in scores are considered in light of the client's goals with respect to the need to be more traditional, or more modern, in cultural style. The traditionalism-modernism balance score is a crucial indicator of progress toward the development of cultural flex, because it is arrived at by adding the total traditionalism score and the total modernism score. The balance score is also compared to the balance score obtained after the first administration of the TMI. Ratings made by the therapist on the Cultural Styles Observation Checklist during the session prior to the assessment session are compared to those made during the first session. The following are the main areas of focus:

- Behaviors (verbal and nonverbal) associated with traditional values
- Behaviors (verbal and nonverbal) associated with modern values
- The degree of balance between traditional and modern behaviors
- Behaviors that are reflective of a combination of traditional and modern values

The therapist directs the client to complete the Multicultural Experience Inventory again. The total score is compared to that obtained during its previous administration. Comparison of scores on individual items, such as being involved in more activities with people of other ethnic groups (from the Contemporary Multicultural Identity items), is also important.

The total score on the MEI may be more important as an indicator of progress for some clients than it is for others. With respect to four of the case studies presented in this book, the total score was more important to Imelda, Tara, and Raul than it was to Harold. For Harold, the more important goal of multiculturalism, at least at that

point in time, involved being more flexible in cultural and cognitive styles within his own cultural group, while it was less important for him to relate more effectively to members of other sociocultural groups.

To evaluate the client's progress in cognitive flex, ratings on the Preferred Cognitive Styles Observation Checklist made during Sessions 1 and 2 are compared with ratings made during the sessions prior to the assessment session. The therapist evaluates specific domains of cognitive style such as communication and learning/problem-solving. He rates behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, associated with field sensitivity and with field independence. Using the checklist, the therapist also examines the degree of balance between field independent and field sensitive behaviors as well as the development of behaviors reflecting a combination of the two cognitive styles. The therapist also readministers the Bicognitive Orientation to Life Scale to compare with responses given to those items during the initial administration.

In addition to progress indicated by the Preferred Cultural and Cognitive Styles Observation Checklists and the different assessment

instruments, the therapist examines the progress made on homework assignments and diversity challenges. Still another indicator of progress in multicultural therapy is the development of more positive attitudes toward people and groups whom the client considers to be different from himself. One gauge of success on the homework assignments is the ratings and notes made by the client after completion of implementation of scripts.

The degree of progress made in diversity challenges is also useful in assessing overall progress. At this time, the therapist evaluates the number of challenges undertaken and the degree of success, as judged by the client, achieved on each. The therapist also reviews progress on homework assignments, on diversity challenges, and on the client's change in attitudes and stereotypes regarding people and groups different from himself.

FEEDBACK TO THE CLIENT

Feedback to the client should be done during the session following the readministration of the assessment instruments. Before sharing the results of the reevaluation with the client, the therapist

must ensure that a good rapport has been established. In all cases, the positive feedback should be given before any barriers to growth are discussed.

With preferred field sensitive and traditional clients, such as Imelda, the therapist is advised to start with the global picture and then proceed to specifics, and to use personal examples from therapy notes to personalize the feedback as much as possible. For the preferred field independent and modern client, such as Harold, however, the therapist should start with details and work up to the global, emphasizing concepts rather than personalizing communications. With clients of mixed style, such as Alex and Raul, the therapist should begin with the global picture and then proceed to specifics. With Rose, also a mixed client but one who is a preferred field independent, the initial approach is on self-efficacy goals then it moves to the big picture and finally focuses in on goals relating to improvement of relationships with others.

The client must be encouraged to understand the importance of active participation in those situations necessary to change the therapeutic plan and/or to develop strategies for goals that have not

yet been achieved. Excerpts from the feedback given to two of the case study clients, Imelda and Harold, illustrate the procedures and strategies implemented to modify the therapeutic plan and/or to work more effectively on those goals on which little or no progress has been made.

Case Studies

Note that the feedback is individualized to match the unique personality style of each client; in these examples, descriptions of efforts to match are set off by italics in brackets.

Imelda. Imelda's preferred cultural and cognitive styles are traditional and field sensitive, respectively. Therefore, the therapist is directive in his approach and personalizes feedback. He also emphasizes social rewards and improvement of sense of community with respect to therapy goals achieved. Here is an excerpt from some of the feedback the therapist gave IMELDA:

The assessment I have done shows that you are making excellent progress in developing modern cultural styles. You're also making good progress in developing the field independent cognitive style. You have continued to develop

in the traditional cultural style and in the field sensitive cognitive style as well. You seem to be getting along better with others—parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, and friends. I'm very proud of your progress [*personalizing and giving social rewards*].

The results of the Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory (the pre-revised version of the TMI is presented in [Appendix M](#)) show that your modernism score is now 42 compared with 38 when you first took the inventory about ten weeks ago. What impresses me most is your balance, or flex, score: When you first took the Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory, your score was lopsided in the direction of traditionalism, but this time your score indicated that you are more balanced in your cultural styles.

On the ratings I have made in our sessions, I notice that you are tending to use both traditional and modern behaviors; in the first few sessions, most of your behaviors were traditional. I'm also impressed by how well you've done on your homework assignments and on diversity challenges. I looked through the ratings you made after your homework and diversity challenges; they indicate that you were successful in what you did.

Your attitude toward Caucasian peers and teachers at your school has also improved a great deal. You started out making angry and negative comments about Caucasians in the first few sessions, but these have been replaced by

more positive statements in the last four sessions. The results of the Multiculturalism Experience Inventory also show that you are now doing more things with Caucasian friends and with your Caucasian coaches and teachers.

The results of the assessment show that you have made good progress in learning how to use field independent cognitive styles. The results of the Bicognitive Orientation to Life Scale show that your field independent score has risen from 12 to 32. At the same time your field sensitive score and bicognitive flex, or balance, scores have also improved.

The ratings on the Preferred Cognitive Styles Observation Checklist show that you still need to make progress in field independent learning/problem-solving and in teaching, counseling, and supervisory styles. The homework assignment and diversity-challenge ratings you made show that you are still uncomfortable in these two domains.

These are the two areas, or domains, we need to concentrate on in the next few sessions. Here is what I would suggest: Let's do some scripts together that will concentrate on using some of the field independent behaviors and strategies in learning/problem-solving and in teaching, counseling, and supervisory styles.

I will play roles in which I will use field independent learning/problem-solving or teaching, counseling, and

supervisory styles, and you will match my behaviors and strategies. I would also suggest that you do more diversity challenges in which you have to use field independent styles for learning and teaching. Here is a suggestion: Volunteer to help coach some of the junior varsity teams with some of your coaches who use field independent approaches.

Harold. Harold's preferred styles are modern and field independent, so the therapist's style for giving feedback is data-centered, much like that of a scientist reporting research findings. He even prepared bar graphs on a large tablet resting on an easel. The therapist encouraged Harold to participate actively in the session. Improvement in therapy focuses on increased self-efficacy and individual achievement. Excerpts from the therapist's feedback to Harold follow:

I prepared these charts [*matching Harold's field independent preferred learning style*] to show the degree of progress you have made [*emphasis on Modernistic style of individual achievement*] between the first time you completed instruments and those done more recently. As you can see, you have made great progress in all of the domains of the traditional cultural styles. You made a higher traditionalism score on the Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory, and the ratings made on the Preferred Cultural Styles Observation Checklist show growth in all areas, particularly in communication.

In your most recent sessions, you also have been expressing more positive attitudes toward people who have traditional orientations. Your self-ratings on homework and diversity-challenge assignments are quite good.

However, there is one area in which you still need progress—you still look somewhat uncomfortable when you interact with traditionally oriented people, and you still have a tendency to interrupt them while they are talking. You need to work on these areas [*emphasis on individual effort*]. These same problems show up in the communication domain of the cognitive styles chart.

My ratings, as well as yours on homework and diversity-challenge assignments, show that your messages still tend to be too short and that you are not very self-disclosing when you converse with others. Here are some of the evaluation feedback sheets you completed after doing your homework assignments and diversity challenges. As you can see, they show that you often rate yourself as being too abrupt and self-conscious; you often behaved as if you were in too much of a hurry to complete the assignment.

I have some suggestions for improvements in this area. I would like your input on these [*independent orientation of the Modernistic-field independent preferred client*]. How about writing some more scripts that focus on a traditional communication style and use traditional behaviors in communication? For some ideas I'd recommend that you read the communication chapter in Beck's book, *Love Is*

Never Enough. I would also suggest role-playing in which I use field sensitive and traditional communication behaviors and you try to match me.

A few sessions back you showed me some literature on marriage-encounter weekend workshops for couples. Some of the exercises described in the brochure were oriented toward the traditional cultural style—writing letters to spouses and open discussions of feelings in small groups. I think that this experience would help to develop your field sensitive and traditional modes of communication and of interacting with others.

ASSESSING THE THERAPIST

The assessment phase of multicultural psychotherapy examines the therapist as well as the client. Ratings of cultural and cognitive therapeutic styles made in Sessions 1 and 2 are compared with those made in the two sessions prior to the assessment session. There are two questions on which assessment of the therapist is focused:

1. How effectively is the therapist matching and mismatching the client?
2. Is the client's false self or preferred style negatively affecting the therapist's ability to flex in therapy and achieve the goals of the therapeutic plan?

For example, while he was doing therapy with Imelda and Harold, the therapist discovered that the clients' dominant styles had a pull effect in the mismatch phase of therapy. With Imelda, the therapist tended to start the sessions of the mismatch phase in a modern mode, but Imelda's strong traditional orientation resulted in pulling the therapist to match her. With Harold, on the other hand, the pull was in the direction of field independent therapeutic behaviors, especially in the domain of communication and interpersonal relationship styles. In this case, the therapist started the sessions of the mismatch phase in a field sensitive mode, but after a few minutes found himself shifting to field independent behavior to match Harold's style. These findings gave the therapist valuable insight into his own preferred styles and how he was failing to encourage the development of client flex.

The therapist took the following four steps to address his concerns:

1. Consulting with a colleague to discuss possible counter transference issues with Imelda and Harold.
2. Remaining cognizant of those client behaviors (both verbal and nonverbal) that elicited the triggering or pull effects, using these as warning signs in his attempt to

prevent the tendency to be pulled into match behaviors.

3. Calling these problems to the attention of the clients so that they could assist in the therapist's attempt to resist pull by recognizing and discussing it with him when it happened.
4. Developing scriptwriting exercises and role-playing the scripts using a modified version of the empty chair technique (Levitsky & Peris, 1970) in front of a video camera, playing the roles of both client and therapist, moving from one chair to the other. In this way he tried out response strategies to client behaviors that had a pull effect on therapeutic style. He then watched the video tape and rated his therapeutic behaviors using the two observation checklists.

SUMMARY

In summary, the following techniques and procedures were included in the assessment sessions: (1) making a decision as to the session in which it is most appropriate to assess progress—for some clients it may be as early as Session 5 or 6, for others it may be later; (2) preparing the client for readministration of the instruments used in the first session; (3) readministering the instruments; (4) scoring

and comparing new scores to those obtained previously, comparing ratings on the Preferred Cognitive and Cultural Styles Observation Checklists, evaluating progress on homework assignments, diversity challenges, and in the development of positive attitudes toward the "different." The assessment sessions were followed by giving feedback to the client; making changes in the therapeutic plan, and giving additional assignments to the client, if necessary; self-assessing by the therapist; and eliminating therapist behaviors that interfere with the development of client flex.

GLOSSARY

Attitude of Acceptance a nonjudgmental, positive, accepting atmosphere devoid of conformity or assimilation pressures. In therapy this enables the client to express his unique, or true, self.

Bicognitive Orientation to Life Scale (BOLS) a personality inventory composed of items that reflect the degree of preference for field sensitive or field independent cognitive styles in different life domains. Assesses cognitive flex by determining the degree of agreement with items that reflect preference for either field independent or field sensitive cognitive styles. A balance or bicognitive score is also attained.

Bicognitive Style a cognitive style characterized by an ability to shuttle between the field sensitive and field independent styles. Choice of style at any given time is dependent on task demands or situational characteristics. For example, if a situation demands competition, the bicognitive person usually responds in a field independent manner. On the other hand, if the situation demands cooperation, the bicognitive individual behaves in a field sensitive manner. People with a bicognitive orientation also may use elements of both the field sensitive and field independent styles to develop new composite or combination styles.

Bicultural/Multicultural Style a cultural style characterized by an ability to shuttle between the traditional and modern cultural styles. Choice of style at any given time is dependent on task demands or

situational characteristics.

Change Agent a person who actively seeks to encourage changes in the social environment in order to ensure acceptance and sensitivity to all cultural and cognitive styles.

Cognitive and Cultural Flex Theory (or Theory of Multicultural Development) the theory that people who are exposed to socialization agents with positive attitudes toward diversity, participate in diversity challenges, interact with members of diverse cultures, maintain an openness and commitment to learning from others, and are more likely to develop multicultural patterns of behavior and a multicultural identity. People who have developed a multicultural identity have a strong, lifelong commitment to their groups of origin as well as to other cultures and groups.

Cognitive Style a style of personality defined by the ways in which people communicate and relate to others; the rewards that motivate them; their problem-solving approaches; and the manner in which they teach, socialize with, supervise, and counsel others. There are three types of cognitive styles: field sensitive, field independent, and bicognitive.

Cultural and Cognitive Flex (Personality Flex) the ability to shuttle between field sensitive and field independent cognitive styles and modern and traditional cultural styles.

Cultural Democracy (1) a philosophy that recognizes that the way a person communicates, relates to others, seeks support and recognition from his environment, and thinks and learns are products of the

value system of his home and community; (2) refers to the moral rights of an individual to be different while at the same time be a responsible member of a larger society.

Cultural Style an orientation to life related to or based on traditional and modern values or a combination of these values. Assessed by the Traditionalism- Modernism Inventory and the Family Attitude Scale.

Diversity Challenges a catalyst for multicultural development such as cultural and linguistic immersion experiences, new tasks, and activities that encourage the process of synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks learned from different cultures, institutions, and peoples.

Empathy Projection the process whereby a person tries to understand the point of view and feelings of others whose cognitive styles and values are different from his own.

False Self the identity developed as a result of attempts to conform to cultural and cognitive styles of authority figures, institutions, and majority cultures.

Family Attitude Scale a personality inventory to assess a person's degree of agreement with traditional and modern family values.

Field Independent a cognitive style characterized by independent, abstract, discovery-oriented learning preferences, an introverted lifestyle, a preference for verbal communication styles, and an emphasis on personal achievement and material gain. People with a preferred field independent orientation are likely to be analytical and

inductive and focus on detail. They also tend to be nondirective and discovery-oriented in childrearing, and in teaching, supervising, and counseling others.

Field Sensitive a cognitive style characterized by interactive personalized learning preferences, an extroverted lifestyle, a preference for nonverbal communication styles, a need to help others. People with a preferred field sensitive orientation tend to be more global, integrative, and deductive in their thinking and problem-solving styles, and they tend to be directive in childrearing, and in teaching, supervising, and counseling others.

Life History Interview focuses on the development and expressions of cultural flex during different periods of life: infancy and early childhood, early school and elementary school years, middle school years, high school years, and post- high school period. The life history interview also focuses on the extent of an individual's actual participation in both traditional and modern families, cultures, groups, and institutions. The life history identifies the type of cultural flex by examining the degree to which a person has been able to combine modern and traditional values and belief systems to arrive at multicultural values and worldviews.

Match and/or Mismatch refers to person-environment fit with respect to the degree of harmony or lack of harmony between cultural/cognitive styles and environmental demands. Two types are cognitive mismatch and cultural mismatch.

Mismatch Shock an extreme case of the mismatch syndrome.

Mismatch Syndrome a lack of harmony between a person's preferred

cultural and/or cognitive styles and environmental demands. This occurs when people feel at odds to the important people and institutions in their lives. They feel alone, hopeless, and misunderstood; they may exhibit a number of symptoms, including self-rejection, depression, negativity, rigidity, and attempts to escape reality.

Model a person whom the client admires and who is dominant in the cultural/ cognitive styles the client wants to learn.

Modeling the process whereby people learn unfamiliar cognitive and cultural styles through imitation and observation of others, through reading and through travel.

Modern a value orientation that emphasizes and encourages separation from family and community early in life. It is typical of urban communities, liberal religions, and of North American and Western European cultures. People who are identified as having a modern value orientation tend to emphasize science when explaining the mysteries of life; they have a strong individualistic orientation; they tend to deemphasize differences in gender and age roles; and they emphasize egalitarianism in childrearing practices.

Multicultural Ambassador a multicultural person who promotes the development of multicultural environments which encourage understanding (multicultural education) and cooperation among different people and groups.

Multicultural Educator a multicultural person who educates others about the advantages of cultural and cognitive diversity and

multicultural orientations to life.

Multicultural Experience Inventory (MEI) an inventory that assesses historical and current experiences. It focuses on personal history and behavior in three areas: demographic and linguistic, socialization history, and degree of multicultural participation in the past as well as the present. The MEI consists of two types of items: historical (reflecting historical development pattern—HDP) and contemporary functioning (reflecting contemporary multicultural identity—CMI). Includes items that deal with degree of comfort and acceptance.

Multicultural Model of Psychotherapy a model of therapy that emphasizes multicultural development by maximizing the client's ability to flex between cultural and cognitive styles when faced with different environmental demands and development of a multicultural orientation to life characterized by serving as a multicultural educator, ambassador, and peer counselor.

Multicultural Peer Counselor a multicultural person who provides emotional support and facilitates change and development of empowerment in those of his or her peers who are suffering from mismatch.

Multicultural Person-Environment Fit Worldview a worldview that is based on the following assumptions: (1) There are no inferior people, cultures, or groups in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, economics, religion, physical disabilities, region, sexual orientation, or language; (2) problems of maladjustment are the result of mismatch between people, or between people and their

environments rather than of inferior people or groups; (3) every individual, group, or culture has positive contributions to make to personality development and to a healthy adjustment to life; (4) people who are willing to learn from others and from groups and cultures different from their own acquire multicultural building blocks (coping techniques and perspectives), which are the basis of multicultural personality development and multicultural identity; (5) synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks acquired from different people, groups, and cultures occur when the person with multicultural potential works toward the goals of understanding and cooperation among diverse groups and peoples in a pluralistic society; and (6) synthesis and amalgamation of personality building blocks from diverse origins contribute to the development of multicultural personality development and psychological adjustment in a pluralistic society.

Preferred Cultural and Cognitive Styles Observation Checklists

observational rating scales that list field sensitive and field independent behaviors in five domains: communications; interpersonal relationships; motivation; teaching, parenting, supervising, and counseling; learning and problem solving. The checklists can be used to assess modern and traditional cultural styles and values.

Preferred Styles the dominant cultural and cognitive styles of a person.

Scriptwriting a therapy strategy used, along with role-playing, to promote cultural and cognitive flex development by matching the cultural or cognitive styles of a person or institution.

Theory of Multicultural Development see Cognitive and Cultural Flex Theory.

Traditional a value orientation that emphasizes close ties to family and community throughout life. It is typical of rural communities, conservative religions, and of minority and developing cultures. People identified as having traditional value orientations tend to have a spiritual orientation toward life, are strongly identified with their families and communities of origin, usually believe in separation of gender and age roles; and typically endorse strict approaches to child-rearing.

Traditionalism-Modernism Inventory (TMI) a personality inventory that assesses the degree of identification with traditional and modern values and belief systems. The instrument yields scores indicating the degree of agreement with items reflecting traditionalism or modernism. The degree of flex can be determined by examining the differences between the total traditionalism and total modernism scores (balance score) as well as by looking at the degree of agreement with the traditional and modern items across the different domains of life: gender-role definition; family identity; sense of community; family identification; time orientation; age status; importance of tradition; subservience to convention and authority; spirituality and religion; attitudes toward issues such as sexual orientation, the death penalty, the role of federal government in education, benefits to single mothers and noncitizens, and abortion. Type of flex can be determined by examining the degree of flex within each domain.

Tyranny of the Shoulds an individual's perception of the self based on what

she believes others expect the person to be like. The pressure to conform could contribute to psychological maladjustment—the individual develops a false self based on the "shoulds" of parents, important others, and societal institutions.

Unique Self a person's preferred cultural and cognitive styles before he has been subjected to the pressures of conformity.

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