



Cultural Issues and Help-Seeking

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What is culture? Why is it important?

- The characteristics and knowledge of a group of people. Includes attitudes, beliefs, outlooks, language and knowledge.
- Culture is a strong part of people's lives. Culture influences peoples lives, values, hope, fear, humor and loyalties.

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Important cultural vocab

- Collectivistic cultures: Emphasize the needs and goals of the group. Emphasize interdependence. Each person is connected to a larger social unit.
- Individualistic cultures: Emphasize independence. Individuals are separate from others, from the larger group. Stresses personal motives over that of the group.
- Enculturation: retaining one's own culture and heritage.
- Acculturation: Adapting and taking on of a different culture.

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Middle Eastern/East Asian Cultures

- Many minority groups come from collectivistic cultures. Therefore, they seek out help from their familial or community group instead of seeking outside professional help. Asian, Middle Eastern countries are collectivistic cultures.
- Individuals feel obligated to protect the family reputation.
- Seeking outside help can cause disturbance to the family/community unit. Can be disruptive if an outside person becomes involved in a private matter.
- Individuals worry about bringing shame to their culture/family/community.

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Middle Eastern/East Asian Cultures Cont.

- Women are considered subservient to men. Therefore, it can be difficult for women to know when they are being physically or sexually assaulted.
- Emphasis is placed on women satisfying their husbands at any cost.
- Virginity is held in high regard. If a woman is victimized no self-respecting man is going to want her.
- If violence is present it can be thought to be the woman's fault; she did something wrong to displease her husband.
 - Can be difficult for individuals of these cultures to disclose, especially if they view it as their fault or a failure on their part.
- Victims from long oppressed groups may be reluctant to seek help from formal service agencies they consider to be an institutionalized agent.
 - Also is related to race. May be distrustful of White people, as White people have been the oppressors.

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Middle Eastern/East Asian Cultures Cont.

- Individuals from these cultures view abuse and mental health differently. Often don't seek out help unless the situation becomes dangerous or significant behavioral concerns exist.
- Mental health issues are considered shameful and there is a stigma attached to mental health and victims of abuse.
- Asian victims are less likely than any other cultural group to utilize mental health services. Seek out assistance and guidance from their family first.

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Europe-UK and France Stigma

- There has been a stigma behind mental health for many years.
 - "just get on with it", don't complain about things.
 - People in the UK tend to be very private individuals.
- Recently there has been a shift-mental health treatment is becoming very "trendy", especially as people come to understand mental health better.
 - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is very popular in these regions

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Europe Cont.

- Therapy in Italy is not normalized yet- people are seen as being "damaged" and needing a justification for therapy.
- Access to mental health services continues to be a big issue.
- In the UK, the National Health Service providers free MH services, but waiting list can be 1 year+
 - Private therapy is \$27-\$55 an hour
- In France private therapy isn't covered by insurance. \$77-132 an hr.
- In Italy, most therapy is out of pocket. \$55-165 an hour.
- While Europe is engaging more in therapy, culture still stigmatizes therapy as well as insurance companies, continuing to make it difficult for people to access it.

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African American Culture

- African American culture emphasizes faith, family and social communities for emotional support.
 - Utilize these supports instead of mental health services.
- Psychological diagnosis is viewed as a personal weakness or punishment from God.
- Individuals have a difficult time seeing the signs of a mental health issue.
- Research shows that African American individuals are more commonly misdiagnosed. They will present with the same symptoms as White individuals but are given more severe diagnosis
 - This is especially true of men who describe symptoms of mood disorder but are diagnosed with schizophrenia.

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African American Victims and Masculinity

- African American grow up in homes where masculinity is emphasized and men are not encouraged to talk about their feelings or emotions.
- African American men fear that talking about their victimization will impact people's view of their masculinity.
- Black men are often joked about as victims. Joke that it makes them a "bitch."
 - Men who aren't tough enough to avoid being victimized are pathetic and therefore deserving of ridicule.
- Punchlines around men being sexually assaulted revolve around being subordinate and thus forced into a role that is stereotypically feminine.
 - No greater humiliation for a man than to be treated like a woman.
- Might be considered gay if disclose abuse.

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African American Culture and Barriers to Help-Seeking

- There is a cultural mistrust of White people in all areas.
- African American culture develops a cultural paranoia- healthy development to protect themselves from the psychological effects of racial discrimination and persecution.
 - Perceived negative stereotypes of Whites increases anxiety. Therefore, when interaction is anticipated, it is avoided all together.
- Counseling is seen as an oppressive dominant system.
 - Some white counselors are seen as racially biased agents working for "the establishment" or "the man."
 - Many black individuals receive services through court order or persistence from family members. Individuals perceive this as other people having control-they no longer have control.
 - Themes of white privilege have informed blacks that they are less advantaged which is also out of their control

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African American and Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Individuals seek out help from their church, community.
 - African American men see barbershops as a source of support.
 - Will often seek out these supports before anything else.
- Powell et. al theories that barrier to help-seeking for African American men are not biologically hard wired for men. Instead, they are socially determined.
 - Less likely to help-seek if their sense of control and freedom is threatened.

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Charlmagne & Dr. Jessica Clemons

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRfPPerWbY>

13:37

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Latin American Culture

- Beliefs are deeply rooted in family and religion.
 - Collectivist culture. Individuals feel obligated to protect the family reputation.
- Marianismo-women's responsibility to remain pure (sexually).
- Machismo-Encourages men to be sexually aggressive and dominant.
 - Latinas have a responsibility to maintain chastity.
 - Religion suggests that it is a woman's duty to perform sexually for her husband whenever her husband demands.
 - Virginity is important in these cultures. If a woman is sexually assaulted it is a shame on her that she lost her virginity. Is now viewed as not pure and no respectable man will want to marry her (also true in Middle Eastern cultures).

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Latin American Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Role expectations emphasize that women are subservient to men.
 - Latinas that disclose receive more negative reactions from their community.
- Familism-Prioritize the family over the individual.
 - Particularly prevalent for individuals from small villages where family reputation is important. Community knows each other's business quickly.
 - Women are encouraged to remain silent for fear of bringing shame to the family.
 - If a woman does disclose, the mother's of the victims are perceived as being responsible and experience shame.

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Latin American Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- When women are victimized, it is thought that they made themselves "accessible" and are held responsible.
 - Receive scrutiny from the community
 - Their mother's are to blame.
- Violation of a woman's roles, and the machismo of men, is used to excuse abuse.
 - Also makes disclosure by men difficult if they are supposed to be dominant. Men may view themselves as weak or out of control if they are victims.
 - There is an expectation that women are to control men's aggression through their own dress and behavior.
 - If a woman is sexually assaulted she must have dressed or done something to deserve it.

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Latin American Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- People in Latin American cultures are taught to respect authority figures. Makes disclosing abuse by teachers, clergy, legal figures difficult. Authority figures are believed over the victim.
- Sex is a taboo subject in these households. Something that is not discussed.
 - Makes sexual assault difficult to report. If people don't know what SA is how can they report it?
 - Sexually assault is especially not discussed as men being the victim.

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Male Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Sexual abuse/assault and IPV are largely seen as women's health issues.
- Male culture centers of masculinity, machismo, being in control and dominant.
- Laws, movements and services have largely centered on women as victims.
 - Only recently have male victims started receiving widespread media attention: Leaving Neverland.
 - However, men, particularly White, Black and Hispanic men are ridiculed in media for being victims.
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwz4DQD9_xQw
 - The ridicule and joke making makes it difficult for men to come forward as victims.
 - Cultural/social themes emerge in this video as well. African American men are seen as a particular threat. Gay men are targets for sexual assault. Straight men don't want to be seen as gay because it's the ultimate humiliation to their masculinity.

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Male Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Media portrayal of male victims makes it shameful and difficult for men to come forward.
 - ▶ Plays into their fear of being judged.
- Men fear being disbelieved-if they are bigger and/or stronger than their assailant how could they possibly be assaulted?
 - ▶ Men worry that they will be deemed the perpetrator based solely on their build/look.
 - ▶ Feel the law is not on their side.
- Men feel less than if they report.
- In cases of IPV, men fear losing custody of their children.
 - ▶ Don't want the relationship to end, but want the abuse to stop.

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Male Culture & Barriers to Help-Seeking

- Men don't realize that there are abuse services/counseling for them.
- Gay men feel that services are heterosexually oriented-fear therapist will normalize the violence.
 - ▶ Fear they will not be believed; if they are gay how can they be raped?
 - ▶ African American and Hispanic gay men is still a taboo subject. They are less likely to report than Caucasian American born men.
- Sexual assault of men is a taboo topic in many cultures. If men of any culture are not given the knowledge of what victimization is, knowing when they are victims and coming forth becomes difficult.
- Men are expected to be macho, touch-toxic masculinity. They can't be the victims!

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Barriers

- Cultural background as well as gender culture affect a person's ability to seek out help and report abuse.
- Sexual culture also affect help-seeking: prevalent in the LGBT community.
 - ▶ How heterosexual people view bi-sexual/homosexual/transgender/transsexual individuals.

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Discussion/Questions?

- What are some of your personal biases?
 - How does your cultural background/gender culture influence these biases?
- What can you do about these biases?
- Have you ever opened a conversation up with a client and invited them to talk about the barriers they faced/currently face regarding help-seeking?

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