A Theoretical Approach to Intercultural Counseling through Social Work Practice

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Abstract

This article refers to the intercultural dimension of social work and the main consultative theories, which are very important tools, and on the basis of its perception, as a practice, derived from the multicultural texture of contemporary social reality. A bibliographic review is undertaken, to illustrate the basic dimensions of intercultural counseling, and reach a reasonable assessment of the effectiveness of these theoretical models, in terms of the complex and multifaced needs, that the professional social worker will be required to cover in his daily work.

Keywords: Interculturalism; Social Work; Counseling; Theoretical Approaches

Import

In our times, the extent of the migration phenomenon and its consequences, especially on host societies, highlights the importance of multiculturalism: a highly topical concept, that indicates social change and it is translated, as the differentiation of the ethnocultural composition of the population. Therefore ,new cultural, social and religious trends enter into everyday life and obviously all these trends interact with established practices, customs, mindsets and perceptions, in a rather confrontational basis – due to distinctness and non-prior contact and they are called up to coexist harmoniously and functionally, in an ideal state still with the possibility of imputation ,to be powerful or even inevitable [1]. According to these circumstances, multiculturalism is a fact, and interculturalism is a goal –in other words the equal function and development of all cultures, within one society. Their mere coexistence, under the regime of tolerance by the carriers of the dominant culture, does not reflect the intercultural ideal. From that point of view, "interculturalism requires multiculturalism, but it does not automatically derive from it" [2]. The basis for the conformation of a society into "intercultural" one could be:

a)   migration for economic or political reasons.

b)   repatriation of populations,

c)   coexistence of indigenous social groups who share a common ethnic origin with distinctive cultural roots or,

d)   the existence of an intermediate civilization.

By definition, it is a process, that affects both minority and majority groups, with willingness and expectation for solidarity among both sides, as they certainly have a decisive role [3]. Adaptation to new data, on the axis of self-determination and awareness, requires a lot of effort by both sides, like what their functional coexistence requires for, as they are representatives of different religious beliefs and different cultural and ethnic identities. At this point, two essential issues arise, the maintenance of cultural elements and the procedure of contact, participation and interaction, [4]. The desideratum or a contemporary social imperative according to the diversity of given circumstances in terms of cultural composition on the one hand is the recognition of value and the reassurance of the equal function on each cultural identity and, on the other hand bridge over differences. Social Work and multicultural reality on this basis and according to this direction the concept of intercultural social work, has been emerged and updated, and it also signifies not only a practice with a supporting role ,but also a procedure which uses techniques and defines goals

,compatible to individuals' life experiences and cultural values· accepts their identities in order to provide a personal , collective and ecumenical dimension · supports the usage of ecumenical and culturalfocused strategies during the therapeutical procedure· and brings to balance the importance between individuality and collectivity, during the procedure of evaluation, diagnosis, therapy and resolution of individuals' difficulties [5]. Social workers belong to firstline professionals, who are called upon to support individuals, families or groups for a smooth adaptation to a multicultural society, where different cultures and ethnicities collide with each other. To this matter, social workers are called upon to act as intercultural mediators, as intermediates , between the cultural and the ideological burden of the host country and the burden of the minority groups, putting into practice :evaluation, negotiation and routing of possible issues in multiple levels [6]. Issues related to insufficient knowledge of the spoken language ,economic problems, loss of social identity, difficulties in job placement, are reflected on psychological instability, of minor populations which is deteriorated, by the fact that, they are not accepted [7,8] as ethno cultural, religious, social entities, from the national population. It turns out that managing such data is a demanding and difficult task, but also a challenging and binding one, both for the individuals who seek for help and for the society itself. But, when the existing and available financial resources and the subordinate social and welfare structures, within the framework of the applied immigration policy, do not contribute to this direction, the operation gets more complicated [9] On this basis, the dimension of the implementation of social work can be described as bilateral; on the one hand, it focuses on the prevention, aversion and avoidance of dysfunctional cases in the field of the everyday life of a person, a family or even of the social reality of a community, and on the other hand, it has to deal with difficult conditions that have to be suppressed and eliminated.

The Definition of Counseling

The meaning of ''counseling'' by default, calls to mind, a dialectical procedure with a clearly advisable and teleological character, between the transmitter and the receiver, and gradually manages to reach the state of ''self awareness ''(Socrates?). On this basis the roots of the examined definition had definitely been spotted in ancient years, as an indicative element of ideological and internal pursuit and as a clear evidence that internal introspection will always be a human characteristic. It is pinpointed, not only as a everyday practice among usual people (in the form of counseling, given the unstable and restlessness of human nature on a case by case basis), but as a professional practice between a specialist advisor and a civilian client · noted that the counselor does not give advice to his client ,but acts, more supportively and cooperatively in a rather implicit way.

That second dimension in recent decades has now been reduced to a contemporary, independent scientific field. Certainly, there has been a multitude of recorded definitions of this concept from time to time, just due to the evolvement and the process of counseling over time. Apart from the fact that expectations, according to human relations, are evolving and probably differentiating, since rapid changes in local, national and international level, have taken place, there is also a mobility among the scientific field, in terms of theoretical approaches and applications, as counseling comes closer to a variety of theoretical directions, action plans and similar practices. Listed below:

a)   counseling, is a procedure, focused on learning, and takes place in a interactive relationship, in order to help individuals reach the state of self awareness and use this knowledge properly, in order to become effective members of the society [9].

b)   Counseling is a specialized and principle based use of a relationship to enable self awareness, emotional acceptance and growth, and the optimal development of personal capabilities. The ultimate goal is to provide for the individual, an opportunity to live adequately and productively. Advisory relationships may vary, according to equivalent needs ,but they can also deal with development issues, they can address and solve specific problems, they can make decisions and confront with crisis, and they can also develop personal ideas and knowledge, on a basis of negotiation with, emotions of internal conflict or the enhancement of relations with one another (The British Association for Counseling, 2012).

c)   Counseling, is an interactive procedure of learning, between the counselor and the client whether they are individuals, families, groups or organizations and approaches in a rather holistic way, any social, cultural, economic and/or emotional issue (European Association for Counselling, 2011).

According to the above preview, it turns out that within the framework of counseling implementation:

a.   The counselor and the individual develop a dynamic and lively relationship.

b.   The ultimate goal in the whole process, is the emotional restructure of the individual, the realization of his healthy potential, his deficits and misconceptions, the need for motivation not passive attitude – and to ensure every possible change and better adaptation to life's data.

c.   The element of the emotional and cognitive interaction between these two parts, is a determining element, for the type of their communication and the heading of the whole therapeutic effort. As [10] points out nowadays, in the educational texts, the terms "counseling" and "psychotherapy" are not often discriminated from one another, since the theory based to their study, is the same. Characteristically, they both rely on audition and discussion by focusing on psychological and psychosomatic

problems and changes, without the use of drugs, in contrast to biomedical approaches [11]. Differentiation is undertaken only by professionals who practice in the same field of research, as well as professors ,based on differences between these two, such as : the fact that counseling is of short duration and is mainly used to manage external problems , focusing on the development of every positive elements of personality while longterm psychotherapy is used for handling deeper meaning issues focusing on error correction, with customers who experience revelations and changes similar to each grade, etc. κ.α. [12] Of course, as stated by [11], the term "psychotherapy", in the strict sense of the term, refers to the psychiatricmedical field, whereas the term "counseling", usually has greater applicability in the educational field or even in the field of social work.

Theoretical Approaches and Models

Theoretical Approaches and Models of Intercultural Counseling on a rather analogical basis and with the variety of problems and, consequently, the multiple needs of a modern society, a wide range of approaches seems to arise , with professionals being very interested in it , as it seems like a field of education and specialization, and hence of methodological practice. Hereto, there will be a reference to the widespread and applied methods in the field of social work, as an applied science, as well as the prons and cons in relation to the article in question. According to the Humanitarian Existential Approach, the most important point is, its contribution to raising awareness, in terms of internal dynamics and freedom, personal choice and responsibility ,on the part of the individual, especially when it comes from restrictive environments and there is a need of release from any relative bonds. Of course, this is also a point of censure, as this may either collide with culture and temperament, or any realistic possibilities for future changes in an external level, that would be considered as of nil or of great exceedance and subversion [13]. The gravity attributed to the client's value system and target, is both valuable and decisive, but the nondirectional and clarified attitude of the therapist, may work confusingly or frustratingly for someone who looks for a more structured and compact intervention.

It is therefore important that the existential therapist will motivate him in order be able to search for his / her own freedom, to make his / her choices and take responsibility for them, taking under consideration what kind of sacrifices have to be done; even if the individual experiences an internal disagreement (institutions, family values and principles against personal desires and aspirations), in the end he will find out what he really wants and finally strike his own balance [13]. The point, therefore, is for individuals to be able to identify the cultural factors that contributed to shape their present self, by separating and choosing through a critical process the elements with which they themselves agree, and not with everything that simply is part of their culture [14]. This, of course, will be possible ,only through

the assessment of the binary relationship that is being developed on which the existentialists focus based on respect ,in terms of making choices and the understanding of the subject's world as it is expressed by them [15]. Thus, there is no question of limiting the expression and dictation of the therapists' personal values to the other, since it is a adaptive approach centered more on universal rather than individualcentral concepts; the point is, to take under consideration all these elements , that make up the identity of people, as worthwhile speech [16]. Outstanding personalities who contributed to these developments, were Rollo May, Irvin Yalom and Victor Frankl. The clientcentered or individualcentered approach, sometimes referenced as a nondirectional therapy, founded by Carl Rogers, reaches the minority groups, in a unique way, that it has greatly contributed to convergence and mutual understanding between the different adjacent cultural [14]. The emphasis given by the counselor ,on the expression of empathy and respect for his / her clients ,is catalytic and important; principles that are used for socialization with various ethnic groups, as a demonstrated respect for their heritage, facilitate better communication [16], and promotes a necessary emotional support for those who may have been accustomed to unequal treatment. Also, the aspect of the individual being the focus of the whole process ,is in line with the need when it comes to intercultural cooperation in order to shape it, in a context that focuses on the specific characteristics of the individual served, rather than the general ones. Another aspect of the individualcentered approach that is in line with the concept of multicultural sufficiency, is that of a nondirectional mindset, that allows therapists to learn about every different culture which could be presented by another person with the awareness of the former, of their own values and limits. Strong aid and encouragement on the part of the therapist, without the countervailing value of the exhortations and the playcoordination role, strengthens the risk of a cumbersome, or even negligible, impact on the person concerned and thus ineffective intervention; of course this applies to cases of servants in need,and work more efficiently in structured frameworks. Otherwise, a less directional attitude may be more convenient and more tolerable for individuals, with a particular origin and culture (Sapp, 2009). The emphasis on the "here and now" of the individual, allows the adoption of short and effective methods, responding to urgent situations, faced by minority populations without having to deal with inner processes of psyche, whose analysis, is rather, time consuming and often painful. Of course, the above is also supported by the optimistic side of the approach, on the basis, that, the solution lies in the human being itself, so it is possible to be found [17]. It is obvious, that it has contributed, in a significant way, to counseling, as far as its intercultural perspective is concerned. The basic contribution of Behavioral Therapy, in the context of its intercultural application is ,that it attaches particular importance to the cultural and environmental payments of the servant [18].It is argued that the individual decides and acts in a specific way, based on the consequences of his actions ,up to that moment. He remains

faithful to modes of operation, that have yielded positive results, hoping to repeat a similar outcome. Therefore, by developing a new learning framework of "rewarding" or "punishing", the expert sets the bases for reworking, remodeling, and ultimately correcting / changing the hitherto unfavorable behavior [19]. The control of the current realistic environmental element, which is also the manifest form and causality of every problematic situation, seems to be more feasible.

Thus, a sense of security is ensured, because having a secure way and more than one method to achieve a goal, they feel fathered and closer to it [20]. In addition, techniques (such as relaxation exercises and imitation of standards) are used, in order to stabilize a plan. according to which the whole treatment process, will take place. In any case, positive, is the fact that the constant need of its supporters to verify scientifically ,the results after the continuous evaluation of their work and the corresponding modification of it, if necessary [21] has led to a treatment with a proven and clear mode of action, which is being considered and reviewed regularly. In any case, we conclude that there is a need to ensure correct weighing and comprehensive assessment not only of all the dimensions of the problems including those of interindividual, intercultural and interpersonal and the available resources for change, but also for the consequences and knockon effects of any changes in person and its fields of action. The focus of Cognitive Behavioral (CG) in cognitive processes and similar actions, is also the nuclear, positive element of this practice, also for minority populations. The recognition by the consultant, of being at the crossroads of two cultures and of any confusion and dysfunctional reality that this entails is the basis for creating a ground of gradual awareness of what this means and how they can evolve and operate with the new data. Of course, a targeted, careful and discreet approach of the expert's side is needed, in an effort to assist the individual identify the structural shapes that define himself and to make any required functional changes and not to directly cancel them, 2005). A key feature of the GA approach is, moreover, the empowerment of the individual himself, through techniques that he will be able to reapply without the constant guidance of the specialist. Consequently, we have the creation of a cooperative relationship, in which particular cultural characteristics are appreciated as part of the personality of the individual, without being underestimated [22]. In any case, however, this is a demanding process, as the expert calls on the individual to look at a second level the effects of proprietary values and practices [23], which brings the risk of denial, even discontinuation of cooperation, since while aiming at disengagement from ineffective practices it gives rise to feelings of rejection or even of interference, and also that of internal conflict.. In any case, the denial of some personal data does not mean, we remove the identity of that person. Given the depending tendency of many individuals, skills and conscientiousness are required by the specialist, to ensure the active involvement of the other side, avoiding an imbalance in distributed roles, to direct and define in

an absolute degree. An important link between the multicultural treaty and this approach, is the emphasis that both sides give to the notion of uniqueness. Although the concept of multiculturalism refers to the uniqueness and peculiarity of each culture, while Cognitive. Behavior of each individual, they both do not cease to recognize the need and the right for separate and case by case treatment [24]. Particularly this treatment can be demonstrated as legitimate and effective, when it comes to cases of individuals, who come from environments where the family has a decisive role in everyday's life of this member, and especially when it is extensive.

Collaboration, in such a case, not only with the individual, but also with other family members, ensures high chances for a universal utilization of all the available human resources. Codes, norms and family experiences, are emerging at both individual and collective levels, which should be the key point, in the assessment and regulation of the whole process by the specialist [25].The person is usually impregnated, as an entity by the elements that make up the culture, the social position of the family, its ethnic and religious identity and therefore the importance and necessity of taking them into consideration in such cooperation, is highlighted. There has already been a talk about the GC focusing on cognitive processes, where it also has another advantage in dealing with culturally diverse individuals. Just because it analyzes specific behaviors rather than something abstract or subconscious, for someone who communicates in a second language – not in his mother tongue or even through a third person(interpreter), clearly, serves best an event based approach, feelings and behaviors, ie more clear concepts [18]. The contribution of Group Systemic theories lies in their particular emphasis, on the reduction of any psychosocial problems which are the result of interaction between the individual and the environment, in the context of new developing communication systems. This manifest itself, as a tendency to move away from the traditional, linear and rather binding, interpretation and practice, which is based on the Cause Effect Model. The reason for this, is a holistic view of the problems, with each organization being considered, in terms of "belonging" to systems, divided into subsystems and attaching to super systems [26,27]. Thus, the person is counted with his emotional burden and his biological dimension as one system, a part of a wider family system, which in turn is a subsystem of the wider social one [28]. The goal here, is to acknowledge the achievement of changes in the family system, and in the individual, as it is a chain process in which the individual is influenced of any change in the functioning of the whole family, and vice versa [13]. [27] with his organizational model, [29] with his structural theory, and Haley [30] with his strategic model are referred as representatives of key family therapies. Intervention in crisis situations, requires, beyond the necessary knowledge of the therapist to determine its origin, a special approach, with a similar focus on the differentiated characteristics of the cultured servant [31]. This, with the therapist always pursuing an axis of respect actively listening to the information and messages of the individual,

attaching particular importance to any meaning, and making similar correlations and assumptions, leads to the foundation of a legitimate and safe therapeutic relationship [31,32]. The expression of emotions and the way of experiencing and interpreting varying situations, has a particular weight in the whole process, which is very different from culture to culture, in terms of both the way and the degree. This is a delicate point for the therapist, because through his effort to collect more information, it is so easy, to exert pressure on the caregiver and make him react. [33]. It should be remembered that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may recognize their difficult situation and the necessity for help, but in fact they rely on identifying it as a concept of therapeutic practice, which is developed in Western standards. [34]. Intervention in the crisis, is therefore offered, as a response to such cases, as it operates rather independently of binding techniques and monocultural orientations, thus allowing the user to identify contact points in a more cohesive framework of cooperation.

Finally, the holisticeclectic approach is characterized by diversity, due to the incorporation of elements from other counseling models, which is considered to be an advantage in working with migrant populations, because of the link between multiculturalism and multiformity, that itself presents. Depending on the case freelance is given to the professional, in order to choose from a wide range of techniques and methods, a proper one and produce the best possible results [35]. As a necessary prerequisite for this, it is underlined and given the specificity of the population the awareness and proper weighing of the elements which are offered for selection, whereas in their individual view they may seem beneficial and productive, but in their synthetic exploitation, they may not prove compatible [36]. The controversial internal situation of most individuals leaves no space for such mistakes. In any case, a legitimate and not arbitrary manipulation, can ensure an equal relationship with the servant, in which it is clearly recognized that the former, possesses specialized knowledge, but does not disregard the life experience of the individual; an encouraging fact, since he will feel that his own load is respected. Thus, uniqueness is supported, and discernment is rejected.

Conclusion

The influx –in particular, unpredicted and uncontrolled of foreign population in each host country and host society, is an important condition [37], which is translated in multiple needs, such as highlighting the weakness of national and welfare mechanisms, polarizing inclinations and discomfort, and generally a state of imbalance, which requires multifocal intervention. Substantial involvement with various minority groups, should be a realistic goal, rather than a desired status. Cross cultural social work is a golden ticket to this, as it approaches by definition minority populations, and has the dynamic to schedule a multitude of tasks relevant to them [38]. On this basis, the framework, into which the professional relationship and the relevant ambiance

will be developed ,with the social worker and the interviewee ,as interactive parts and as exponents of different ethnocultural and religious heritage , comes out as a vital component for a correct and successful, or nonsuccessful way of the counseling process .These element has become a catalytic component for the correct and successful or not successful course of therapeutic practice. Each side is not only a physical presence but also a carrier of an alliance of perceptions, values, and attitudes, that are impossible not to interfere in the whole interaction and influence it and while for the interviewee, the control of effect of that mixture, is not, and cannot be the desideratum, for the specialist… definitely is… as the status and the project he is called upon to perform, do not allow him to be prejudiced on any basis of familiarized meanings .Certainly, that doesn't mean that he must decline those meanings, but on the contrary , he should be aware of them ,just like of his temperament and identity ,and at a later stage , being able to realize the interviewee's concerns ,and evaluate any differences that will be found [39]. For such purposes, among any personal fortification, there is also a need for an equivalent fortification, in terms of knowledge, that of fundamental elements of each culture and the characteristics of its people, as some of those representatives a specialist will be asked to cooperate with. This is an extremely essential element, with increased chances of effectiveness, not only for the correct course of the whole procedure from start to finish, but also for the operational preparation, installation and fulfillment of this procedure [40], already from its initial stage.

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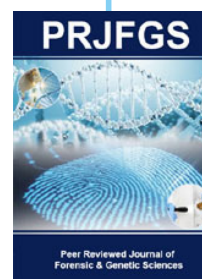
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