Why Inclusive Inquiry

Eurocentric Cultural Patterns
in the Use of Self and in Groups
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Inclusive Inquiry is a method to cultivate a relational culture, generate wisdom, and disrupt the dominance of Euro-centric cultural norms. The first step of Inclusive Inquiry is to increase awareness of the dominance of these patterns in our use of self and groups.

Through the process of socialization, we learn unconsciously to enact cultural patterns every day. They are enacted through the Use of Self, in groups, organizations and institutions. Eurocentric and particularly American cultural patterns reflect the supremacy of whiteness, patriarchy, capitalism, and Christianity. The patterns themselves are neutral. The problem is in their pervasive dominance. These cultural patterns have colonized our psychology and education. The challenges are that the dominance of the patterns reinforce systemic inequity, disappear relational multicultural practices, and damage relationships and groups.

1. Eurocentric cultural patterns

Individualism
Individualism is…Seeing ourselves as unique individuals
Narratives of Individualism are that one achieves by oneself and there are no intrinsic barriers to success. Individualism disappears the process of socialization and interferes with identifying as social identity group. Individualism denies interdependence. It is a myth that I develop on my own. As an interdependent self, I am who I am because of who we all are.

Example: *"If you know how different I am than other (white/cisgender/American/affluent class…) because of X experience, then you would know that I'm different and not prejudiced."*

In a group: Individualism is problematic because A) Individuals become defensive when individualism is challenged B) An action is attributed to an individual, rather than the relationships/social context that gave rise to the action. C) It is difficult to explore the collective aspects of a social identity group, D) difficult to explore group level dynamics, and E) feedback is treated as a two-way process rather than an interdependent process.

Objectivity
Objectivity leads us to think there is a truth free of context, and that we can see ourselves as being able to be free of all biases. Because the self and situations are socially constituted, objectivity is not possible.

Examples: *"I treat everyone the same"; Being right or wrong; Getting it perfect; Fact-finding*

Binary Thinking

Good vs Evil. One extreme or another. Being racist = bad; Anti-racist = good
Binary thinking doesn't allow for people to make mistakes. This triggers identity threat.

Example: *To avoid being identified as a "bad person", a white person making a statement that is color-blind or "color-celebrant"".* (DiAngelo, 2018)
Example: *When someone enacts a microaggression and is called in to be curious about their behavior, the person gets defensive as it threatens the identity of being "a good person".*

Low-Context

Low context culture makes sense of action in the here and now, without the social and environmental context. Low-context is problematic because A) the context that shapes a person's performance in a group can easily be missed, and B) higher context expression, e.g. body gestures, is given less value.

High Control

Acting to shape an experience or others' behaviors in order to lessen your own uncomfortable feelings; Exhibiting a discomfort with ambiguity; 'Splaining; Taking up airtime; Interrupting

Representational Knowledge (information)

Representational Knowledge include explanations, data and stories. The body's forms of knowledge are disappeared: how we know ourselves and each other (Relational Knowledge), Know-how that comes through embodied practice (Practical Knowledge) and the capacity to respond that comes through experience (Responsive Knowledge).
Examples: *Explaining before apologizing; Getting information over connecting; How something looks over lived experience; Powerpoint over experiential learning; Plans over inquiry.*

Rational mind over matter

The mind is the ruler of the body. Giving a deductive logical argument or explaining a concept receives higher status than a feeling or story. Logic, Ideas, visions, goals, models and concepts are given more weight than the lived experience.

Verbocentrism

What one says is more acknowledged and valued than stillness, gestures, posture, movement choices, and energy in the group. This is problematic because A) individuals' non-verbal contributions get missed and have less influence, and B) group level patterns get missed.

Action Orientation

Doing is valued over Being with. Individuals who take action, e.g. Interrupting, starting or ending a conversation, signifies more status. This cultural pattern leads to a problem-orientation - experience is often interpreted as a problem to be fixed. Problem-solving, prescriptions and advice-giving follow.

Efficiency and Productivity
Producing more is valued over relational practices that enable relationship-building. By being efficient, relational practices are marginalized and disappeared. E.g., A linear process over an emergent process

Scarcity
The belief that there is not enough for all of us. To belong. To be powerful. To be resourced. To be loved. This leads to excluding people and multiple ways of knowing, grasping for power and competing for resources.

Clock-Time
American culture's timescape is clock-time. But, the timescape of the body and timescape the earth are different: Cycles, rhythms, pulses. The supremacy of clock-time interferes with the health of the body and earth. Example: A group goes until 9pm. But participants may be exhausted and less present.

2. Impacts on relationships
- Triggering others suffering
- Damaging group functioning
- Jeopardizing relationships
- Lowering trust and credibility
- Reinforcing oppressive patterns and messages
  (Thurber and DiAngelo, 2017)

3. Power dynamics of performing dominant cultural patterns
- Individuals who perform Eurocentric cultural patterns are awarded higher status.
- Individuals who do not perform these cultural patterns receive lower status.
- When an individual has a social identity that is not socially dominant (eg person of color, woman, non-US born, LGBTQ) *and* they don't perform these patterns, their status can be further lowered.
- When a person with a dominant social identity performs these patterns, they are further awarded higher status.

Sources
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