



Browning Counseling: Working with Latinx Clients

Dr. Manuel X. Zamarripa, LPC-S

Institute of Chicana/o Psychology

info@razapsychology.com

www.razapsychology.org

Opening



Brown Wellness &

Well-being

Identity

Family/Community

Spirituality



Strengthen and Reconnect to Brown Wellness

Identity ~

~ A self-protective strategy for coping with prejudice, discrimination, and stigmatization



Strengthen and Reconnect to Brown Wellness



Family/Community –

- Our family wounds are also Cultural Wounds
- Traditional notions of “dependency” or “enmeshment” may be conceptually and theoretically inappropriate for Latinx families

(Cervantes & Sweatt, 2004)

Strengthen and Reconnect to Brown Wellness

Spirituality/Faith ~

- Continuity of health: mind, body, spirit
- Historically ~ source of strength, resistance, ethnic affirmation
- Suffering & injustice are spiritual issues (Comas-Díaz, 2007)

Our History with Therapy



Legacy of disconnection
& stigma

Lack of representation

Mainstream Counseling Values

Viewed as central to success/progress in therapy ~

- SELF-awareness,
- SELF-fulfillment,
- SELF-discovery,
- SELF-disclosure



Values

Individualism- the notion that our behaviors and attitudes are guided by incentives that promote independence

Collectivism- the idea that decisions and what is valued as important is based on the betterment of others (e.g. community or family members)

(Hays & McLeod, 2010)



Values

- The language of mainstream psychotherapy is infused with values that promote individualistic developmental stages, such as separation from family of origin through differentiation and individuation



I & C Values on a Continuum Profile

- Place an "X" on each continuum to indicate your place on each value
- Identity
- Express your distinctiveness ----- Adopt appearance of your social group
- Self viewed as individual characteristics-----Self viewed as related to family characteristics
- Growth/Change valued-----Increasing/maintaining family traditions
- Family
- Immediate family-----Extended family
- Not involved in personal decisions-----Equally involved in personal decisions
- Move away from family-----Stay with family

Traditionalism

- Seen as valued, however, often portrayed as static and binary (traditional v. contemporary as polar opposites).
- Using knowledge of Individualism, Collectivism, & Acculturation:
 - Deconstruct what “traditional” means for client.
 - Focus on the strengths of the meaning for client.
 - Are there exceptions to client’s belief about this meaning.
 - Both/And

Traditional Counseling Assumptions

- What do you expect from a therapist (behavior)?
- What do you expect from a client (behavior)?
- What is the focus of counseling?

Only 20% of Latinx with symptoms of a psychological disorder talk to a doctor about their concerns. Only 10% contact a mental health specialist.

Traditional Counseling Assumptions

- The premise that history is irrelevant
- For most Chicanxs the past and present intricately interrelate (e.g. telling of family stories/history)
- Also, an absence of historical context in therapy can lead some clients to assume they are the sole cause of their distress.

Traditional Counseling Assumptions

- The formality of the session and a professional distance between client and therapist establishes the appropriate therapeutic context for successful outcomes

Traditional Counseling Assumptions

- The assumption of verbal openness & directness in communication
- The assumption relative to linear thinking
- The privileging of accurate communication over appropriate communication

Traditional Counseling Assumptions

- The premise of changing the individual
 - ~ interventions tend to focus on the individual, individual should take initiative to change; regardless of the possibility that the environment may be the problem

The art of using talk therapeutically is not a solely White people thing. Historically, ancestrally we went to our community, our elders, our circle when we had struggles or difficulties. We, in fact, used “talk” as a path to healing. – Dr. Manuel X. Zamarripa

 **Therapy is Ours**
Institute of Chicana/o Psychology



Therapy is Ours

Latina/o/x cultural characteristics lend themselves to a process of healing through talk in various ways:





Therapy is Ours

- Platica is a pathway to personal and therapeutic connection.





Therapy is Ours



- We have the cultural practice of Personalismo. It individualizes each interaction. Its purpose is to know, more personally, the person in front of you.





Therapy is Ours

- Interconnectedness is a central belief in Chicanax/Latinx healing

(Cosmas-Díaz, 2006)





Therapy is Ours

- Our cultural styles of interaction values a treatment that emphasizes affect rather than cognition



(Roll, Millen, & Martinez, 1980)

Brown Your Counseling

- Build rapport and respect
- Value appropriate as well as accurate communication
- Recognize both direct and indirect communication and valid and useful



Brown Your Counseling

- Balance between formality and personalized attention
 - The formal/conservative therapist frequently somewhat less than personal; professionalized rather than professional.
 - The informal/hipster therapist, on the other hand, presents a lack of respect for her own (*i.e.*, the therapist) status by dress and manners and forms of address

Brown Your Counseling

Help seeking behavior and
Help offering behavior

~ What are barriers to seeking help?

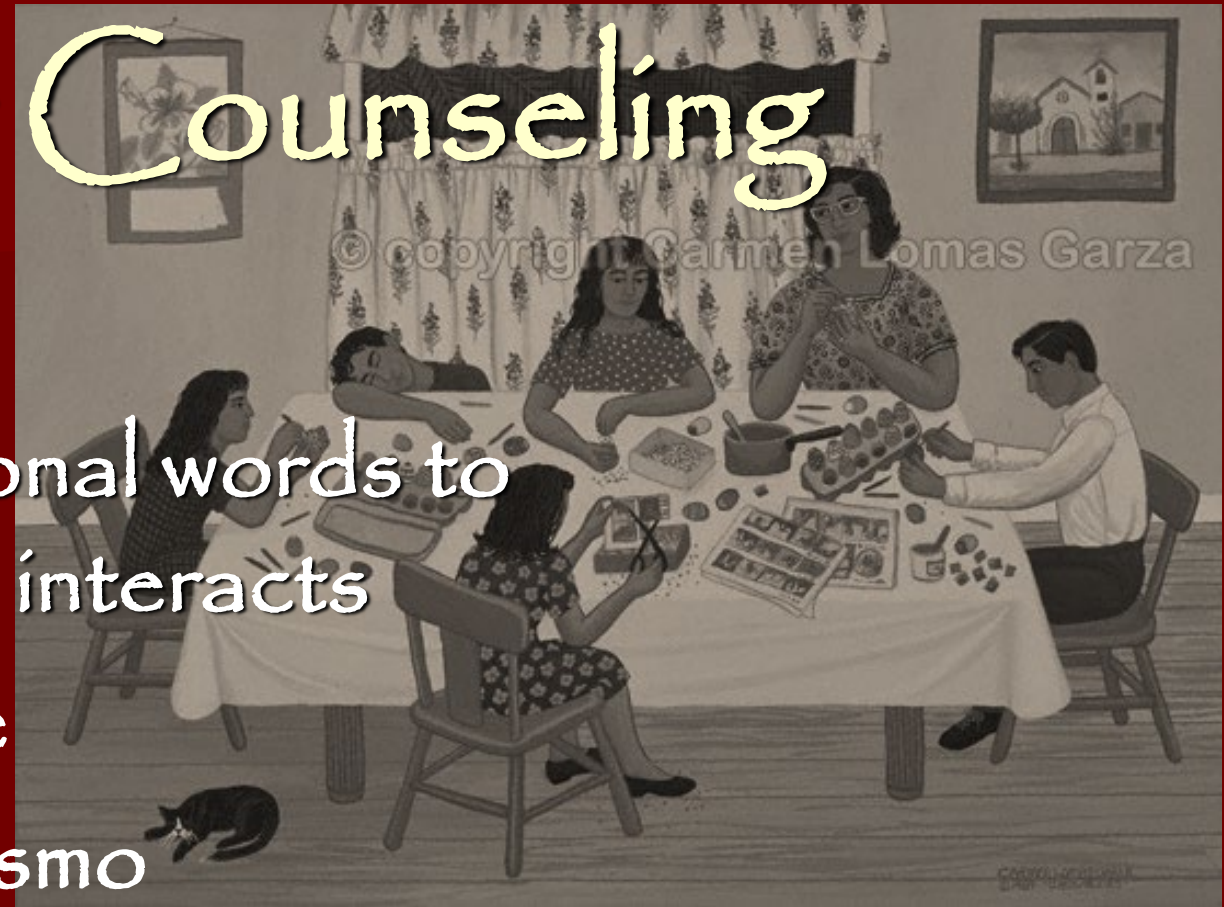
~ What are the barriers to moving beyond an individualist frame of "help offering"?



Brown Your Counseling

Plática~

- Exchanging a few personal words to everyone with whom one interacts
- Not an act of resistance
- A pathway of Personalismo
- The power of stories to heal



Brown Your Counseling

- Ethnic Identity - Include a component that directly addresses enhancing and strengthening one's ethnic identity (facilitates interconnectedness to a collective identity)

Brown Your Counseling

- Traditional Latinx interdependencies are viewed as both healthy and necessary
- Assessing relationships with Latinx clients must incorporate this perspective; try to view the health function an individual's reliance on others might serve
 - “Co-agency”

Brown Your Counseling

“Calling Back the Spirit”

- From liberation theology and liberation psychology
- Development of spiritual resilience and empowerment via affirmation of ethnic roots and practices

Latinx Spirituality

- Ramírez (1983) “mestizo perspective”
- A dynamic, synergistic process developed from the amalgamation of peoples, philosophies, and cultures bridging the European continent and the Americas
 - the intermingling of physical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual ties b/w Spaniard and Native
- Forged out of the struggle to preserve Mexican Indian ideologies with new learning from European domination.

Variations of Spirituality in Latinx Families

- For some spirituality is a conscious and ever-present part;
- For others perhaps seen only as some remnant of childhood;
- Still others disavow any influence of spirituality
- Not particularly helpful to profile certain family types that may be more receptive to interventions with a spiritual dimension

Spirituality and the Counselor

- We must become aware of own spiritual values we bring to counseling
- Values can include:
 - belief in “forgiveness”,
 - belief that a person is basically good;
 - that evil in a person’s life can be supplanted by bringing out the good

Four Elements

- Fire- spirit, passion- movement, anger, guidance, awakening
- Wind- breath, voice, impulse- movement
- Earth- my body, medicine, mother, sustains us, rooted, still, grounding, focus
- Water- our blood, our Madre's blood- movement, reflection, depth, sensitivity (& security), strong flexible power.



Brown Your Counseling: Tools, Techniques, Interventions

- History/Context - Use a multidisciplinary approach, where Chicana/o history is integrated into the method (facilitates interconnectedness, collective identity)
- Identity & History in Group counseling - Youth behavior concerns, Young adult relationships, Acculturative stress, Self-esteem

Brown Your Counseling: Tools, Techniques, Interventions

- Reframe pathology perspective of dependence from a resilience framework
 - “Enmeshment” found to positively correlate with individuals’ healthy ego development among families of color (Comas-Díaz, 2006).
 - Cultural resilience is a host of values and practices that promote coping mechanisms and adaptive reactions to trauma & oppression within an indigenous context.

Brown Your Counseling: Tools, Techniques, Interventions

- The use of story and narrative in answering questions
 - Need to explore impact of stressors in therapeutic conversations.
 - Telling migration narratives an important cultural adaptation

How would you practice differently

What are the seeds you foresee growing?



Xinaachtli (Sheen-ach-tee) is a Nahuatl (Aztec) concept describing the moment a seed germinates, reaching its “bursting” and “in between” point when it is no longer a seed and not yet the plant it will transform into.

Community Liberation & Healing

"...and to all those who died, scrubbed floors, wept and fought for us."



Institute of Chicana/o Psychology