Culture, Family Values and the Individual

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Frequently, when an individual comes to the office complaining about husband, child or co-workers, he is highlighting a conflict in values having roots in previous generations. It is important to trace this conflict in values systematically, to develop a genogram which tracks changes in values through generations, and to identify those individuals or generations who dealt overtly with values conflict. Moreover, it is essential to specify the family members who coped with value conflicts through denial, over- or under-functioning, marital conflict or projection of the conflict to a child in succeeding generations.

In dealing with value conflicts, it helps to have a structure or theoretical orientation as a guide for observations. For example, Gregory Bateson[1] summarizes a major assumption of relativity in the meaning one ascribes to the world when he says:

> The human individual is endlessly simplifying, organizing, and generalizing his own view of his own environment; he constantly imposes on this environment his own constructions and meanings; these constructions and meanings (are) characteristic of one culture, as over against another.

Indeed cultural anthropoligists tell us that: "basic change is usually, if not always, the result of the interplay of internal variations and external forces which are themselves variable.[2] Coupled with the family therapists' view—that all families strive for homeostasis and symptoms are expressions of the families' attempt to freeze time and forestall change—one begins to see the enormity for value conflicts within individuals and families in our changing multi-cultural society.

In an interesting treatise on change, Watzlawick[3] suggests that anybody seeking our help (as therapists), suffers in one way or another from his relation to the world. He suffers from his image of the world, from the unresolved contradiction between the way things appear to him and the way they should be according to his world image. Watzlawick states that a client can choose between one of two alternatives: he can intervene actively in the course of events and adapt the world more or less to his image; or where the world cannot be changed, he can adapt his image to the unalterable facts.[4]

Following this line of thinking, many immigrants—and except for Native Americans, we are a country of immigrants—choose the first alternative. Confronted with the challenge of a society steeped in values different from his own, the new immigrant often cuts off from and disparages the values of his ancestors, while taking on the values of the dominant cultural group.

One might say that this country was founded in rebellion against the values of the fatherland. In the resulting fissure, as with all cutoffs, this was often an external split from the values of the "old country." The conflict was retained on an internal level, yet its existence was often denied. One wonders if the cultural affinity for chemical addictions—such as alcoholism and drug dependency, or social addictions such as gambling and delinquency—manifests denied value conflicts, transmitted through the generations.

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Did the immigrant wife, who served in a wealthy American family and adopted their values, engender a conflict with her husband who toiled with his peers from the old country? If so, was the conflict denied? How did it affect the children? Did they ally with Mom's more American values or did they take Dad's side and maintain allegiance to more traditional values? Were they caught between Mom and Dad in a conflict of values?

On the other hand, enclaves of ethnic groups often bind together and recreate the "old country" in sections of our cities. For them, time stands still and their community becomes a microcosm of the "old country" in the new world. In this case, value conflicts may not appear until a daughter attends college or a son dates a young woman from outside the cultural group. In any case, the conflict which surfaces when families move from one country or locale to another, is often dealt with by disparagement, by cutoffs, or by idealization of the old or the new culture. When there is difficulty identifying with role models with subsequent poorly integrated patterns of behavior, one finds depreciation, devaluing and disparagement of values from either culture. In effect, change is denied; time stands still; the family homeostasis is maintained. However, the unresolved conflict in values is then transmitted from generation to generation.

It has been said that the continuity of all cultures depends on the living presence of at least three generations. Individuals who have grown up in a family in which there is only a two-generation enforcement of early expectations often receive conflicting perceptions of family values. Yet, when one or two generations of immigrants settle, they still develop patterns for organizing their behavior, using resources, relating to others and creating a meaningful life based on their internalized values. Then children are not taught the entire range of human values and potential human behaviors; rather they learn to conform to a limited number of values and subsequent behavior patterns considered appropriate to a particular family.[5]

In isolation each value system is interesting. However, in a country like the United States where people are squeezed into close and intimate contact, these distinct cultural patterns often lead to tremendous conflict in values.

What are referred to as American values are extremely diverse, yet they mirror what Jules Henry has termed a "driven culture."[6] In his view, American culture is motivated by drives for achievement, competition, profit, and mobility as well as by drives for security and a higher standard of living. He emphasizes that the American dream is fuelled by expansiveness while struggling against ever-present fear of failure. This conflict between the drive to achieve and the fear of failure, coupled with values of particular ethnic groups is at the root of many clients' conflicts. Employing the case study method of observation and Kluckhohn's value orientation theory, this paper presents data from an individual interview which supports the hypothesis that transgenerational value conflicts are often at the core of many marital, parent-child, and adolescent conflicts.

As an outcome of years of research as a cultural anthropologist, Florence Kluckhohn evolved her value orientation theory.[7] She defined value orientations as deeply rooted, complex, and patterned principles resulting from the interplay of three elements of the evaluative process; the cognitive, the affective, and the directional or operational elements. According to Kluckhhohn, value orientations, as they relate to the solution of human problems, give order and direction to human acts and thoughts.[8] Value orientations are deeply rooted and affect all people in all areas of the world. They provide guidelines for the way a society deals with the cognitive, affective and operational aspects of life. The basic assumptions for this theory are as follows:

(a) A limited number of universal human problems are common to all groups.
(b) There is wide variability in their solutions.
(c) All variants of solutions are present at all times in all cultures.[9]

The problems for which all people in all societies must find solutions refer to beliefs about the nature of man, his relation to nature and supernature, his time orientation, his activity orientation and his preferred mode of relating to groups of people. Since each family or cultural group has a preferential order when approaching these problems, the choices for solution are rated according to first, second or third order choices. For example, during a period of socio-cultural change, a first order choice in values may give way and be replaced with the second order choice. In addition, one can predict extreme value conflict when the dominant culture's first order

Chart I — What is the character of human nature? (Beliefs about the basic nature of man.)

American Middle Class	1. Neutral.	2. Evil. (Outcome of our Puritan heritage; wars; the holocaust.)	3. Good, but corruptible.
Italians (Southern rural)	1. Mixed, good and evil.	2. Evil. (Outcome of Original Sin.)	3. Good.
Irish (rural)	1. Evil. (Outcome of Jansenism).	2. Mixed, good and evil.	3, Good, but corruptible.

solution fits with the third order choice of an individual or his family.

As can be seen by studying a chart of three typical American cultural groups, the potential for values conflicts is significant. At this time, it is important to recognize that even within immigrant groups, variability exists among members of the same culture based on their geographic locale (rural or urban), their occupation and educational level, and their socio-economic status. Further, the old values are retained more readily when three generations live in close proximity.

The problems are discussed and first, second and third order solutions for the American middle class, the Italians and the Irish, are identified.[10] It is important to recognize that value conflicts within each group interface with conflicts of other cultural groups in playground, classroom, workplace, as well as in the family. In turn, these unique conflicts collide with the value of the dominant American middle class. It is easier to maintain old values when there are role models in each generation. The five problems and the choice of solution for each group are shown in Charts I through V.

The solution to this problem of basic human nature influences the way individual, family or culture views instincts, emotions and feelings. Within cultures, view of and response to sexuality, assertiveness and aggression are influenced by their chosen solution, Irish are less comfortable discussing their sexual feelings and their anger than are Italians, since feelings and emotions express the basic nature of man. The Irish have guilt about their instinctive nature; the Italian may feel family shame about misuse of instincts.

Irish and Italian immigrants feel less responsible for natural catastrophies than do middle class Americans, who strive to overcome all problems and pain, including death, with science and technology. The attitudes of hippies of the sixties and early seventies and interest in Eastern religions may be reactions against American technology worship as a solution for human problems and suffering. The Italians are pessimistic and resigned to suffering; the Irish are stoical about suffering and often somatatize their pain. On the otherhand, Americans strive to overcome pain

Chart II — What is the relation of man to nature, to supernature?

American Middle Class	1. Dominant over nature and supernature (worship of technology; overcome pain and suffering with science and problem solving.)	2. Subjugated to nature and supernature. (Calvanist roots; if all else fails, God will overcome.)	3. Harmony with nature/ supernature (the sixties, the flower children.)
Italian (Southern rural)	1. Subjugated to nature/ supernature. (Medieval religious roots.)	2. Harmony with nature/ supernature. (Seasonal orientation of rural life; mystical/magical views)	3. Dominant over nature/ supernature.
Irish (rural)	1. Subjugated to nature/ supernature. (Medieval religious roots.)	2. Harmony with nature/ supernature. (Seasonal orientation of rural life; mystical/magical views; heritage from the Celts.	3. Dominant over nature/ supernature.

Chart III — What is the temporal focus of human life? (Time orientation.)

American Middle Class	1. Future time orientation. (still planning the frontier and the perfect society.)	2. Present orientation, (during recreation only; still remnants of future orientation via country club contacts.)	3. Past orientation, (cut off from roots; holidays-increased anxiety.)
Italian (Southern rural)	1. Present time orientation, (live for today; don't worry about tomorrow.)	2. Past orientation, (close connection with history and ancestors.)	3. Future orientation.
Irish (rural)	1. Present time orientation, (live for today, don't worry about tomorrow.	2. Past orientation (close connection with history and ancestors.)	3. Future orientation.

through the right therapy, the right drug or the right job or partner.

The therapist who worries about the time a session begins or about the plans for future sessions may be expressing his values, not those of his clients. It is difficult for an Irish or Italian mother to understand the therapist's concern for the "empty nest." This mother expects that her children will always be with her, Whereas the Italian father will enjoy his children, the American father will worry about the future cost of their college education.

Case History

In order to further support the thesis that value conflicts are often at the root of problems presented by individuals, case history excerpts from an interview with a third generation woman of Italian ancestry are presented. The interview follows a trip to Italy made by the woman and her mother seven months after her father's death.

Excerpts provide examples of techniques used to examine value conflicts. Methods employed to raise a client's consciousness of value conflicts are identified. The conflict is tracked through the generations. One of the important goals for a therapist is identification, in each generation, of the key carrier of tradition and values from the "old country." Clarify the date of his or her death and the impact of that death on the family system. In this case, when the maternal grandfather died, overt bridges to the Italian culture were cut off, not to be reopened until Lynda's recent trip to Italy.

This is the history of a young woman who began therapy three years ago complaining of feeling apathetic, locked into her job, her personal life, and her marriage. Separated on and off for several years, she kept returning to her husband because "he was all she had," and she feared that when her parents died she would be alone. In fact, she had terrible fear of her parents' dying. As the only child, cut off from her extended family, the parents' deaths would leave her rootless.

At the start of therapy, Lynda affirmed her treatment goal as independence from parents and husband. Hoping to create less conflictual ties with her family, she expected to terminate an unsatisfying and "dead" marriage. Overclose to parents, cut off from extended family, and fearful of living alone, Lynda repeatedly asked her husband to return, following separations. Each time, he willingly concurred. Her respect for him waned.

It is important to recognize that Mario experienced a parallel family history. As a child he had a warm, closely knit Italian family. Following the death of his maternal grandfather, the family dispersed and sustained little personal contact. Mario's father severed ties with his family of origin. Overwhelming loneliness fuelled his pursuit of Lynda and left him vulnerable to her whims. He tried to control with money; Lynda controlled with sex and affection.

Chart IV — What is the modality of human activity?

American Middle Class	1. Doing — (competitiveness, striving for upward mobility; first question asked when you meet someone is "What do you do?" Build the frontier and gain recognition.)	2. Being in becoming — (development approach.)	3. Being, (The 60's, the Beatles; "Let It be."
Italians (Southern rural)	1. Being. (Feelings important; their expression is part of family life. People valued for who they are, not what they do.)	2. Being in becoming (religious influence.)	3. Doing, (don't discuss job at home.)
Irish	1. Being (feelings are important; key is keeping them under control; whereas Italians are overt with feelings, the Irish are covert.)	2. Being in becoming (religious influence.)	3. Doing, (don't discuss job at home.)

Although I saw Mario several times, he persisted in a longstanding personal therapy with a different therapist. His goal was also independence and termination of the marriage.

Immobilized in an unsatisfying job and marriage, Lynda was fearful of change. Overclose and angry at mother, she maintained a distant but respectful relationship with her Dad. Coached to narrow the distance with her father, she balked and frequently distanced from therapy. Reactive to introspection—yet feeling like a puppet who exists to please others—she continually sought to make her parents happy. Lynda chafed at the thought of any similarity to her "emotional" mother. Akin to Dad, she desperately tried to control her mother's—and her husband's—emotionality.

Eventually Lynda narrowed the distance with her father. As she moved closer to him emotionally, her fear of death lessened. She became less critical of her mother. Consequently, Lynda could describe her mother as: "kind, generous, warm, compassionate and fond of animals yet closed, impulsive and retaliative." Her father is described as a "blank." She labels him: "smart in some ways, yet fearful of showing emotions and feelings, afraid to let go, honest but dishonest." The initial awe of her father diminishes. Subsequently, Lynda labels him a strategic manipulator who disowns his generous, loving side. Conflict with her Dad surfaces. When he tries to "shape her up," she distances from therapy and moves toward Mario.

After several months, she and Mario return to therapy, focus on their marital conflicts and control issues, such as money and sex. Mario pursues sexually; Lyndia distances. Lynda hounds issues such as money, and Mario's lack of success. Like her father, Lynda is concerned about money and job success. She describes Mario as "emotional, unsuccessful and not good with money." Still, Lynda has a difficult time seeing the parallels between her father and mother and her relationship with Mario, and although it is quite clear that Lynda has taken a role similar to her father's while Mario is in the same position as her mother. Again distancing from introspection, Lynda, in predictable manner, stops therapy.

About eight months later, Lynda calls to say her Dad is seriously ill and the hospital staff is reluctant to let her or her "emotional" mother visit with him in the Intensive Care Unit. They are afraid that his "weak heart" will not withstand the stress of their visit. Coached to think through her desires and options, Lynda takes a firm position with the staff. She and her mother are permitted to see their father and husband. He lives for several weeks. During that time

Lynda and her mother spend a great deal of time with him.

Following his death, Lynda continues therapy. However, for the first time, she shows commitment and a desire to change. No longer does she distance when faced with conflict or discomfort. Her relationship with her mother improves, following a stormy period in which Lynda attempts to "take over," and control her mother's emotionality. In time, she realizes that she is taking her father's position with her mother and avoiding the pain of his loss. Lynda and her mother talk about her Dad, reconnect with cut off relations, and develop more individual interests. In time, Lynda goes back to school while her mother becomes more assertive and independent. For instance, Lynda selected an apartment for her mother, who subsequently cancelled the lease and chose an apartment more to her taste. Initially, Lynda was reactive. Eventually she saw the value in letting her mother function independently.

Although the conflict in values and the cultural issues inherent in Lynda's problems have not been addressed directly, excerpts from a succeeding interview will clarify them. The following session took place after Lynda and her mother's return from a trip to Italy.

As you study the dialogue, recollect Kluckhohn's solutions to the problems faced by all people in all cultures. Identify the values of the dominant American middle class culture. Observe how these values interface with the Italian culture of the family, and the Irish culture of the school and community. Spot the father's solution to the problem of confiicting values. Consider the solution chosen by Lynda's mother and her family. Pinpoint the death of Lynda's maternal grandfather to the weakening of her mother's solution. Postulate the effect on Lynda. How was the conflict in values a pivotal factor in the central triangle, among Lynda, her mother and her father? Determine how her alliance in the central triangle influenced Lynda's choice of a marital partner.

Study the mode employed by Lynda's family when dealing with conflict in values. Identify members who solved the dilemma through adaptation, cutoffs, conflict, prejudice or projec-

Chart V — What is the modality of man's relations to other men?

American Middle Class	1. Individual orientation, (stress autonomy and individual expression rather than responsibility to a collective; early separation, i.e. nursery school, play groups, baby sitters; move away from family.)	2. Collateral orientation, (equality, democracy, family decision-making.)	3. Lineal or hierarchical orientation, (bureaucracy, corporate life, racism, sexism.)
Italian (Rural Southern)	1. Collateral orientation, (family key component of life; individuality rejected as willful threat to family cohesiveness; separation avoided.)	2. Lineal orientation, (father head of family; Godfather important; older generation respected.)	3. Individual orientation, (independence a threat to family unity.)
Irish	1. Lineal orientation, (hierarchy and authority of the Church important; attraction for bureauracy and civil service type of jobs such as firemen, policemen, etc.; love of public life and politics.)	2. Collateral orientation, (family life important; mothers and sons very close; this weakens the father-son tie.)	3. Individual orientation, (development of independence not stressed; dependence on and respect for authority foremost.)

tion to succeeding generations. Spot the ways in which family response to sex, money and death indicate an unresolved conflict of values. How are marriage and divorce seen as a solution to value conflicts?

THERAPIST: Lynda what did you learn on your trip to Italy?

LYNDA: I discovered that the people are really genuine people. They have personalities. They have lives, they have happiness. They have sadness. When I think of them over here, the Italians, I think of them as immigrants and beneath us. Not as people, not as the same kind of people. Over here, they are sad, depressed people. They have sorrow etched in their faces. In Italy, there is so much poverty—so much poverty—it is unbelievable. But they are still *happy*.

THERAPIST: How do you account for the difference?

LYNDA: They came here to earn money. Over there, money isn't that important. People are important. They want to enjoy life. They don't care if they have a savings account. Life is the issue, not money. Here, money is everything. They come here for money, for survival. When they come to America they lose their life. Money becomes their life.

THERAPIST: In your family also?

LYNDA: Yes. I see it in my own family. I see it in how my father was. I can imagine how my grandparents were. It goes from generation to generation—and it becomes stronger—that need for the money, the power. It becomes their life. Thy forget that there is anoher aspect to life, to living.

I see my family with so much sorrow and depression. It isn't what I saw over there, it's completely different.

THERAPIST: How do you account for the difference?

LYNDA: In Italy, they seem to have a full life. Over here they give up so much. They don't realize what was left when our grandparents, or whomever, came over here.

THERAPIST: How did they lose it?

LYNDA: I guess they lost it in transition, and they did not realize what had happened. They left a part of their life back there. When my grandparents had children, and my parents, they lost it. They lost that life, that joy in being alive. They left it over there. With the war and the depression, the language barrier and the customs, they lost it all. Over here, there are a lot of put-downs. Over there, they are accepted. They are equal. They are one country. There is unity. Over here, are so many different personalities and ethnic groups, that you lose so much. You really do.

THERAPIST: So much of?

LYNDA: So much of yourself, your nationality and of your ethnic background, your people, you lose your history.

THERAPIST: What was the gain?

LYNDA: Prosperity, that became the most important thing. (sadly) Money. I saw parts of Southern Italy where there had been an earthquake. The people are still living in the same shacks 15 to 18 years later. We went to a winery where the people worked for survival. These people are happy. They laugh and joke with you. You don't see the sadness and pain that you see in the workers over here. The men, especially the laborers, over here, have such sorrow etched in their faces. You don't see that in Italy and there is so much poverty. But it is entirely different.

THERAPIST: Do you see the difference being the people who chose to come here?

LYNDA: That may have something to do with it. I think they thought they were going to gain more when they came over here than they did. They were very depressed and disappointed about what happened. They expected the streets of America to be paved with gold. They really believed that before they came.

Recall Kluckhohn's possible solution to the problem of man's relationship with nature. Italians view man as subservient to nature. Disasters such as erthquakes are viewed as natural outcomes of this compliant relationship. Therefore, people need not assume responsibility for the outcomes. Since the being-orientation is valued and the mode of doing is a third order choice, for Italians there is not pressure to modify catastrophies wrought by nature or supernature.

In contrast, Americans assiduously overcome nature and conquer her foibles. Somehow we see disasters as our responsibility. The government labels disaster areas. The national guard and our citizens join forces to "right the wrong" immediately. One wonders if the people who left countries such as Italy were in conflict with their traditional values. Perhaps they wanted more. However, were they prepared for, or overwhelmed by, the rigorous and responsible way in which Americans attack relationships with nature or supernature? Do their sadness and

depression reflect a sense of loneliness, futility, confusion and helplessness in an alien culture?

THERAPIST: Could you take that into your family; say your dad's family? Do you know anything about your grandparents?

LYNDA: They were the first generation to come over. They came here to work, to survive, but with high expectations. They were disappointed. They did not expect to work as hard as they did. They expected to live very comfortably. I think they were lonely and disappointed. It was not what they expected but pride kept them from returning.

THERAPIST: Are you saying that the generations before returned with glowing but unrealistic stories of America?

LYNDA: I think so. I never thought about it before but since the trip to Italy I see it differently. In my family, it happened, especially in my father's family. His family was so into money and working and saving money and not really enjoying life. His father or his mother must have put that into his head and my aunts' and uncles' heads. Because they are all the same. They don't enjoy life. They work until they die.

THERAPIST: Are you saying, they don't live for the present; they are not enjoying present life?

LYNDA: To me, they don't enjoy present life.

THERAPISTS What is their orientation to time, past, future, present?

LYNDA: I think it is the future. They are trying to make something better for the future. But when they get to the future, it is always the future again. They never reach their goal.

THERAPIST: And what is the final future?

LYNDA: Death! There is no future. They just keep striving for something. I'm not sure that they know what it is. Especially my father, he kept going and going, out of force of habit, I think. He just did. I don't think he ever reached a goal.

THERAPIST: One of the things you told me was that in your family when someone dies, there is a tendency to cut off.

LYNDA: Yes, that's true, they cut off from the rest of the family.

THERAPIST: Does that mean that if one lives for the future and death is out there in the future, every death is a reminder?

LYNDA: I am beginning to think that every death is a realization for the rest of the family. My father, for example, worked since he was a teenager. He never took vacations or really enjoyed life. He worked until he was 63 and then he died. Some family members may have realized that he worked for nothing, that he never enjoyed life. The realization was so frightening to them that they cut off. Rather than dealing with it, they cut off until they got back into the flow again. Then they got back into the family. If not, they severed family ties.

THERAPIST: Got back into the flow again?

LYNDA: Of people just getting into that momentum of working, working, working, with no relaxation. No vacation, if a vacation, not much of one. Just rest up for more work. You never take off for a month and do something flamboyant. You just do the same monotonous things.

THERAPIST: It sounds like a drug that dulls your consciousness.

LYNDA: It is! That's why I think when there is a death in the family, it is such a shock to the system. People realize it will happen to them. They cut off rather than deal with it.

THERAPIST: And how is it different in Italy?

LYNDA: The people I met really believe that life is living. You live for today. You don't worry about money. You don't worry about anything but enjoying life.

THERAPIST: Live for today, for tomorrow you may die?

LYNDIA: Those people really believe that. I loved every minute of it. It was so good to feel that. It was so different from what I was brought up to think. I was just so shocked when I went there and got to know the people. It was great.

THERAPIST: How much of that future orientation is part of the American culture that they came into? In Italy the present orientation counselled them to live today for tomorrow you may die. But in America, the message is work hard and plan for the future. Do you think there was any conflict of cultures?

LYNDA: Oh, I think that had a lot to do with it. It had a lot to do with it. First was the shock. It was not what they expected. Then there was the shock of the different cultures. These people didn't know about the other cultures.

THERAPIST: You mean the subcultures within the American culture?

LYNDA: Right, I don't think they realized what it was going to be like when they got to this country.

As the interview continues, Lynda identifies ways in which Italian family values interface with the values of an Irish culture in the school

and community. The Irish lineal respect for authority clashes with the Italian love for the family. Discord intensifies when one views this in light of the disparate American value system.

LYNDA: An example is my mother. Growing up, she came from an Italian-American section of Brooklyn, Bensonhurst, extremely Italian. But the school that she attended was on the borderline of an Irish neighborhood. So, you had the two nationalities merging. The teachers were mostly Irish. My mother's name was Albina. The principal of the school never heard of the name Albina. She said: "We can't call you that. We'll call you Anna." So for most of her life, her name was Anna. Then, when she went to work, there was some other person who didn't think Anna was an appropriate name, so she called her Ann. My mother has had about six names and her name is Albina. It is just something that they lost. They even lost their name. And I wonder how many people's last name has been changed also. I can just feel for these people. The culture shock. You even lose your name or the spelling of it. It's just horrible. I can just imagine what these people must feel when they come here!

THERAPIST: Lynda, one of the things you said was that here you were like nothing somehow, and there, in Italy, you are really like something.

LYNDA: Yes. Over here, they lose their respect, their dignity. Over there, they have dignity. No matter what they do; how they earn their money—they are still people; they are still individuals.

THERAPIST: So, they are valuable as human beings, as people, because they are alive?

LYNDA: Yes, and when they come here they just lose everything.

THERAPIST: Lynda, would you say that what makes you valuable in Italy is just being, being alive, being a person?

LYNDA: Yes, definitely. I think it is just being an individual.

THERAPIST: And here, what makes you valuable in America?

LYNDA: Earning money! Doing someting! Working! Just working to survive!

This segment highlights the influence of a culture's solution to the problem of activity orientation on the self-esteem of its members. In Italy, being is sufficient to make one valuable. In the United States, your value is determined by what you do, the kind of work in which you engage. This may engender tremendous value conflicts in immigrants and their succeeding generations. It may markedly influence their self-worth unless the newer value is disparaged. If the old value is disparaged, the immigrant may feel cut off from his being, his roots and his sense of self.

THERAPIST: Lynda, one of the things you said was that when you came back, you saw your parents differently. You understood them more.

LYNDA: Yes. I always saw them as depressed people but I never knew where that came from. Now, I understand where it came from; from my grandparents. And, I think as the generations go on, if there isn't a stop to it, it will be worse. It just increases more and more. The fun out of life, the enjoyment out of life is totally diminished as time goes on. I think my grandparents must have had some kind of happiness in their life but lost a lot when they came here. Through all the poverty or whatever it was that they went through, the war, the depression, whatever. And my parents picked up on it and they grew up with that depression. And it was put into me and my cousins. I think that having not seen it, I would probably continue that way. Although I am going to try to change that. I don't know.

THERAPIST: Change what?

LYNDA: That feeling of always being depressed and not being able to enjoy life. You are not supposed to enjoy it. It's just not done. It's not part of life.

THERAPIST: Enjoyment is not part of life?

LYNDA: Enjoyment is not part of life! Working, just surviving that's it, existence. It's almost like vegetation. You know, you're just here. You do regimented things and that's it. You don't deviate from it. I would hate to raise children that way. It's awful.

THERAPIST: How do you think it will affect you when you have children?

LYNDA: If I do have children, I will allow them to be themselves. I was always smothered, totally somothered. I got to a certain age where I had graduated from school and I wanted to make a decision between work and college. Again, I was told what to do, and I accepted it. When I wanted to leave my house and get an apartment, that was not accepted. So, I continued to live at home. Marriage was the only way to leave the house. So, I married very young.

THERAPIST: Do you think that's familial with your family or do you think that it is a cultural

issue that you see with many Italians?

LYNDA: I think it's a cultural issue. Most of the Italian Americans that I know don't go out very often. Every Sunday, they have dinner. Usually the only time they have good times are at weddings or christenings, family gatherings of some sort. Other than that, they don't really go out that often. They don't go for dinner or they don't go to the theatre. They don't take weekends away.

THERAPIST: Weddings and christenings maintain the family connectedness and expand the family system.

One can see how values and value conflicts can be tracked through the generations. Is depression a learned behavior, a learned response to a situation? How do learned values influence a family's style of childrearing? This segment highlights the Italian collateral—family oriented—view of relating to groups of people. Social actvities are always family oriented. Independence and individuality are discouraged or minimized. Views about the nature of man emerge.

THERAPIST: Lynda, would you see your family here as very emotional?

LYNDA: Emotional in terms of sad. They are not happy, definitely sad.

THERAPIST: And in Italy, how would it be?

LYNDA: I guess it's balance. But from the way I see it, they seem more happy than sad. The people that remained in Italy didn't come here and experience what my grandparents experienced.

THERAPIST: The pain?

LYNDA: The pain, the loneliness, the difficulties of survival. So they are not aware of it as deeply as the generations over here. I think that's where the difference is.

THERAPIST: They haven't suffered as much?

LYNDA: They haven't suffered. They remain in their country. They suffer but it is accepted suffering. They really didn't go through . . . it's almost like a torture to come over here. And before they came, they didn't expect to go through that. Their pride—especially for the men—kept them from returning. They came here to make a better life for themselves and to go back would be to say they were defeated. This would reflect shame on their family. So they came here and they stuck it out, no matter how hard it was. It's very sad! I wonder if the other cultures go through this pain. I am sure they do.

In reviewing the above segment, one begins to imagine the pain and emptiness experienced by immigrants in this foreign land with its disparate value system. In some cases, work, alcohol or over-involvement with family may have been a way of avoiding the loneliness. Were cutoffs from the old country used to distract the immigrants from their emptiness?

In the next segment, one sees the impact of the dominant American culture—and in the school, of the Irish culture—on Lynda's mother. Her family kept more traditional Italian values about the nature of man. Children, instincts and spontaneity were viewed as good. However, in the school and community, Lynda's mother learned to squelch her joy and spontaneity. Finally, when her father, the last tie to the old country, died, all traces of the Italian culture died with him and Lynda's mother fell back on the more American values of her husband's family. As is often the case in the death of a key family member, the ripples from his death can be tracked through the generations.

THERAPIST: Did your mother ever say what it was like for her? She had three cultures with which to contend, the Italian, the American and the Irish. Do you think she had a lot of hurt about that?

LYNDA: I'm sure she must. I see my mom as a child who had a lot of happiness and emotion inside her. As she grew up, it was pushed down and stomped on. I think maybe how I feel is really the way she felt as a young child. But I think she lost all of it, or most of it, over the years. From what I remember and from what my mother tells me, my grandfather was a very happy man. He died just before the war began, I have a feeling that they really changed my mother's family.

THERAPIST: When he died?

LYNDA: When he died. I think he may have been the last glimmer of happiness from the old country.

Following this session, Lynda made some important decisions regarding her life. She legally separated from her husband and initiated divorce proceedings. She purchased a home and planned to live alone for the first time. Her relationship with her mother continued to improve. Lynda tried to calm her insides when her mother warned her of the dangers of living alone and of being single.

A few months later, precisely the week before the planned move, Lynda came to the session very confused and unsure about her planned divorce and move to her new home. I suggested

that we view the above tape together. Her comments were as follows: "The treadmill, do, do!" "Oh God, it was brainwashed into me,." "I want to go back to the familiar because I am afraid to deal with other things." "I think it's scary." "Change is too frightening." It's terrible to be alone." "I am so afraid and terrified of it." "My grandmother came here without her husband." "At Ellis Island, she hid her nephew under her coat for days because he had a cold." "Hearing those stories all my life, doing anything different is so scary, especially if you are alone."

By the end of the tape Lynda regained her resolve and commented that she would like to take the tape home with her, to use whenever she returns to her old ways.

Several months later, Lynda and Mario, although separated, developed a good relationship. As Lynda states: "We are friends, not husband and wife. We started out as friends. We should never have married. I hope we can remain friends always." Mario has found a good job. Lynda is preparing to change careers. Lynda's mother, a woman who feared leaving her home, has just returned from a trip to Florida. According to Lynda, she has a new network of friends and seems to be having a wonderful time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this case highlights the crucial role culture occupies in conflicts expressed by at least some of the individuals who seek our help. Values are a facet of a person's existence that can assume pivotal proportions. They must be studied. As a guide to the study of values, key questions are pinpointed:

1. Identify the values of the dominant culture.
2. Make a genogram of values.
3. Track values through the generations.
4. Where is the family with regard to traditional and American values?
5. Which values have changed?
6. When did the change take place?
7. Identify the process used to change values.
8. How did the change take place, *i.e.* adaptation, cutoffs, prejudice, conflict, projection?
9. Spot the date of death of the most prominent keeper of the old values.
10. How did the family handle this death?
11. What was the effect on the family?
12. Identify bridge person to the old values.
13. Track changes in values down the generations.
14. Identify leaders for change in each generation.
15. Spot protector of traditional values for each generation.
16. Clarify those values still in conflict.
17. Study handling of sex, money, alcohol and death as indicators of unresolved value conflicts.
18. View marital conflict, parent-child conflict and in-law conflicts as indicators of value conflicts.
19. Is divorce sometimes a solution to a values conflict?
20. Is the family deviant, or the sick one, holding on to traditional values or is he the foiled trail blazer for new values?
21. Recognize the intense anxiety that may surround value conflicts. Realize that the intensity of the anxiety may distort and change perceptions.

Finally, as trail blazers in the search to apply family systems theory to work with individuals, it behooves us to continue testing the hypothesis on which this paper is based:

"Value conflicts are often at the root of many of the problems presented by individuals." Continued clinical testing will support or refute this hypothesis.

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