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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTINUITY

Co-Creating Transitional Spaces for Permanence in Change

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Are families, communities and societies capable of remembering, of creating continuity and of correcting/adapting themselves to changing environments over several generations? If this is the case, as we assume in this paper, which concepts and integrating framework are available to make sense of what happens in intergenerational reproduction of families, communities and societies?
In a long term clinical anthropological fieldwork project (Kleinman 1980; Rush 1996) in transcultural psychiatric and youth care practices and educating transcultural family therapists in The Netherlands answering this question proved both relevant analytically in research and clinically in therapeutic practices.
Intergenerational transmission of pathological relational/communicational patterns and life-phase transitions are central re-occurring themes in the family therapy theories and in clinical practices (Falicov 1988; Schuetzenberger 1998; Krause 2002; Jessurun 2010; Tjin A Djie & Zwaan 2007; 2013).
Also the concepts of liminality and schismogenesis are common in transcultural (family) therapy (Keeney 1983; Imber-Black et. al. 1988; Di Nicola 1997; Krause 2012). In 1996, in a Handbook of Transcultural Psychiatry & Psychotherapy, the phenomenon of migration was redressed as a life-phase transition based on Victor Turner ritual processual theory in which 'liminal vulnerability' was coined as an explanatory and diagnostic device to de-pathologize effects of migration in psychiatry and youth care settings (Van Bekkum et. al. 1996; Van Bekkum et. al. 2010).
Schismogenesis in family therapy theory was introduced by Gregory Bateson and with the concept of complementary and symmetric communication pathological relational patterns can be detected with families in therapy (Doherty & McDaniel 2010).
Combining frameworks of Gregory Bateson (1972; 1979) and Victor Turner (1969) on process, system, ritual we introduce an integrating concept of Family & Community Continuity (FCC) which serves to redress the frequently rebalancing of permanence and change in families and communities.
Bateson's cybernetic system's theory is outlined in which families and communities are taken as self-generating, self-organizing, self-correcting over several generations (1972; 1979).
Change and continuity are central in Bateson's thinking (Eriksen 2004). Applying transformational active ingredients, detected by Victor Turner, during the second 'liminal' phase of rites of passage could add a new explanation of containing the destructive, 'runaway', effects of schismogenesis.
Co-creating 'transitional spaces' during culture-bounded rituals in family therapy offers a clinical model to research and analyse permanence in change. During these spaces also non-rational remembering emerges with which families, as cybernetic systems, can transform stagnations, distortions and disruptions.
We will demonstrate the analytical and clinical value of these concepts by presenting the cases of Amet, a young men from Roma families/communities, and of Eric, from post-colonial Eurasian families/communities.

Keywords: schismogenesis, liminality, cybernetic systems, rituals, clinical anthropology, transition, change and stability, family & community continuity.

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