

*AN ETHNOGRAPHIC LOOK AT CULTURAL  
HEALERS*

*E-LEADER BRNO*

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**DR. PENELOPE KEOUGH  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
SAN DIEGO, CA USA**

## ABSTRACT

THE PRESENTATION AND ULTIMATE PAPER WILL EXPLORE CULTURAL HEALERS AND THE IMPACT THEY HAVE ON THE LAY COMMUNITY AND OTHERS. THE GOAL OF THE PRESENTATION/PAPER IS TO EXPLORE THE AFFECT CULTURE HAS ON THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND ALLUDE TO HYPOTHESES WHY NATIVES OF SPECIFIC CULTURES MAY HAVE MORE TRUST IN CULTURAL HEALERS THAN MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. THEORIES TOWARD THIS EXPLORATION INCLUDE HEGEMONY, SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, CRITICAL RACE THEORY, AND CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY.

## THEORY

THIS PRESENTATION/PAPER WILL BE BASED ON THE WORK OF MICHAEL COLE, BERRY & POORTINGA AND MARCUS AND KITAYAMA. ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE WILL BE EXPLORED AND THE FAITH THE LAY PERSON MAY HAVE IN WHOLISTIC TREATMENTS AS OPPOSED TO THE MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL.

KEYWORDS: CULTURAL

PSYCHOLOGY, HEGEMONY, CRITICAL RACE THEORY, SOCIAL BEHAVIOR, CURANDERO

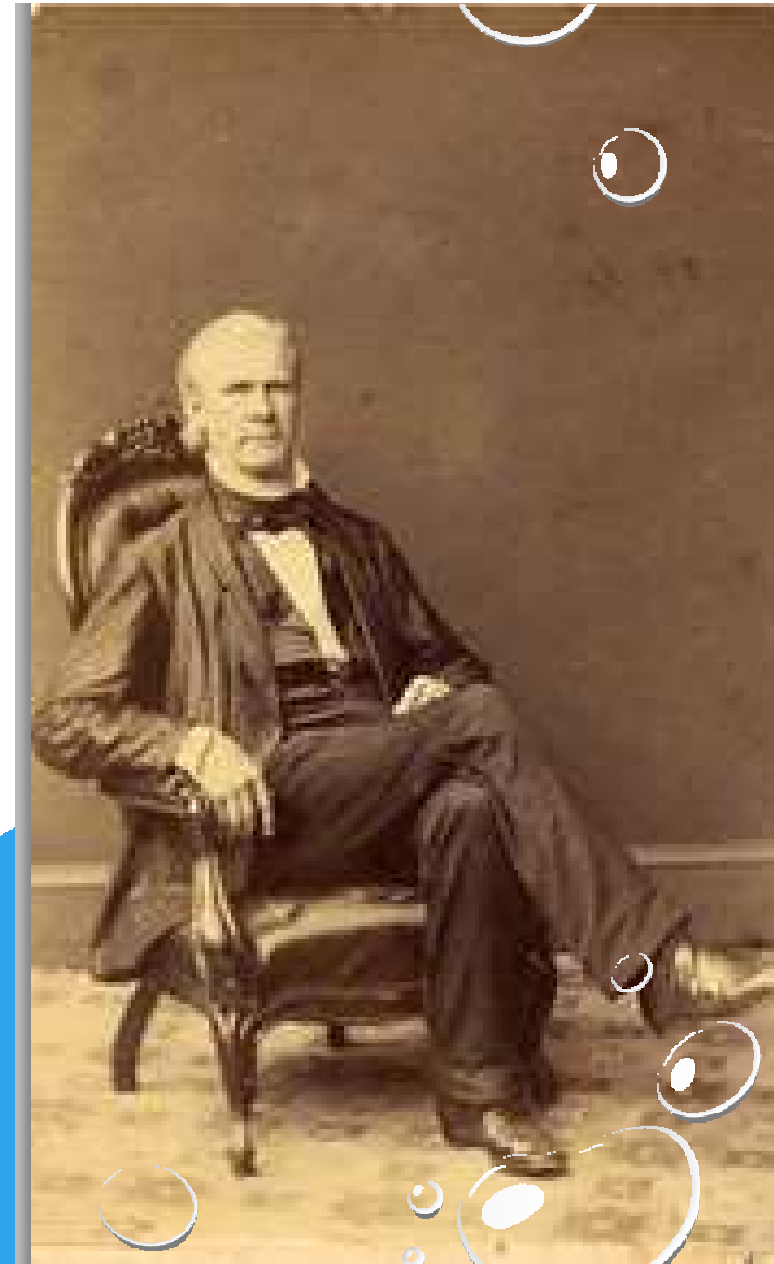
## PROBLEM

ACCORDING TO JAMES (1986), "AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON MEDICAL SCHOOL, WHERE I TAUGHT FOR MANY YEARS, MY SUBJECT WAS CULTURE AND ILLNESS – HOW SOCIETY AND OUR BELIEFS MAKE US SICK. I DISCOUNTED MY ABILITY AS A SCHOLAR BECAUSE MUCH OF WHAT I KNEW WAS INTUITIVE, NOT SCIENTIFIC; SOFT, NOT HARD". (P. 2).

STRESS, ANXIETY, POLITICS, ROAD RAGE, DEADLINES AND BILLS CREATE AN UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENT BRINGING ON HEART DISEASE, EMPHYSEMA, CANCERS AND TUMORS.

## THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

- WHAT PROMPTS INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO TRUST MEDICINE MEN, FAITH HEALERS, CURANDEROS, SANGHAS (TIBETAN HEALERS) AND OR SHAMANS?
- TRADITION OR MAGIC?
- TO! FIND THE ANSWER, ONE MUST LOOK TO AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW!



## AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW

THE AUTHOR WAS INTRIGUED TO CONDUCT AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW WITH A HINDI CALLED SIKH (NAME IS FACTITIOUS TO PROTECT THE INDIVIDUAL'S IDENTITY), A NAME HE IDENTIFIES WITH "SINCE THAT IS HOW HE CALLS HIMSELF IN RELATION TO HIS CULTURAL/ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION" WHICH IS EAST INDIAN (KEOUGH, N.D).

## ETHNOGRAPHIC TRADITIONS

“MANY FORMS OF SPIRITUAL HEALING EXIST IN THE HINDU TRADITION, FROM THE TIME OF THE VEDAS TO HINDUISM IN ITS CONTEMPORARY FORM... HISTORICALLY, THE AYURVEDA—WHICH IS AN ANCIENT, FIVE THOUSAND YEAR OLD VEDIC SYSTEM OF MEDICINE KNOWN AS THE “SCIENCE OF LIFE” (FRAWLEY 1997; JONES AND RYAN 2007)—**PLACED EMPHASIS ON THE PURE SELF (*ATMAN*)** AND TRUE CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS RELATION TO THE UNIVERSE (*BRAHMAN*).” (LAYTON, 2016, N.P.).

# INDIGENOUS BELIEFS

FOR EXAMPLE, SIKH STATES, "I AM NOT VERY RELIGIOUS", HE WAS TOLD BY HIS PARENTS NOT TO "EAT FOOD FROM VENDORS BECAUSE IT IS PERCEIVED TO BE NOT PREPARED IN SANITARY CONDITIONS" (PERSONAL COMMUNICATION AS TOLD TO AUTHOR DURING DOCTORAL STUDIES AT CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, N.D.).

YET, IN KEEPING WITH THE PREPARATION OF FOOD, RELATED TO THE "PURE SELF", A CONCEPT RELATED TO HEALTH STEMMING FROM A CULTURAL TRADITION, PARRISH (1994)

NOTES, "IF, HOWEVER, A MAN MARRIES A WOMAN FROM A CASTE THAT IS SOMEWHAT LOWER THAN HIS OWN (BUT NOT UNTOUCHABLE) AND DOES NOT EAT FOOD COOKED BY HER, THEN HE WILL NOT LOSE HIS CASTE STANDING" (P. 90).



# DEFINITIONS SUPPORTING ETHNOGRAPHIC TRADITION AND BELIEFS AS OPPOSED TO MODERN MEDICINE

HEGEMONY: DOMINATION OF ONE NATION OVER THE OTHER.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT): ANOTHER FORM OF DOMINATION OF ONE RACE OVER ANOTHER.

ACCORDING TO LAW (2018)..". CRT REGARDS THE

PRIVILEGED POSITION OCCUPIED BY MOSTLY WHITE, MIDDLE-CLASS ACADEMICS AS A MAJOR

OBSTACLE TO A COMPREHENSIVE EXPOSURE OF THE RACISM THAT IS SEEN TO PERMEATE THE LAW,

ITS RULES, CONCEPTS, AND INSTITUTIONS." (N.D.).

## CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY:ITS RELATION TO ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES & CULTURAL HEALERS

CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: SHWEDER (1998), A CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGIST, WENT FURTHER TO DEFINE CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: IT “IS THE STUDY OF ALL THINGS MEMBERS OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES THINK (KNOW, WANT, FEEL , VALUE) AND **DO** BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE KINDS OF BEINGS WHO ARE THE BENEFICIARIES, GUARDIANS AND ACTIVE PERPETUATORS OF A PARTICULAR CULTURE” (P. 867 AS CITED IN BERRY ET AL, 2002, P. 328).

“THE ONE IDEA SHWEDER INSISTS READERS GRAPPLE WITH CAN BE SUMMARIZED BY SAPIR’S EARLY (1924/1963) CLAIM THAT “THE WORLDS IN WHICH DIFFERENT SOCIETIES LIVE ARE DISTINCT WORLDS, NOT MERELY THE SAME WORLD WITH DIFFERENT LABELS ATTACHED”, (P. 209, AS CITED IN MARKUS & KITAYAMA, 1992, P. 357).

# CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY: CREDENCE TO VARIOUS EXISTENCE OF CULTURAL HEALERS

HENCE DIFFERENT TERMS OF CULTURAL HEALERS VARY FROM ONE INDIGENOUS GROUP TO THE NEXT: SHAMANS, MEDICINE MEN, FAITH HEALERS, SANGHAS, OR CURANDEROS (MALE), AND CURANDERAS (FEMALE), MEXICAN HEALERS WHO OFFER, HERBS AND POTIONS BORDERING ON “MYSTICAL” CURES.



## CONCLUSION

IT HAS BEEN THIS AUTHOR'S PURPOSE TO EXPLORE THE AFFECT CULTURE HAS ON THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND ALLUDE TO HYPOTHESES WHY NATIVES OF SPECIFIC CULTURES MAY HAVE MORE TRUST IN CULTURAL HEALERS THAN MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. ONE TRUSTS THE POINT HAS BEEN MADE WHICH DISCERNS A STRIKING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE, FOCUSING ON PATHOLOGY TO THE STARK DIFFERENCE CULTURAL HEALERS CONTRIBUTE TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING THROUGH TRADITION, CULTURAL ARTIFACTS, MYSTICISM, AND FAITH PASSED FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER.

ONE CAN ONLY HYPOTHESIZE WHICH FORM OF HEALING: MODERN MEDICINE OR CULTURAL HEALING TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER HUMAN SUFFERING AND PAIN!



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