Family Mediation with African Couples: A Culturally Sensitive Approach

Djidjoho C. Akloubou Gnonhossou
Segbegnon M. Gnonhossou
Background

Def: Alternative dispute resolution for divorce (Bailey, 1989)
Focus: Eurocentric
African descent: (Hairston, 1999, 2008)

In the US

Non western

• Japanese, Latino, Chinese …
• African immigrants: Little to no work
• In Africa: Distinctive values
Web of relationship among African immigrants / Relationship dynamic
Research Questions

1. Participants’ perspective regarding the use of third party
2. What are the impacts of home and host cultures?
Procedure

- In-depth interviews
- Length 58 min – 129 min
- Member checking (30mn – 75mn)
- Instrument:
  - Interview guide (11 open ended questions)
  - Researcher
Analysis: Descriptive Phenomenology

- Low interference
- Analytical memo
- Bracketing
- Thematic analysis
- In vivo, descriptive, value coding
Findings

- Past network
- Absent in new context

- Attitudes toward 3rd party (No and Yes)
- View and characteristic (go between, respected by both, role model)

Culturally sensitive
Culturally competent
Family Mediation Now in US

| Culturally Sensitive | • Familiarity, trust-worthy  
|                      | • Reconciliation-driven |
| Dual Mediators       | • American mediator      
|                      | • African mediator       |
| Culturally Competent | • Integrate African values 
|                      | • Become cultural broker |
Discussion

- Narrative mediation based on story-based epistemology
- Cohere with African’s narratively shaped worldview
- Components of NM suitable to participants’ views;
- NM Role compatible with expected qualities
- E.g.: Name problem and resulting in Reconciliation
- E.g.: From saturated stories to alternative stories
Implications

- Research
- Training mediators
- Family life education
- Court system
Reference


