FOURTH EDITION

Counseling for Multiculturalism and Social Justice

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I dedicate this book to Nga Thi Truong and Kieu An Ratts. Working on this book has been challenging because it has meant time away from the both of you. Thank you for all of your love and support.

—Manivong J. Ratts

* * *

I would like to dedicate this book to students who aspire to become multicultural and social justice change agents.

—Paul B. Pedersen
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Retired hockey great Wayne Gretzky is known to live by this maxim, which his father shared with him. Gretzky’s ability to foresee where the puck was going allowed him to stay ahead of the game and excel in the sport of hockey. This perspective can also be applied to the field of counseling and psychology. The future of counseling and psychology rests on our ability to continue to refine the multicultural and social justice counseling perspectives. We need to have the foresight to know where both perspectives are heading if counseling and psychology are to be sustainable resources. We must use research to improve our understanding of multiculturalism and social justice. Research, when done appropriately, can provide the vision to sustain the multicultural and social justice counseling forces. Just as important is the need for clinical practice to be informed by clients who seek psychological and community-based services. Clients bring with them a wealth of experiences and knowledge that should not be ignored.

As we look to the future of the counseling profession, we believe the next iteration is to bridge the multicultural and social justice perspectives. By bridging these two complementary forces, we expand the boundaries of imagination and practice on the ways in which counseling can be used to positively impact individuals and communities. Moreover, we address the challenge of living in a multicultural and socially just world in which people are able to live full and self-fulfilling lives.

The need to acknowledge and combine multiculturalism with social justice cannot be overstated. If counselors lack multicultural competence, they will be ineffective social change agents. No matter how well-intentioned, highly skilled, well trained, or intelligent they are, they can do harm if they make wrong or culturally inappropriate assumptions; they can inadvertently promote social change strategies that are not in clients’ best
interests. Counselors may ignore the relevance of culture and disregard the influence of the sociopolitical milieu, or they may inappropriately use individual therapy to address systemic issues without getting at the source of the problem. The inaccuracy or misattribution resulting from wrong assumptions or from disregarding the influence of contextual factors on individuals translates into defensive disengagement by both providers and consumers of counseling, each trying to protect the truth as they perceive it.

The current trend toward increased multicultural counseling among counselors is critical and has been argued to be a fourth force in the helping professions with as profound an impact on counseling as the third force of humanism had on the prevailing psychodynamic (first force) and behavioral systems (second force) of that time (Pedersen, 1991). Each force reflects a new movement in counseling and psychology. The multicultural dimension is not competing with other counseling theories. By making culture central to humanism, psychodynamics, and behavioral psychology, those perspectives are strengthened, not weakened.

Similar arguments have also been made to consider social justice as a fifth force in counseling (Ratts, 2009; Ratts, D’Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). Social justice is a paradigm unto itself distinct from all other helping models. Social justice counseling acknowledges that human development issues need to be understood within the context of living in an oppressive environment. Counseling is not office bound. The debilitating impact of oppression warrants the need for advocacy and activism in communities. Social justice counselors understand that counseling involves both individual and systems work.

Developing into multicultural and social justice competent counselors is not an easy task. Multiculturalism and social justice are too often classified as secondary or tertiary prevention approaches. It is something that counselors do if they have time for it, or it is something that is superficially added to an already established theory or practice. This attitude and antiquated way of thinking does nothing but hinder the profession and our clients. Some counselors will become so frustrated by their inability to connect with individuals from oppressed groups that they will blame their lack of multicultural and social justice competence on the clients themselves.

Counselors can choose either to ignore the influence of culture and oppression or to address it head on. In this book we discuss the increasing need to merge the multicultural and social justice forces into all facets of the helping field. We make several assumptions in writing this book, some of which are more controversial than others. Let us state these assumptions directly and explicitly.

- There is complexity in the multiple aspects of human identity.
- Multiculturalism is broadly defined and includes all the unique dimensions that shape human identity.
- All counseling takes place in a multicultural and sociopolitical context.
- The most important elements of multicultural and social justice competence can be learned but cannot be taught. Good teaching can, however, create the favorable conditions for multicultural and social justice competence to occur.
- Multiculturalism and social justice go hand in hand. Both are necessary conditions in any psychotherapeutic interaction.
- People experience both oppression and privilege. We are members of dominant (oppressor) and target (oppressed) groups.
- The interlocking system of power, privilege, and oppression exists on many levels and hinders human growth and development.
- Counseling that is informed by intrapsychic approaches cannot sufficiently resolve systemic based issues.
Counseling includes both individual therapy and systems advocacy.
Counseling can serve as a vehicle to oppress or liberate clients.

The 4th edition of this book is significantly different from previous editions. Earlier editions of this book were titled *A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness*. The book was a resource guide on developing multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skill. To make this book relevant to the times, the following substantive and formative changes were made.

- We adopted a broader and more inclusive definition of multiculturalism. We focus on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability status, and religion/spirituality as it relates to counseling. We bridge the very best from the multicultural force with the strengths of the social justice force to create a new paradigm.
- We introduce two self-assessment instruments that help measure counselors’ awareness of their level of multicultural and advocacy competence.
- We offer a framework that merges the multicultural and social justice forces and helps counselors to determine whether individual counseling (office-based interventions), advocacy counseling (community-based work), or both are needed when working with clients. We added an application section written by experts in the field that operationalizes multiculturalism and social justice with various client populations.

As a result of these changes we have retitled the book *Counseling for Multiculturalism and Social Justice: Integration, Theory, and Application*. We believe this title better reflects the intent of the book. We integrated both the multicultural and social justice perspectives into one unifying force. Past theories are highlighted along with their connection to current and emerging multicultural and social justice concepts. We also focused on applying multiculturalism and social justice in clinical settings. The book has three parts, each of which is described in the following sections.

Section I: An Overview of Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling

Section I encompasses Chapters 1–5, which provide foundational theories, concepts, and the context needed to understand the role of multiculturalism and social justice in counseling.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of both the multicultural counseling and social justice counseling movements and their connection. This chapter helps readers gain a historical perspective of the roots of multiculturalism and social justice in counseling. Chapter 2 highlights the five counseling forces in counseling and psychology. This chapter begins with an overview of the major tenets of the psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, existential-humanistic, multicultural, and social justice counseling forces and a critique of each. Chapter 3 describes the complexities of identity as well as the influence of oppression on identity. Privilege, border, and oppressed groups are identified and discussed. This chapter highlights the need to understand identity within the context of living in an oppressive society and the influence of power and privilege. Chapter 4 bridges the multicultural and social justice counseling forces into one unified approach. We introduce readers to the counselor–advocate–scholar model, which provides a framework that counselors can use to determine whether individual therapy
or systems-level work is needed and integrates scholarship. Chapter 5 explores the concept of worldview and provides a comprehensive summary of predominant identity development models in the literature related to race, gender, and sexual orientation. Identity development models are important to understanding how oppression impacts racial, gender, and sexual identity development.

Section II. Developing Multicultural and Social Justice Competence

The chapters in this section focus on practical strategies that can help one develop into a multicultural and advocacy competent helping professional. Chapter 6 discusses the importance of terminology and its dynamic nature. We offer suggestions on how to refer to individuals based on their group membership. Using appropriate terminology is important to creating an affirming clinical environment. Chapter 7 explains the importance of developing multicultural competence. The Multicultural Competencies Self-Assessment Survey is provided as a tool to gauge the counselor’s level of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Chapter 8 discusses the importance of developing advocacy competence. The Advocacy Competencies Self-Assessment Survey is introduced to help counselors develop into advocacy competent change agents. Chapter 9 explains why gaining buy-in and addressing resistance toward multiculturalism and social justice are important. We introduce E. M. Rogers’s (2003) diffusion of innovation theory as a basis for how to infuse multiculturalism and social justice into counseling theories, research, and practices.

Section III. Addressing Individual and Systemic Oppression

In Section III we operationalize multiculturalism and social justice when working with oppressed client populations. This section is perhaps the most significant addition to the book. We invited scholars who are recognized experts in their respective areas to write application chapters focused on counseling from a multicultural and social justice framework. Each of the application chapters provides a historical overview of an oppressed group, identifies key multicultural concepts and systemic barriers, and offers a case study to help readers operationalize multicultural and social justice counseling tenets. Client confidentiality was maintained in all case material so that the client and third parties (e.g., family members) are not identifiable. (Some examples are actually composites of many individuals known to the authors.)

Examples of individual counseling and advocacy counseling are offered for each client group discussed. We note that practical considerations regarding book length prevented us from including chapters on all oppressed client groups. Issues relevant to the following client populations are included: Asian and Pacific Islanders (Chapter 10); African Americans (Chapter 11); Native Americans (Chapter 12); Latin@s (Chapter 13); multiracial individuals and families (Chapter 14); lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals (Chapter 15); transgender individuals (Chapter 16); women (Chapter 17); and the poor (Chapter 18). Chapter 19 takes up religious and spiritual issues in counseling.

Multiculturalism and social justice are too complex a topic for any one book to cover completely; we have barely scratched the surface here. This book is intended to guide the reader toward a deeper understanding of the connection and practical applications when multiculturalism and social justice are integrated into the field. The reader is encouraged to seek further training and professional development to gain a deeper understanding of concepts discussed in this book.
References


We would like to acknowledge both Alexa Wayman and Jennifer Truong, recent graduate counseling students at Seattle University, for their research assistance with the book. Their commitment to multiculturalism and social justice has been important in helping to put this book together.
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Caroline O’Hara, EdS, LPC, NCC, is a doctoral student in the counselor education and practice program at Georgia State University. An active scholar and researcher, Ms. O’Hara has published and presented at the national level in the areas of identity development, social justice counseling, sexual and gender diversity, multicultural competence, counseling supervision, and advocacy (both client and professional). She has also held multiple leadership positions. Locally, she has served as president of the Chi Epsilon Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota (CSI). Nationally, she serves as chair of the Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling (AARC) Diversity Committee, Student perspectives editor for AARC’s NewsNotes, associate student editor of the CSI Exemplar, and member of the CSI Professional Advocacy Committee. She has been recognized with the CSI International Leadership Fellow and Intern Award, the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Emerging Leader Fellow Award, and the American Counseling Association Courtland C. Lee Multicultural Excellence Scholarship Award.

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Alexa Wayman holds an MAEd in counseling from Seattle University, wherein she completed a year-long internship at an alternative education K-8 school in Seattle. Her current work involves engaging with children and families in a low-income neighborhood through the Seattle University Center for Service and Community Engagement. Working with the Seattle University Youth Initiative, she strives to foster family resilience and advocates for early learning and closing the achievement gap with immigrant families. She is actively pursuing ways to engage in research and practice to respond to the needs of marginalized communities; she is currently involved in a qualitative study investigating causal factors for English language learners student dropout and retention rates.

Alexander C. Winninghoff is an educator and writer. She completed a BA in social justice at Antioch University and a master’s in teaching from Seattle University. She has served in the greater Seattle area as a diversity trainer and policy consultant for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer issues in a school district and as a youth advocate with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. She currently teaches at an inner-city high school in Atlanta.