
Preface to the Third Edition

Counselors enter the field to effect changes in people's lives. That is a given, as shown in countless admissions essays. "I want to help others," most counselors declare. This book is dedicated to that goal, but with an expanded target. Instead of focusing only on the individual, the writers of this text aim at a broader effort. Our aim echoes the original focus of the so-called father of counseling, Frank Parsons, who declared that the fundamental purpose of counseling was social improvement. Counselors might wonder how they might effect such change. After all, we are not politicians. Thus counselors may not understand their role in bigger social change. Lest counselors believe that the social change endeavor is overly optimistic, it should be noted that we have seen remarkable social changes in the past 50 years. Despite setbacks and miles to go, racial relations have improved in many respects since the 1960s. Out of the bad old days of overt racism has come a beginning awareness that it is not OK. And yet a more covert racism lies near the surface of everyday discourse, cloaked in the guise of "all lives matter" (which they do) and "build more walls." And in the vein of women's and sexual minority rights, a positive shift in attitudes and some laws have aimed at more equity. But racism, sexism, and heterosexism have not vanished.

The work of improving inclusion and social equity thus remains. For those positive social changes that have occurred, some credit can go to the counselors, writers, and activists of each era. With such progress, we remain hopeful. However, positive human relations are never a guarantee. We must remain vigilant. We must be ever restless to ensure that dominance by the powerful is challenged at every turn, that they do not reign unquestioned and supreme as they often have and still do in many cases. As author Robert Kegan says, social change does not pass on through the genes, but it requires constant education. In the same vein, Frederick Douglass was adamant: Power concedes nothing without a demand. And your work as a counselor is to demand social equity.

Culturally alert counseling is moral enterprise. It is an effort at *tikkun olam*, the Hebrew word that refers to renewing or repairing the world. Culturally alert counseling is an attempt to include all other human beings in the great work of helping and healing, with no

exceptions. That work is guided by counselors' constant vigilance about their cultural assumptions, about their clients' worldviews, and ultimately, the norms that guide their organizations, their communities, their nation, and the world. Those norms have often represented the hegemonic sovereignty of the mainstream. As a result those who are on the margins, commonly sexual minorities, nondominant racial and ethnic groups, women, and those who are poorer are disregarded. Instead, we return to Parsons's original intent that counseling is ultimately about social improvement.

Counselors can no longer in conscience leave anyone out. Such inclusion has not been easy for human beings over the centuries. Class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity and religion have been used as dividers. Counselors, above all professionals, are asked to look into those great divides, to see themselves in others, to see others in others, to know the rich differences among mixed-up human beings, and to relish the great similarities. The philosopher Richard Rorty explains this obligation as "reminding ourselves to keep trying to expand our sense of 'us' as far as we can . . . [to include] the family in the cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the mountains, then of the unbelievers beyond the seas (and, perhaps of all . . . the menials who, all this time, have been doing our dirty work)." Rorty's words reflect the personalist dictum that every person has inherent worth. Rorty asks us to stretch our vision, making an intentional effort to honor people whom we might instinctively think of as "they" rather than "us." To know others as they are, by knowing them well, is our obligation as counselors. And that is a central purpose of this book.

FOUR GUIDING DIMENSIONS BEHIND THE BOOK

The third edition of this book is an even more comprehensive text for emerging counselors and psychotherapists of all kinds. It continues to be written with four guidelines in mind. Each has been addressed in this third edition. The writers hope that these dimensions make this book both useful and inspiring. They are *depth*, *breadth*, *readability*, and *applicability*.

Depth refers to two levels. First is the conceptual depth, or framework, that is presented in the notion of constructivism. Constructivism is here defined as the simple idea that all human beings make meanings in their own culturally influenced ways. Constructivism reminds counselors to be humble, to realize that they are always making sense, and to take responsibility for the sense that they are making. To aid in that sense-making, further conceptual frameworks are provided in this book for the journey. In the first three chapters, the notions of critical consciousness, ethno- or culture-centrism, privilege, social stratification, pluralism, dominance and nondominance, and oppression are examined in hopes that they might guide the reader through the remaining chapters.

The second dimension of depth lies in the quality of the subsequent chapters on ethnic and social groups in this book. Chapter authors who are known experts in each culture or topic have been recruited and vetted to provide the most accurate and meaningful insights into the human conditions of each cultural group.

Breadth is the second of the four impulses that led to this book. This revision further expands the inclusion of significant social and cultural groups that counselors are likely to encounter. The notion of culture can be writ large, and it is here. New chapters on counseling refugees and immigrants and counseling military veterans have been added to the previously new chapter on counseling and disability. As was emphasized in the previous editions, culture no longer only refers to race or ethnicity. Clients' and counselors' worlds are also culturally constructed through the lenses of social class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion. And now large populations represented by refugees, immigrants, and military veterans, with their particular needs, are also included. This book therefore honors those populations with corresponding chapters. Before I lose some readers, let me note that this book also speaks to white European American middle-class men. Members of the so-called dominant groups also face challenges based on their cultural assumptions. Counselors need to know that, and members of this group need to know themselves.

Readability continues to be a third major impulse that led to the writing of this book. Much textbook and academic writing on culture and counseling continues to suffer from the malady of academic prose: It is overly abstract, insufficiently illustrative, and often wooden. To remedy this problem, the editor selected writers who could bring out the power of this material in vital, rich

ways. Thus the text is littered with vignettes, anecdotes, figures, and exercises that make the concepts come alive. We have tried to make the writing clear and accessible. It has helped this author immensely to have been an English major and English teacher in the past to the chagrin and benefit of chapter authors.

Finally, *applicability* guided the writing of the book. A comprehensive analysis of current practices led to the final chapter on actual skills to be used in culturally alert counseling. Counselors are practical people. They must act. Multicultural counseling skills have at best been alluded to and untested in the past. This book continues to stretch that boundary by presenting explicit sets of counseling skills that might be used with culture in mind. It should be noted that there are complementary videos available through Sage publications to accompany some of the chapters in this book. Those videos illustrate skills for a number of the specific populations in this book. They are useful for demonstrations in class.

Here is a brief summary of the topics in chapters that are upcoming. As counselors and students of counseling, you are also asked to know yourself well to better know others. At the end of the first two chapters, you will perhaps be less likely to project your cultural assumptions onto others; you will be more likely to listen and wait. Then Chapter 3 launches into the topic of human equality, with a description of social stratifications and how to challenge those that are harmful through advocacy.

The journey then leads in Chapters 4 and 5 to explorations of ethnicity and race—topics that include all readers. No one is left out of this book, whether they are in a dominant or majority group or in a less-powerful minority. The following seven chapters (Chapters 6 through 12) describe specific ethnic groupings. In those pages, readers will come to better know both themselves and others. Next, in Chapters 13 through 19, are readings and activities devoted to exploring the wide worlds of social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, immigrants and refugees, and military veterans.

As mentioned earlier, the book ends with an expanded depiction of the key skills for doing culturally alert counseling. Such skills can be confusing for the counselor. Culturally alert counseling is not a specific counseling theory but rather an application of skills to particular populations at times. Chapter 20 is an attempt to clarify the very practice of culturally alert counseling. With exposure to actual counseling skills, readers will be better equipped to apply the understandings that they have learned and try them out in solidarity with

those now-familiar others. These skills are vividly illustrated by the complementary six-part training video series *Culturally Alert Counseling: Working With African American, Asian, Latino/Latina, Conservative Religious, and Gay/Lesbian Youth Clients*. One of the six videos parallels Chapters 18 and 19 and comes with this text.

Enhancements of the Third Edition

This third edition of *Culturally Alert Counseling*, after six years of feedback, success, reconsideration, and pondering, continues to be a labor of love for me and all of the coauthors.

A revision should significantly enhance a prior version of a book. And so I expect that we, the authors, have done so. Change for change's sake only speaks to restlessness. Change for improvement's sake speaks to a responsible enhancement in a book. We have chosen the latter route. Many of the authors are the same experts on each topic from the successful first edition. Two of the chapters, namely, the one on European Americans and the one on gender, have been completely rewritten. Other authors have revised their work with the wisdom of six years of living, reading, and testing.

So we have built on the first two editions with wisdom that can be gained only from experience. Here are a few of the new and revised elements in this second edition:

- A new, comprehensive **chapter on counseling refugees and immigrants**. This topic was long needed. The chapter is the result of an international recruiting effort to find experts on this continuing and ever-expanding population, whose mental health needs are often ignored in the popular literature. The coauthors from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, offer insights that speak to the empathy and understanding that is required for these groups.
- An original and new **chapter on counseling military veterans**. Erin Kern brings a fresh understanding of military culture and of military veterans' unique challenges.
- Expanded treatment of **bisexuality** as an often minimized and ignored topic in the field (Chapter 15).
- Placement of the topic of **transgender** in the chapter on gender. This has been a response to input from members of the transgender

community that there is a gender phenomenon, not only a sexual orientation matter. The reader, however, might wish to include the section on transgender in the readings for Chapter 15 on sexual minorities.

- A new section on **microaggressions and gender** and expanded treatment of **nature and nurture** in the development of sex and gender in Chapter 14.
- Creation of a **"class genogram"** activity for counselors to use and an expanded treatment of class-alert counseling practices, including presentation of a new section on **class-alert client assessment**.
- Expanded descriptions of the **growing South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latino/a ethnic groups** in the United States and counseling practices for these groups.
- A completely revised chapter on **Native Americans**.

THE CHALLENGE TO COUNSELORS

Let us go back to the original impulse behind this book. I asked some years ago, "Why is there a book on culturally alert counseling at all?" We cannot take this for granted. In my work with international populations, I have noted that this topic is not required for the training of counselors in many countries. It is therefore somewhat of an anomaly outside of U.S. and Canadian contexts. Counselors and other countries, when seeing this book and this certification requirement, express a wish that their communities would offer such education.

The work of counseling is like almost no other work. It is difficult. Complex. Personally challenging. Ambiguous. Emotional. Concrete. Abstract. It takes a particular kind of person to encounter other human beings in their uncertainty and pain, to hold them, and to journey with them on the bumpy road to becoming more fully human. Those of you who have chosen to accompany other human beings through their doubts and discoveries must therefore be prepared. There is much to learn and try, and try again, and learn.

It was once perhaps simpler. Counselors assumed that they worked with the individual shorn of any cultural dimensions. Now we have acknowledged the cultural component is intertwined in the life stories of

every person. Clients bring with them ancestors, parents, religious teachers, ethnic models, and neighborhood friends. There are films seen and lyrics heard. There are the aunts and uncles of childhood, the siblings of yesterday and today, the weddings, the memorial services, and the dinner table conversations. All are represented in clients' memories, in their strivings, their manners, and in their morals. All sit with the client before you. Thus the work of counseling is now made larger by our recognition of these presences in the room.

The field did slog on for many years without a full appreciation of these silent, and noisy, presences in clients' lives. But there was a cost. Members of nondominant groups and poor folks didn't seek counseling, or dropped out early, when the field was seen as a white middle-class endeavor. I know this fact personally—this lower middle-class Irish American kid from Queens had no access to counseling, nor would go for it, even if he were lost, anxious, scared, confused, or addicted. And we were all of those. The community didn't support personal exploration or vulnerability. The working-class environment didn't usually value probing for personal meanings and seeking right relations with others. But to counseling I did go—only after it seemed acceptable to tell all to a stranger. We also feared that counselors might not understand our ethnic group or our religion. And sometimes they didn't. Counselors of the time rejected religion as superstition but prayed to the god of analysis and insight. They didn't know that they were engaged in a great classist enterprise of trying to heal the white upper-middle class. Counseling must now be bigger than that. It must embrace the complexity that

culture brings. That is the only way to do this good work. With the inclusion of culture into the work of counseling, we extend possibility of human solidarity that we so long for.

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Addendum to the Preface for the Third Edition: The Use of Non-Binary Pronouns

The writers of these chapters have struggled with how to deal with what I will call the great gender pronoun debate. As persons who are transgender have been recognized both in public spaces and in the field of counseling, the binary pronouns of *she/he*, *her/him*, and *her/his* have been found lacking. They do not represent the fluid gender identity of many persons who are transgender. As we write these words, the move to use words such as *they*, *them*, and *their* to represent the singular rather than the plural is increasing. We recognize the importance of shifting to gender nonbinary language. A number of these chapters have acknowledged the emerging shift by using nonbinary pronouns. We chose the inclusive pronouns *they*, *them*, and *their* to represent the singular person, although grammatically incorrect as of the time of this writing, to reflect the range of transgender identities. We, the authors, ask for your understanding and encourage you to use gender-fluid language.

We believe that inclusion and empowerment are more important than adhering to rigid grammar rules!