

Preface

This text addresses a void in the literature on diverse counseling encounters by providing tools and approaches for cultural assessment. It also presents social justice variables of privilege and oppression to help make the counseling intervention (process and goals) relevant and meaningful to the client. Several texts have addressed the issue of counseling the “other” or counseling within-group, and counseling clients from other cultural contexts than the helper’s, i.e., culture (ethnicity, nationality), disability, gender, and sexual orientation, and these include books on theories, strategies, and skills, along with guidelines and competency statements issued by professional associations to increase efficacy in counseling across cultures, genders, sexual orientations, spirituality or religions, developmental stages, and ability/disability levels. In addition, researchers have addressed the importance of social class, and contexts that clients come from, cultural and geographic.

However, no text has addressed how the counselor or clinician can formulate a counseling intervention plan, by providing specific information for addressing all the cultural and social justice variables that are contextual for a client. As Marsella (2015) notes “How can successful counseling ignore or be indifferent to the cultural context of a person’s life? How can the personal history of being a racial or ethnocultural minority be avoided or denied with all of its consequences for accumulated injustices, oppression, and abuses? When this occurs, it is no longer counseling as a healing art and science that is present, rather it is simply a re-socialization” (p. vii). Although texts exist that address these variables individually, this leaves the average counselor/therapist wondering how they can attend to so many factors, while also focusing on the client, the presenting problem, and building a therapeutic relationship.

This text helps mental health professionals in (a) identifying the cultural and contextual variables significant for a client by getting the information from the client, (b) building a therapeutic relationship during this process, and (c) incorporating client-specific cultural information in developing the goals for counseling, and making the intervention culture specific. We continue to hear about early terminations, and disappointing counseling encounters for culturally different clients (Sue, Zane, Hall, & Berger, 2009). These negative outcomes are the result of an inability to incorporate the client-specific cultural variables, client values, beliefs and assump-

tions, and contextual variables, such as social class and place in a hierarchical society, into the counseling intervention. When we are presented with broad guidelines either about a cultural group, or counseling competency statements, without any guidance on how to operationalize the information and make it relevant to a client's situation, it results in confusion for the helping professional, and frustration for the client. Shin (2015) notes that "a common criticism of racial/ethnic identity stage theories, offered previously by several scholars, is the fact that the models fail to capture the vast intra-group differences in identity development within all racial and ethnic groups" (p. 13). This stance can be generalized to most of the information one finds in the multicultural counseling domain, ergo the need to "decolonize" the field of cross-cultural, multicultural, transcultural counseling, by taking away the generalities common to psychology to describe cultural groups, without providing the tools to make information applied to counseling settings client specific. The primary goal in providing therapeutic services is to initially develop a therapeutic relationship. However, focusing on what the profession wants, recommendations from the research literature, and the training that professionals undergo, and requirements for ethical practice create a dilemma for a therapist.

Making the intervention meaningful to a client is the goal of this text, using specific cultural assessment tools, and providing case studies to highlight how the assessments were helpful in making the intervention client specific. The purpose of counseling is to help the client in making his or her life more manageable; by providing knowledge and skills that will provide insights, and enhance the client's ability to negotiate the personal, cultural, social, and occupational world successfully. Given this goal, it is evident that a text is needed to address the issue of how to manage the body of literature available in a meaningful manner, and to incorporate the knowledge, skills, and competencies into each specific counseling intervention, and to meet the client in his or her cultural, familial, social, and occupational world, along with recognizing the personal variables, such as personal style, and attitudes, that are commonly addressed in counseling encounters.

This text addresses critical information needed to conduct appropriate cultural assessments and incorporate the results into the counseling interventions, i.e., development of goals and process. As counseling and psychology goes international due to impact of globalization, it is critical that theory, practice, and research consider meaningfulness of theories, competency and ethical guidelines, and assessment models for a global audience (Friedman, 1999; Leach & Gauthier, 2012; Leong, Pickren, Leach, & Marsella, 2012). This is especially critical as many developing and developed nations look to American Psychology as the standard for theory, practice, and research. The chapters present information on the rationale and research for using cultural assessments; the information is grounded in professional, and ethical guidelines for assessment, and counseling interventions. Not only does the text identify the key cultural domains that need assessment to understand the client's cultural identity and context, it also includes cases (Chap. 8) to show how the information is incorporated into the counseling process.

The cases utilize assessment strategies needed for each case to develop interventions that are culturally sensitive, and tailored to address the client's presenting problem, incorporating culturally relevant strategies and goals for a positive outcome. The strategies and tools presented are not the only the ones in the research literature, several instruments and tools exist, we encourage you to consider cultural assessment strategies that would be specific and useful for the client you are working with, and to develop your interventions incorporating the domains identified in this text, i.e., incorporating cultural identity, worldview, acculturation, privilege and oppression, and other client-specific issues that may be relevant. Good luck with your interventions and may you be highly successful in your chosen profession and provide culturally sensitive, and responsive counseling and psychotherapy in all your settings.

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