

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Arthur, N., & Collins, S. (2005). *Culture-infused counselling: Celebrating the Canadian mosaic*. Calgary, AB: Counselling Concepts. ISBN 0-9738085-0-0. 542 pages.

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It is a little argued fact that since its inception in 1971 multicultural policy has shaped Canada's national identity and its international image, and has drastically altered the country's demographic landscape. In response to these changes, counselling programs nationwide have become increasingly aware of the need to understand and respect diversity. As a result, there is a growing need for educational resources and curriculums that critically explore culturally sensitive approaches to therapy.

Culture-Infused Counselling: Celebrating the Canadian Mosaic is Nancy Arthur and Sandra Collins' attempt to provide students and practitioners alike with a comprehensive resource that adds a Canadian perspective to a predominantly American body of literature.

The authors begin by proposing a substantially broad definition of culture—one that goes beyond phenotypic, ethnic, or religious affiliations and encompasses such wide-ranging characteristics as gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class. In doing so, Arthur and Collins operate under the assertion that all types of counselling are forms of cross-cultural encounters. They subsequently argue for the need to infuse cultural competencies into every area of therapeutic practice.

The textbook is divided into three parts, the first of which affords the reader an in-depth look at the conceptual and theoretical foundations of culture-infused counselling. The opening chapter provides extensive information on the historic trends of multiculturalism in Canada before exploring the finer intricacies of fundamental concepts like race, ethnicity, and culture.

Following the introduction, Arthur and Collins present their own model for enhancing multicultural competencies—one largely based on Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis's (1992) framework. The three primary domains entail a cultural awareness of self (of personal assumptions, values, and biases), a cultural awareness of *the other* (an understanding of the client's worldview), and, finally, the establishing of a culturally sensitive working alliance. Each domain comprises a set of core competencies that are subsequently subdivided into three separate categories: attitudes and beliefs, specific knowledge, and skill competencies. After a well-organized, tabulated layout of their framework, the authors tackle issues of cultural identity development, introduce the concepts of accommodation and acculturation, and address the hazards of stereotyping and cultural oppression in counselling.

Chapter 3 then offers specific guidelines on how to translate the aforementioned principles into practice—focusing specifically on developing a respectful therapeutic relationship between counsellor and client. The remainder of the first section is dedicated to the exploration of various aspects of multicultural practice. These include

the effective means to infuse cultural-sensitivity into organizations and counsellor education programs, a comprehensive overview of ethical considerations and assessment procedures, and the challenges of conducting research across cultures.

The second part of *Culture-Infused Counselling* consists of a “population-specific” look at multicultural counselling. Arthur and Collins enlist almost a dozen contributing writers to aid them in refining general multicultural competencies and narrowing their applicability to predefined cultural factions. The chapters in this section outline the value systems, shared-experience, and challenges faced by such groups as First Nations peoples, immigrants and refugees, ethnic minorities, girls and women, lesbians, gay males, and international students.

The definition of culture and the concepts of acculturation, identity formation, and relationship to the dominant group are subsequently revisited in each of these chapters. While this may prove beneficial to the reader who chooses to select a single section to page through, it inevitably creates some redundancy for those of us who decide to read the text in its entirety. Furthermore, it remains unclear why separate chapters have been dedicated to counselling lesbians and gay males (both of whom face similar but not identical challenges), while immigrants and refugees are lumped together, by the authors’ admission, into a non-cohesive whole.

The closing part of the book provides the reader with some food for thought and considerations for the future. Here, the authors discuss the challenges of bridging the emic approach to multicultural psychology (which stresses between-group differences) and the etic perspective (which values universal similarities across cultures).

While the text ultimately proves to be a valuable tool for both novice and seasoned therapists who wish to enhance their cultural responsiveness, one cannot help but question some of its formative assumptions. By suggesting that limiting therapist exposure to multicultural counselling serves to restrict the “services available to *non-dominant populations*” (p. 82, italics added), Collins and Arthur seem to inadvertently imply that cross-cultural counselling consists of an encounter between a therapist from the dominant group and a client from a cultural minority. Such a conjecture is misleading as multicultural counselling involves two participants of dissimilar cultures, irrespective of their assigned social roles in the therapeutic encounter.

The enterprise of multicultural counselling is one that views people primarily through the lens of group membership. However, to understand a person predominantly through cultural belongingness is to box that individual into what is, arguably, an arbitrary category. Assigned cultural labels such as “Arabs,” “Natives,” and “Blacks” are far too broad and loosely assigned to definitively account for an individual’s outlook. While Collins and Arthur discuss the challenge of defining all-inclusive categories, they do not seem to adequately explain why they chose to adhere to such a means of classification.

The purported “principles of the africanic perspective” (p. 128) effectively portrays African culture as a uniform, static construct, ignoring the rich diversity that exists between (and within) the different nations of the continent. Ultimately, misrepresentations like these make it abundantly clear how difficult it is to speak of culture-specific worldviews without engaging in a homogenization of culture that

inevitably freeze-frames its fluidity. This reification of culture, the attempt at rendering the abstract more tangible, inevitably leads to the creation of what Edgar Friedenberg (1975) refers to as the conscript clientele. It renders certain groups within a larger population more visible than they otherwise would be and, by extension, makes them easier to administer, manage, and refer.

In summary, the main limitation of the book is that it does not challenge some of the tacit, underlying assumptions prevalent in the field of multicultural counselling—namely that culture, broadly defined, can be used to account for worldview. In this regard, it falls short of one of its intended goals to provide readers with a thorough “reconceptualization of the multicultural competencies emergent in this larger body of literature” (p. v).

Nevertheless, *Culture-Infused Counselling* is a comprehensive Canadian resource that examines various aspects of cross-cultural counselling. It explores both the theoretical and the practical aspects of the enterprise, provides the reader with a detailed overview of ethical considerations and research procedures, and presents rich ethnographic exposés of various non-dominant populations in Canada. As such, it is a document that may prove useful to counsellors and educators as an introduction to culture-infused practice. It also remains the only textbook that infuses a Canadian perspective into a mass of mostly American resources.

References

- Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural counseling competencies and standards: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 70*, 477–486.
- Friedenberg, E. Z. (1975). *The disposal of liberty and other industrial wastes*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Toporek, R. L., Gerstein, L. H., Fouad, N. A., Roysircar, G., & Israel, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook for social justice in counseling psychology: Leadership, vision, and action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 1-4129-1007-2. 617 pages.

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Recently, an interest in social justice and advocacy has (re)emerged, offering an invitation to counsellors to broaden their conceptualization and practices of counselling. The embrace of social justice ideals is not a big step for many counsellors. Operationalizing these principles, however, causes many to pause with uncertainty. This *Handbook*, edited by Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar, and Israel, attempts to reconcile this difficulty. Through the contributions of 67 authors, a bridge is created for students, educators, and practicing counsellors between theoretical/conceptual frameworks and active engagement in the field of social justice. Consisting of eight parts and a total of 35 chapters, this *Handbook* covers several salient domains (e.g., counsellor education, career counselling, health care) with focused depth and breadth.