THEORY AND PRACTICE

Internationalizing the counseling psychology curriculum: toward new values, competencies, and directions

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ABSTRACT   *The changing world in which we now live requires that counseling psychology alter its training curriculum assumptions, content, and methods to prepare students and faculty for meeting the challenges of life in the global community. Global problems such as poverty, migration, overpopulation, international war and violence, rapid urbanization, and cultural disintegration are posing new challenges for service professions that are no longer suited to ethnocentric values, content, and interventions. Adjustment syndromes such as alienation, culture shock, acculturation, identity conflict and confusion, and migration stress are now emerging as major problems for counselors in schools, colleges, industry, clinics and private practice. New competencies are needed. The present article offers 50 different ways to assist in the internationalization of the counseling curriculum, with specific recommendations for professional psychological associations and department of psychology curriculum content and extra-curricular activities, and universities. The article calls upon counseling psychologists around the world to help create a new professional and global consciousness that can advance our field by addressing the problems we face and restoring dignity to those we serve through the provision of more informed and culturally sensitive services.*

Introduction

It is essential that Counseling Psychology be responsive to the changing world in which we live. Unlike the world of the last few decades, today's world requires counseling psychology to acknowledge the global context of our times, including the increased interdependency of our individual and collective lives. Events and forces in distant lands and cultures—once considered inconsequential and unimportant—have a daily impact upon our lives. Under these circumstances, counseling psychology needs both to

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reconsider its training assumptions, methods, and ethics with a new vision, vigor, and commitment. It also needs to respond to the emerging international challenges of overpopulation, poverty, environmental desecration, crime, cultural disintegration, ethno-political warfare, and urbanization (Marsella, 1998, 2000).

The global context and nature of our world is rapidly changing. One hundred years ago 1.6 billion people lived on Earth; but by the year 2000, the world population exceeded 6 billion. There has been more population growth since 1950 than in the preceding 4 billion years. The most recent United Nations mid-level projections indicate that there will be 8.9 billion people on Earth by 2050 with almost all the gain occurring in the poorer nations (Mullins, 2000), indicating a growth of 78 million people a year and 1.5 million people every week. In 1900, only a few thousand barrels of oil were used each day worldwide compared with 72 million barrels per day today (Pedersen, 2000). If the world's population were only 100 people (Hatter, 2000) then there would be: 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 North and South Americans, and eight Africans. Of this population, 52 would be female, at least 70 would be non-white, 59% of the world's wealth would belong to six people, all six people would be citizens of the U.S., 80 would live in sub-standard housing, 70 would be unable to read, 50 would suffer from malnutrition, only one would have a college education (Pedersen, 2000).

In addition to the sheer scope and complexity of current global challenges, there is the problem posed by their time-compressed speed and unpredictability. We now speak of specific syndromes of distress and disorder associated with this problem, such as future shock, culture shock, alienation/ anomie, acculturation stress, meaninglessness, rootlessness, and identity confusion. We speak of societal and group disorders such as cultural disintegration, cultural dislocation, ethnic cleansing, social disillusionment, sick societies, urban blight and decay, social fragmentation, cults, endemic crime and violence, and cultural abuse and collapse (Marsella, 1998).

Clearly, our response to this challenge as individuals and societies will shape the nature, quality, and meaning of our lives in the coming century. And our response to this challenge as counseling psychologists will shape the definition, identity, growth, and survival of our profession and discipline. The key to counseling psychology's response resides in its willingness *to internationalize the curriculum* so that psychologists—especially those from North America and Northern Europe—can develop the new competencies necessary to meet the challenges of our times.

Internationalizing the psychology counseling curriculum will be no easy matter. The biggest impediment may well be the ethnocentricity of Western academic and professional psychologists, many of whom seem to have little awareness or sympathy for altering a psychology curriculum that both reflects and supports their personal values, epistemologies, praxiologies, and training cultures. Indeed, there appears to be a reluctance among many of these psychologists to accept a very basic 'truth'—that western psychology is rooted in an ideology of individualism, rationality, and empiricism that has little resonance in many of the more than 5,000 cultures found in today's world (Marsella, 1998). The curriculum challenge also extends to international students coming to the United States or Europe for study (Arthur, 2004). This is because there is a felt sense of unreality to what they are taught. Their own culturally constituted

experiences and psychologies are either devalued, ignored, or misunderstood. This is also true for many American minority group students. Ask an American Indian, Pacific Islander, Asian, Black, or Hispanic student if much of what they are taught in psychology is consistent or applicable to their realities. Marsella (2000), wrote:

> Yet we continue in psychology to proceed without making the training changes necessary to improve the accuracy and validity of our course work, oblivious to the consequences of our actions. Our own power and position has blinded us to the limitations and faults of our knowledge. We pass off as science, data that has little validity for most of the world's population. We speak confidently of clinical diagnostic, assessment, and therapeutic procedures that lack relevance and may well result in victimization of our clients because of minimal cultural and international equivalencies. How can this be? How can our own scientific orientation in the West which is supposedly committed to constant inquiry, doubt, and toleration of uncertainty result in such widespread insensitivity to its assumptions, methods, applications, and conclusions? (Marsella, 2000, p. 7)

It is our opinion that our training will need to be more multicultural, multisectoral, multinational, and multidisciplinary. We will need constantly to be aware of the importance of developing new western psychologies, indigenous psychologies, and syncretic psychologies that resist the hegemonic imposition or privileged positioning of any psychology because of its powerful economic, political, or cultural context. The interesting fact is that even as we speak of educating our students, it will also be necessary to educate our faculty. Cultural awareness training as well as formal academic coursework will be a critical part of continuing education. Clearly, we need a revolution in thought and practice. Marsella (1998) proposed the term 'global-community psychology', which he contends will require a re-evaluation of psychology's fundamental premises, methods and practices toward constructing a new meta-discipline of 'global psychology'. Marsella (1998) proposed suggested that a 'global-community psychology' be defined as 'a set of premises, methods and practices for psychology based on multicultural, multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral and multinational foundations that are global in interest, scope, relevance and applicability' (Marsella, 1998, p. 1282).

Counseling curriculum bias and the new western paradigms

There are many reasons why internationalism is presently minimalized in the counseling psychology curriculum. Some of our colleagues believe that the international applications of counseling are not relevant to the practice of counseling in the United States. Other colleagues believe that an international perspective is too broad and that the diffusion of attention would be inconvenient to the counseling profession as it exists in the United States, regardless of any other benefits. Still others are overtly hostile to an international perspective because they feel it may weaken the profession and make it appear as if much of what we do is invalid, biased, and possibly destructive. Counseling has a reputation among many minorities as protecting the status quo from the dominant culture by requiring the client to adapt to the

system even when that system is acknowledged to be unjust. These attitudes have resulted in documented examples of scientific racism (Sue & Sue, 1999). In any case, the resources for internationalizing the curriculum in counseling psychology are readily available and underutilized, and we know that our students and future generations will be held responsible for practicing counseling in a global context, whether they like it or not.

Western values and mental health

As other cultures around the world become consumers of psychological services they are re-framing the assumptions of textbook psychology to better fit their indigenous cultural contexts. As the field of psychology becomes more of a global phenomenon, indigenous assumptions that complement and compete with one another need to be incorporated into psychology textbooks. Lewis-Fernandez and Kleinman (1994) concluded that three culture-bound assumptions regarding mental health are deeply rooted within North American values: (1) the egocentricity of the self, where individuals are seen as self-contained and autonomous units whose behaviour is determined by a unique configuration of internal attributes; (2) the mind–body dualism, which separates psychological and physical problems; and (3) the assumption that culture is a vague and arbitrary superimposition on the otherwise 'knowable biological reality'.

New paradigm assumptions

Kuhn (1970) expressed the belief that a major paradigm shift will occur when scientific theories cannot adequately account for ideas, concepts or data and when some new competing perspective, better accommodates these data. Elements of analytical reductionism in psychology and counseling seem to be moving toward a more holistic, culturally inclusive and integrative approach that recognizes how people from all populations are both similar and different at the same time. In that regard the dual emphasis on both the universal and the particular becomes complementary and necessarily joined in a combined explanation.

Mahoney and Patterson (1992) describe the new paradigm as a cognitive revolution with an inter-disciplinary perspective in which human behaviour is described as reciprocal and interactive rather than linear and unidirectional. Smith, Harre and Van Langenhove (1995) describe the new perspective of psychology as advocating tolerance of ambiguity rather than dissonance reduction, multi-dimensional reality rather than uni-dimensionalism, the validity of subjective as well as objective proof and the recognition of cultural bias by the dominant culture in the applications of psychology. They contrast the new paradigms with the old paradigms in psychology. They argue that the new paradigms emphasize (1) understanding and description of a context more than just measuring variables; (2) predicting consequences more than causation; (3) social significance more than statistical significance; (4) language and discourse more than numerical reductionism; (5) holistic perspectives more than atomistic trivia; (6) complex interacting particulars more than simplistic universals; and (7) subjectively derived meaning more than objectively imposed meanings.

Cultural encapsulation

Wrenn (1962) first introduced the concept of cultural encapsulation. This perspective assumes five basic identifying features. First, reality is defined according to one set of cultural assumptions. Second, people become insensitive to cultural variations among individuals and assume their own view is the only right one. Third, assumptions are not dependent on reasonable proof or rational consistency but are believed true, regardless of evidence to the contrary. Fourth, solutions are sought in technique-oriented strategies and quick or simple remedies. Fifth, everyone is judged from the viewpoint of one's self-reference criteria without regard for the other person's separate cultural context. The encapsulation has not diminished over time. There is evidence that the profession of counseling is even more encapsulated now than it was when Wrenn (1962) wrote his original article (Wrenn, 1985).

An example of North American psychology's encapsulation is evident in the published research. Gielen (1994) contends that American psychology routinely neglects international research even when the research is in English, in contrast with the hard sciences where international research reports are more routinely included. Rosensweig (1992) estimates that about forty to forty-five percent of all psychological researchers live outside the USA and that their research is vastly under-represented in US professional psychology journals. Psychology is growing faster outside than within the US and in the near future more published research on professional psychology will be produced outside than within the US, leaving the professional field of psychology in the US encapsulated by domestic concerns.

Challenging conventional assumptions

Psychology in general, and counseling psychology in particular, have been characterized by conventional assumptions that reflect the values and priorities of the Euro-American cultural context, from which the field of psychology originated as a professional field of activity. Ten examples (Pedersen, 2000) of these assumptions demonstrate their pervasive influence in applications of textbook psychology:

1. 'Psychologists all share the same unimodal measure of what is normal behaviour'. There is a frequent assumption that describing a person's behaviour as 'normal' reflects a judgment both meaningful and representative of a desired pattern of culture-specific behaviours across social, economic, political and cultural contexts.
2. 'Individuals are the basic building blocks of society'. This presumption is reflected in the psychological terms such as personality, self-awareness, etc. Conventional psychology is primarily focused on the development of individuals rather than collectivities or groups, such as the family, the organization or society itself.
3. 'Only problems defined within the framework of the psychologist's specialized expertise or academic discipline are of proper professional concern to the psychologist'. There is a tendency to isolate the professional identity of the psychologist from that of other professionals even though multicultural problems wander across these boundaries freely.

4. 'There is a superior quality judgment attached to psychological abstractions'. In the psychologist's use of professional jargon we assume that the same words have the same meaning across cultural contexts. While this assumption is typical of a 'low context' culture in which the context is less relevant, it would not apply to 'high context' cultures in which all meaning is contextually mediated.

5. 'Independence is usually desirable and dependence is usually not desirable'. As part of the Western emphasis on individualism, there is a belief that individuals should not be dependent on others or allow others to become dependent on them. This is not the case in a more collectivistic culture.

6. 'Clients are helped more by formal and professional counseling than by their natural support systems'. Family and peer support are the primary resources in many cultures where professional counseling is less available or is inappropriate. In some non-Western cultures counseling is a last resort only when everything else has failed.

7. 'Everyone thinks the same way, moving linearly from cause to effect'. It is not just the content of our thinking that is culturally mediated but the very process of thinking itself. Nonlinear thinking, typical of many non-Western cultures, will seem illogical to linear thinkers.

8. 'Counselors need to change clients to fit the system and not change the system to fit the client'. Advocacy by counselors is frequently considered unethical and unprofessional. Much of the counseling literature relates to client adjustment, sometimes even when the system is wrong and the client is right.

9. 'History is not relevant for a proper understanding of here-and-now problems'. Counselors are more likely to focus on the immediate here-and-now events that created a crisis and consider historical background as a distraction at best and a defensive evasion at worst.

10. 'We already know all of our culturally learned assumptions'. Each time we discover one of our cultural biases we disprove this assumption. As we increase our contact with persons and groups from other cultures, this process of self-discovery is accelerated.

Thus, what is occurring within the context of emerging Western paradigms is a increased recognition of the role of culture as a determinant behaviour and of the importance of culture in constructing and creating alternative realities that differ with regard to their values and with regard to their views of the nature of personhood, reductionism, materialism, competition, and empiricism. In addition, the new paradigms have legitimated research methods that emphasize qualitative, subjective, and phenomenological accounts and narratives.

Fifty ways to internationalize the curriculum

So, what doe we do to make counseling psychology relevant, accurate, and meaningful for our new global community? Marsella (1998, 1999) and Marsella and Pedersen (2002) proposed the following actions for internationalizing the curriculum under

the banner: 'Fifty Ways to Internationalize Psychology'. The 'ways' involve actions to be taken by the American Psychological Association and by academic departments. Within the departments, the actions are divided into three categories: philosophical orientations, curriculum changes, and extra-curriculum activities.

I. American psychological association:

- Develop a mission statement that reflects a commitment to 'internationalizing' the curriculum;
- Designate a special administrator to coordinate and evaluate efforts in this area;
- Finance the development of curriculum materials;
- Finance a limited number of international faculty and student exchanges;
- Develop an international journal of clinical and counseling psychology;
- Establish a special website for 'internationalizing' the curriculum;
- Sponsor international meetings to address the issue of 'internationalizing' the curricula;
- Obtain external funding for international exchanges and award APA Fellowships in this area;
- Subsidize the purchase of foreign psychology journals and books;
- Sponsor a special university network that will develop research methods and projects relevant to 'internationalizing' psychology.

II. Departments of psychology mission statements, orientations, values

- Increase awareness of the social, political, historical, and cultural determinants of all the psychologies, and thus, of their contextual biases and relativity;
- Identify and teach the psychological basis of the complex and interdependent global web of economic, political, social, technical and environmental events, forces and changes going on;
- Recognize that our response to internationalization will shape psychology's identity, growth, and survival as a discipline and profession;
- Incorporate cultural explanations of human behaviour into explanatory models and theories;
- Expand the repertoire of professional and research and inquiry approaches and especially to increase the use of cross-cultural research methods and 'qualitative' methods;
- Focus on global problems (i.e., centers for . . .);
- Value and encourage multidisciplinary, multisectoral, multinational, and multicultural approaches;
- Include social justice, equity, and universal human rights issues and concerns;
- Include cultural, biological, and environmental diversity and sustainability;
- Include appropriate spirituality issues (i.e., human capacity for awe, reverence, connection, interdependency) in course material;

- Hire minority and international faculty;
- Review the applications of psychology to non-conventional training settings such as refugee camps, disaster settings, homeless shelters, street gangs, slums, impoverished villages;
- Study the psychological consequences of alternative intellectual perspectives inclusively to include post-modernism, social constructivism, feminist theory and cultural stress theories.

III. Department of psychology: curriculum

- Infuse global perspectives in all courses by acknowledging the global implications of course goals and material;
- Encourage academic minor concentrations that focus on global problems (e.g., poverty, ethno-political warfare, population);
- Using global resources via the internet;
- Addressing global problems through term papers and collaborative class projects;
- Providing cross-cultural training and cultural sensitivity training;
- Develop ability to assess one's own multicultural competence through both self-evaluation and through more systematic assessment methods;
- Develop ability to evaluate alternative concepts, methods, and results with regard to the cultural context in which they are applied and derived.;
- Offer credit for international practicum experiences (e.g., working in refugee camps);
- Requiring foreign language competency;
- Encourage faculty to team teach courses with international content, and to form multidisciplinary learning communities on global problems;
- Requiring a course in global and international problems;
- Increasing use of distance education to form collaborative international training and research programs;
- Promote an understanding of ethnic, cultural and international variations in psychopathology, especially the culture-bound disorders;
- Develop student ability to assess one's own multicultural competence;
- Become familiar with indigenous healers;
- Understand the psychological consequences of world citizenship.

IV. Departments of psychology: extra-curricular activities

- Increase international faculty and student exchanges;
- Form collaborative training and research programs with foreign universities;
- Improve the integration of foreign students in departmental and university life;
- Celebrate the missions and contributions of international organizations (e.g., UN, UNICEF, International Red Cross) through displays;
- Provide certificates in cross-cultural training and understanding;

- Invite international guest speakers;
- Encourage foreign travel and study abroad.

V. Universities

- Support foreign language dormitories;
- Link universities, businesses, and government sectors in international networks of activities.

Closing thoughts

Think of this list of fifty strategies as a list of starting points for guiding the inevitable change in how counseling psychology will be taught in the future. If mainstream psychology is to become more global and less culturally encapsulated several changes will be required (Gielen, 1994). First, textbooks need to incorporate examples from a variety of societies. Second, textbooks need to introduce cross-cultural perspectives throughout the text. Third, psychological theories need to be routinely contextualised in a cross-cultural framework. Fourth, psychological theories need to be consistently understood in their historical context. Fifth, US journals need to invite more international Editors authors and advisors. Sixth, US journals need to cite more relevant literature outside the US. Seventh, textbooks need to be jointly authored by persons from different cultures. Eighth, institutional support and funding for collaborative research across cultural and national boundaries needs to become more available.

There are several trends that give rise to optimism. Rosensweig (1992) has pointed out that psychology and psychological publications are growing much more rapidly outside the US than within the US. Second, all fields are becoming more global in their focus as a result of new technologies. Third, there is a multicultural movement in the social sciences that has increased attention to cultural issues. Fourth, the topic of cultural and multicultural issues has become more widely accepted in psychological meetings and publications. Fifth, the APA journals have included articles on a regular basis where there is a re-examination of cultural bias in psychological services.

Leong and Blustein (2000) discuss how exploring psychological perspectives that have developed outside the framework of North American experiences will give us a clearer understanding of how culture frames our assumptions. Some of the most dangerous assumptions about culture and human behaviour have resulted from an insulation or isolation among counselors and psychological researchers. One such assumption implies that all good and usable knowledge in psychology emerges from North American and/or that all knowledge is universal have increasingly been critiqued from a variety of vantage points (Kim & Berry, 1993). By deconstructing psychology in a variety of cultural contexts we will not only enhance the development of psychology outside the US but within American society as well (Cheung, 2000).

In brief, we call upon counseling psychologists throughout the world to dialogue, to exchange views and actual positions, to learn the challenges facing our world, and in the process, to create a new professional and global consciousness that can advance our field, resolve problems, and restore dignity. It is within our capability to do so! It is our responsibility to do so! We are reminded here of the words of Vaclav Havel (1997), who wrote:

> For the real question is whether the 'brighter future' is really always so distant. What if, on the contrary, it has been there for a long time already, and only our blindness and weakness has prevented us from seeing it around us and within us, and kept us from developing it? (Havel, 1987, p. 122)

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