

Book Review / Compte rendu

Arthur, N., & Collins, S. (2010). *Culture-Infused Counselling* (2nd ed.). *Le counselling tenant compte des références culturelles* (2ième éd). Calgary, AB: Counselling Concepts. ISBN: 978-0-9738085-1-3, 524 pages.

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ABSTRACT

Culture-Infused Counselling is the second edition of Arthur and Collins's text, originally published in 2005. The book treats culture as ubiquitous, and advocates an approach to counselling that is "culture-infused" in the sense that practitioners never step *out* of culture to engage in any of their professional activities, including counselling, supervising, teaching, consulting, assessing, and researching. This edition is significantly revised to include new material addressing the complexities of cultural identity and an additional chapter on the role of social justice and advocacy in counselling. *Culture-Infused Counselling* verges on encyclopedic in scope and is a key and valuable resource with a distinctly Canadian focus.

RÉSUMÉ

Culture-Infused Counselling est la deuxième édition de l'ouvrage d'Arthur et Collins, initialement publié en 2005. Ce livre traite de la culture comme étant omniprésente et préconise une approche au counseling de type « culture infusé », c'est-à-dire que les praticiens ne peuvent *sortir* de cette culture pour s'engager dans leurs activités professionnelles, notamment le counseling, la supervision, l'enseignement, la consultation, l'évaluation, et la recherche. Cette édition est sensiblement révisée afin d'y inclure de nouveaux éléments à propos des complexités de l'identité culturelle et un chapitre supplémentaire sur le rôle de la justice sociale de même qu'un plaidoyer en faveur du counseling. *Culture-Infused Counselling* a une visée encyclopédique et constitue une ressource clé de grande valeur distinguée par une perspective typiquement canadienne.

This is the revised second edition of Arthur and Collins's 2005 edited volume, *Culture-Infused Counselling*. The authors, both counselling psychologists and counsellor educators, have collaborated for several years on initiatives focused on the provision of services to non-dominant populations, including international students, women, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and questioning community. This book, like its predecessor, introduces theory and practice for counselling and research with diverse populations, set against a uniquely Canadian historical and legislative backdrop.

Unlike some revised collections that feature mostly updated introductions and afterwords, this volume has been substantially reworked by both the editors and the contributors—a diverse, pan-Canadian collection of practitioners and academics. New chapters have been added and original ones revised and tightened

up to accommodate a total of three additional chapters within roughly the same number of pages.

The book's first section is devoted to a conceptual overview and does a skillful job of emphasizing the distinction between "infusing" practice with a sensitivity to culture and treating multiculturalism as a sort of variable to consider with certain visibly "ethnic" or "minority" clients. The authors argue that culture is ubiquitous and that "no person or group can be fully understood in the absence of a purposeful inquiry into culture" (p. v). The authors make good on this claim by sharing vignettes and anecdotes from their own experience, and ensuring that all contributors situate themselves at the outset of their chapters. Arthur and Collins also draw on examples from their own professional backgrounds to emphasize a related point about the scope of "culture," showing that it not only pertains to all client groups, but deserves careful consideration across all *contexts* in which counsellors work as well. This includes therapeutic practice, supervision, research, administration, and counsellor education.

The opening chapters do an effective job of contextualizing the material within a Canadian setting, reminding readers that counselling practice always unfolds within a broader context that inescapably influences what goes on in face-to-face conversations. Arthur and Collins provide a historical account of Canada's uneven journey toward a multicultural identity, highlighting important legislative milestones in relation to First Nations, bilingualism, and human rights. While carefully documenting progress in various areas, the authors are not afraid to point to domains where progress is seriously needed. At times, the book is a painful reminder of Canada's shockingly phlegmatic response to serious domestic issues of racism, inequity, and oppression.

This updated version of *Culture-Infused Counselling* includes a more nuanced conceptual account of culture and cultural identity than did its predecessor. These are challenging constructs, and they run the risk of categorizing persons into tidily homogeneous subgroups purportedly linked by uniform values, beliefs, rituals, and traditions. The revised first section of this text and new chapters added to the section on counselling practice help to avoid this slippery slope by emphasizing the multiplicity of cultural identity and acknowledging the sometimes paradoxical nature of describing within-group similarities while simultaneously proclaiming the uniqueness of each individual.

The opening section offers the authors' framework for culture-infused counselling competencies: (a) Cultural Self-Awareness, (b) Awareness of Client Cultural Identities, and (c) Culturally Sensitive Working Alliance. Using a variety of charts and diagrams, these are cross-referenced with the more familiar counselling competency domains of Attitudes and Beliefs, Knowledge, and Skills. The result is an occasionally dizzying taxonomy—impressive in scope, but also cognitively demanding because it involves holding several interpenetrating subcategories in mind simultaneously. At times one can get lost within the multiple levels, which unpack like so many matryoshka dolls, one nested inside another. At the same time, this meticulous attention to categorizing competencies ensures that the text

avoids a failing common across the multicultural counselling literature: namely, the endless repetition of platitudes about striving for “cultural sensitivity” without a corresponding articulation of what it takes to get there.

One timely addition to this opening section is a chapter on social justice and counselling. The topic is increasingly gaining attention, in no small part due to Arthur and Collins’s thoughtful contributions to the field. They make the point that although the multicultural counselling literature does a good job of highlighting differences between and within cultural groups and of alerting practitioners to attend to the ways they differ from their clients, “[i]t falls short of efforts to overcome some of the social inequities that adversely impact persons from non-dominant groups” (p. 142). The chapter includes a list of social justice advocacy competencies as well as a useful framework for “cultural auditing”—that is, reflexive examination of one’s work with individual clients, groups, and systems.

The second section covers three useful topics not tied to any particular demographic—ethics, assessment, and research—before the book moves to an expanded section devoted to intervening with specific cultural subgroups. As mentioned, this section includes new chapters to explore “multiplicity” and “hybridity” of identity. These are welcome additions to counteract a familiar occupational hazard associated with multicultural counselling: the tendency to “essentialize” or stereotype people and the groups they are identified with, which leads to unrealistically formulaic recipes for intervention. For the most part, the section’s chapters do a good job of avoiding that, introducing readers to issues and concerns associated with clients of various demographics without painting the lines too sharply: First Nations, Immigrants and Refugees, Girls and Women, Lesbian Women, Gay Men, and International Students. Missing is a chapter on working with men more generally. That would help to balance the list, although admittedly it is an open question due to space considerations as to which targeted subgroups merit inclusion in such a book; socioeconomic class and physical disability are also missing here.

The focus on non-dominant populations featured in the eight chapters of this section is an important component of any text devoted to culturally sensitive practice, despite the risks of pigeonholing. After all, some tentatively held foreknowledge of a person’s general background is as important a sign of respect and professionalism as is an attitude of curiosity that conveys to clients that there is no one quite like them in the world.

What I find somewhat lacking here (and, I’d like to emphasize, in virtually all of the “multicultural counselling” literature that I am familiar with) are illustrative examples of counselling *practices* that help to embody the well-articulated principles cited throughout the text. For example, within the domain of *culturally-sensitive working alliance* is nestled a category called *skills*, and among this list is *validate the cultural strengths of clients*. This articulates an aspiration, but does not demonstrate the actual conversational practices for achieving it. In my experience, a range of well-established counselling approaches focused on client competence such as collaborative, solution-focused, and narrative therapies offers a wide swath of specific interventions ideally suited to “operationalizing” many of the

principles detailed in the text. This does raise the question of space, however: the book is already encyclopedic in its current form. Perhaps this raises the prospect of a companion volume.

The book's fourth section comprises just one chapter, a look-ahead that reinforces some dominant themes and introduces new ones, such as the importance of collaboration at the levels of both practice and theory among practitioners who too often work in silos devoted to specific client populations (e.g., multi-ethnic clients versus LGBTTQ populations). As a counsellor educator teaching Multicultural Counselling to graduate students, I have found this book rich and provocative, replete with personal reflections, clinical vignettes, lists, charts, vocabulary guides, competency frameworks ... the list could go on.

Arthur and Collins combine a passionate advocacy for marginalized persons with a scholarly and disciplined examination of the cultural, theoretical, and practical context of counselling. This revised edition consolidates the book's standing as one of the key sources in the field.

About the Author

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