

Book Review / Compte rendu

Paré, D. A. (2013). *The practice of collaborative counseling and psychotherapy: Developing skills in culturally mindful helping*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. ISBN: 978-1-4129-9509-2. 477 pages

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ABSTRACT

The Practice of Collaborative Counseling and Psychotherapy: Developing Skills in Culturally Mindful Helping encourages active learning for readers by using reflections, vignettes, discussions, chapter summaries, and experiential exercises. Each story-like chapter is laden with rich insights on the counsellor-client relationship that is informed by relevant and current theoretical approaches to counselling practices. The book is written from a narrative perspective, which may be a drawback for those readers who find this approach to be esoteric. Nonetheless, Paré offers practical and theoretical skills framed within the narrative perspective.

RÉSUMÉ

The Practice of Collaborative Counseling and Psychotherapy: Developing Skills in Culturally Mindful Helping [La pratique collaborative de counseling et psychothérapie : Développement de compétences d'aidant culturellement conscient] encourage l'apprentissage actif chez les lecteurs en utilisant des réflexions, des vignettes, des discussions, des résumés de chapitres, et des exercices expérientiels. Chaque chapitre est comme une histoire et chargé d'indications précieuses sur la relation conseiller-client à base d'approches théoriques actuelles et pertinentes aux pratiques de conseil. Écrit d'un point de vue narratif—ce qui peut être un inconvénient pour les lecteurs qui trouvent cette approche ésotérique—ce livre de Paré offre néanmoins des compétences pratiques et théoriques dans un cadre narratif.

In his book, *The Practice of Collaborative Counseling and Psychotherapy*, David Paré encourages the integration of cultural mindfulness through collaborative practice. A relatively unique feature of the text is that it incorporates the voices of graduate counselling students in training, which makes it a useful resource for many students and counsellor educators. Further, Paré's volume blends theory, research, and practice, drawing from his professional expertise in narrative work as an experienced psychologist, family therapist, and associate professor of educational counselling in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa.

The text is divided into five sections. In the first section, *Preparing for Practice*, Paré argues that culture should always be considered in a counselling context; specifically, culture must not be understood from a Western perspective but from a broader concept that embraces inclusivity, collaboration, and diversity. The concept of culture is explored by drawing on the lived realities of individuals, such as Maria, who acts as both counsellor and client throughout the text. By using Maria as an example in both roles, Paré effectively demonstrates the mutual benefit of collaborative counselling. The author further focuses on the meaning-making process within the therapeutic

relationship, where clients and counsellors are conversational partners engaging in collaborative dialogue.

Section 2, *Constructing a Foundation for Collaboration*, offers insight into essential values for nurturing the counselling and psychotherapeutic relationship: respect, acceptance, empathy, caring, and safety. Paré highlights the need for counsellors to develop subtler receiving and listening skills. These skills allow counsellors to be present with clients and to demonstrate empathy and compassion. Paré further notes that silence should not be avoided, as it can be a positive strategy to embrace by strengthening the dynamic of the therapeutic alliance.

Within Section 3, *Mapping Clients' Experience*, the author prompts counsellors to exercise cultural curiosity when engaging with clients, and to be mindful of the nuances underlying language. He draws readers' attention to the complexity and multilayered nature of dialogical conversations. Paré urges counsellors to be aware of and reject the power differential role of the perceived expert, which their clients often accord to them. Only by adopting a non-expert stance can counsellors mindfully respond to and confirm their clients' meanings. By utilizing such techniques as restating, paraphrasing, confirming understanding explicitly and implicitly, recapping, and summarizing, counsellors may develop a shared understanding with clients of how meanings are coordinated and co-constructed.

The fourth section, *Assessing Challenges, Preferences, and Opportunities*, offers counsellors explicit directions about their roles within a collaborative relationship that help them move beyond passive to active engagement with clients. Paré emphasizes that counsellors should approach clients' problem-saturated narratives with a sense of purposefulness, beginning with defining the problem and journeying toward a preferred outcome. He prompts counsellors to see clients as relational beings, separate from their problem-saturated stories. Thus, counsellors should avoid diagnostic labelling and pathologizing of clients, an understanding that fits within the narrative social constructionist framework that Paré espouses. The author also discusses useful tools for co-authoring and meaning-making, which include internalizing and externalizing conversations and the miracle question. These tools help to define the problem, generate preferred outcomes, and evaluate challenges and competencies. Further, Paré calls on counsellors to shift their understanding of assessment from a westernized perspective that often focuses on the individual in isolation to a more holistic perspective that considers clients' socioecological factors across multiple contexts.

The final section, *Promoting Change*, culminates in principles and skills that stress critical reflection to produce generative change in the client. Paré invites counsellors to engage in critical self-reflection, as this process may collaboratively influence clients to use their resourcefulness to develop a sense of personal agency. He briefly addresses theoretical models to reinforce that no one model supersedes another in addressing all clients' lived experiences; counsellors should be culturally mindful of clients' thoughts and beliefs, as well as their feelings and values, and use the model that best facilitates change toward preferred outcomes. He stresses that working with thoughts and their associated actions help to highlight the importance of the clients' behavioural patterns, such as negative self-talk. Through conversational practices,

clients are likely to deconstruct some of these behavioural patterns by identifying them, evaluating their impact, and developing alternatives that link to change. To assist in their desire to change, the author suggests that clients may benefit from recording and tracking their problematic self-talk.

Similarly, Paré challenges counsellors to reflect on their own emotions, particularly those evoked within the therapeutic relationship. The narrative and collaborative framework of this text allows Paré to address the craft of storytelling, particularly how clients position themselves in their cultural worlds. He points out that during therapeutic conversations, stories are frequently linked to certain sociocultural discourses, recommending that counsellors deconstruct these discourses to address problem narratives and then reconstruct preferred narratives. This section concludes by addressing the ambivalence of beginning and ending therapy. Ending therapy is compared to a rite of passage; it signifies another key transition that should be valued and celebrated, instead of mourned. In collaboration with clients, Paré suggests the possibility of inviting witnesses to this last session or of utilizing documentations, similar to Michael White and David Epton's work with their practices of therapeutic letters. Some clients find such tools offer deeper insights into their growth and changes, thus affirming their sense of personal agency.

Paré's longstanding interest and established works in narrative and postmodern therapies help to ground his ideas around collaborative counselling and psychotherapy. The text presents a global concept of culture, which transcends westernized thinking and offers a multiplicity of perspectives. This cultural shift fosters a better understanding for counsellors who need to develop culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills in order to provide culturally appropriate counselling for diverse populations.

However, in this book Paré overlooks specific dimensions of culture, such as sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, spirituality, and religion. These dimensions are not unpacked within this global cultural concept. Readers—like myself—who are interested in these aspects of culture would need to use other counselling resources to augment their culturally specific narrative practice. Also, the narrative language of the book may be challenging for readers who lack grounding in a postmodern social constructionist framework.

Nonetheless, Paré is successful overall in communicating some key principles and practical ideas to increase readers' cultural mindfulness, while facilitating collaborative counselling and psychotherapy with clients. Readers who are interested in expanding their knowledge of narrative work, as well as graduate students who wish to advance their counselling competencies in narrative techniques and concepts, are likely to see this text as being a valuable resource.

About the Author

Sandra Dixon is a PhD candidate in Educational Studies in Counselling Psychology, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary. Her main research interests are spirituality, religiosity, multicultural counselling, social justice, and ethno-cultural issues.

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