Counselling in a multicultural society

Edited by

Stephen Palmer

&

Pittu Laungani

Counselling in a Multicultural Society

Counselling in a Multicultural Society

EDITED BY
STEPHEN PALMER
AND
PITTU LAUNGANI

SAGE Publications
London • Thousand Oaks • New Delhi

Editorial arrangement and Introduction Stephen Palmer and Pittu Laungani 1999
Chapter 1 © Don Rawson, Graham Whitehead and Mohan Luthra 1999
Chapter 2 © Pittu Laungani 1999
Chapter 3 © Fred Roach 1999
Chapter 4 © Waseem Alladin 1999
Chapter 5 © Zack Eleftheriadou 1999
Chapter 6 © Pittu Laungani 1999
Chapter 7 © Stephen Palmer 1999
Chapter 8 © Stephen Palmer 1999

First published 1999

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Publishers.

SAGE Publications Ltd
6 Bonhill Street
London EC2A 4PU

SAGE Publications Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320

SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
32, M-Block Market
Greater Kailash – I
New Delhi 110 048

British Library Cataloguing in Publication data

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

ISBN 0 7619 5064 8
ISBN 0 7619 5065 6 (pbk)

Library of Congress catalog card number 98–75103

Typeset by Mayhew Typesetting, Rhayader, Powys
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Athenaeum Press, Gateshead

To Maggie and Ann

CONTENTS

Contributors ix

Introduction: Counselling in a Multicultural Society 1
Stephen Palmer and Pittu Laungani

1 The Challenges of Counselling in a Multicultural Society 6
Don Rawson, Graham Whitehead and Mohan Luthra

2 Culture and Identity: Implications for Counselling 35
Pittu Laungani

3 Culture, Counselling and Racial Issues 71
Fred Roach

4 Models of Counselling and Psychotherapy for a Multiethnic Society 90
Waseem Alladin

5 Assessing the Counselling Needs of the Ethnic Minorities in Britain 113
Zack Eleftheriadou

6 Client Centred or Culture Centred Counselling? 133
Pittu Laungani

7 In Search of Effective Counselling Across Cultures 153
Stephen Palmer

8 Developing an Individual Counselling Programme: a Multimodal Perspective 174
Stephen Palmer

Afterword 203

Appendix 1 Recommended Reading 204

Appendix 2 Cross-cultural Counselling and Psychotherapy Centres and Other Relevant Organizations 206

Index 208

CONTRIBUTORS

Waseem Alladin is Chief Editor of *Counselling Psychology Quarterly: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* and an Associate Member of the Institute of Directors. He is a consultant clinical and counselling psychologist with the East Yorkshire Community Healthcare Trust, Beverley, where he is the specialist in cognitive therapy. He is an Honorary Fellow in Clinical Psychology, PsyD Clinical Course, School of Medicine, University of Hull. He is also Director of the Centre for Couple, Marital and Sex Therapy. His current interests are in transcultural medicine, hypnosis, cognitive therapy for social dysfunction and forensic neuropsychology.

Zack Eleftheriadou, MSc, MA, Dip. Infant Mental Health, UKCP Reg. Psychotherapist, is a Chartered Counselling Psychologist and Psychotherapist. She works in private practice in North London entitled Noema Psychotherapy and Counselling Service. She is the coordinator of the Cross-Cultural Counselling and Psychotherapy course at Regent's College and course tutor for the Counselling for Refugees course at Birkbeck College, University of London. She has published widely, including the recent book *Transcultural Counselling*. She is currently completing a research project on children's representations of culture through drawings.

Pittu Laungani PhD is an Associate Professor in Psychology at South Bank University, London. His research interests are in the field of cross-cultural psychology, and over the years he has published more than 50 research papers in academic journals, contributed several book chapters on topics related to identity, mental illness, therapy, counselling, stress, death and bereavement, child abuse, health and illness – all of them from a cross-cultural perspective. He has also written and edited several books, including *Death and Bereavement Across Cultures*, published by Routledge in 1997, and a play entitled *The Strange Affliction of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, which was published by the British Psychological Society Division of Counselling Psychology in 1997. His book *India and England: a Psychocultural Analysis* is due out in 1998, and a new play,

entitled 'Pillars of Society', had its world premiere in Melbourne in August 1998.

Mohan Luthra (Manmohan S. Luthra) has worked in local government for a number of years and has been a senior education officer. He has also been research fellow and principal lecturer at Brunel and South Bank Universities respectively. Currently he works at West London Leadership as Regeneration Manager.

Stephen Palmer PhD is Director of the Centre for Stress Management and the Centre for Multimodal Therapy in London, and is an Honorary Senior Clinical and Research Fellow at City University. He is a Chartered Psychologist (counselling and health), a UKCP registered psychotherapist and a health educator specializing in stress management and counselling. He is a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and the Royal Society of Arts. During the period 1998–99 he is Chair of the Institute of Health Promotion and Education. He edits three book series in the field of stress counselling and psychotherapy, including the new *Brief Therapy* series (published by Sage).

Fred Roach, PhD, AFBPsS, CPsychol, is a Consultant Forensic Clinical Psychologist and Head of Psychology Specialty for Forensic Psychology Services within the Surrey Oaklands NHS Trust. He is also Head of Psychology Specialty for Alcohol and Substance Misuse Services and is a Listed Law Society Directory Expert Witness. His therapeutic interests include cognitive behavioural therapy, brief psychotherapy and hypnosis. Dr Roach also runs a private practice offering professional supervision, counselling, psychological assessment and treatment.

Don Rawson PhD is a Chartered Psychologist and is employed as a lecturer in Counselling Psychology at City University, London. He also maintains a small private practice. With a background in social psychology, he has a special interest in mind–body problems. His publications include an analysis of health promotion theory and development of models of interprofessional working.

Graham Whitehead MSc has been working in the field of student counselling since 1990, following completion of his training at Reading University. He is currently Senior Counsellor at South Bank University in London. He works from a humanistic integrative perspective with academic interests in transcultural and transpersonal counselling and psychotherapy.

INTRODUCTION: COUNSELLING IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Stephen Palmer and Pittu Laungani

To use the well-worn cliché, the world has turned into a global village. Travel has become safe and easy, so much so, that many people live in one country and commute to work daily in another, thus adding a completely new dimension to the concept of work and travel. At the other end of this dimension, an increasing number of people in the West work from home. Those who work at home have little reason to feel deprived of the experiences enjoyed by those who travel. Multiple satellite transmissions make it possible for people to 'invite' the outside world into their homes. Moreover, by clicking their 'mouse' they are able to explore and surf through cyberspace and enjoy the exhilaration of virtual reality. It is clear that the outside world is catching up with the world inside our homes and our heads.

In the past decade people from different countries have come to Britain. There has been a steady flow of people from the European Union countries, from Eastern Europe, from the new Commonwealth countries, from Africa, from Hong Kong, and from countries in South East Asia. The persons coming to Britain have included a vast assortment of political refugees, asylum seekers, tourists and other types of 'settlers'. In addition to the newcomers, Britain, as a result of its past historical associations, has been the beneficiary of several groups of Asians (from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, East Africa, South Africa), African-Caribbeans and Africans, most of whom emigrated to Britain soon after the Second World War to set up homes in Britain.

Some politicians in Britain have expressed concern over what they see as an influx of outsiders wishing to settle in Britain. There is among some politicians a belief, shared by many others in the country, that when people migrate to Britain they ought to jettison their cultural baggage. It is believed that such a course of action will assist greatly in the rapid process of assimilation to the norms of the host country. Such a

belief is naïve, false and potentially dangerous. It is naïve because it is unworkable. It is potentially dangerous because a fiat of such a nature is in direct infringement of fundamental human rights. Such a belief also rests on the false assumption that the norms of the host country are the only ones that matter, and regardless of the kind of norms and values the outsiders might have imbibed in their own cultures, it is incumbent upon them to acquire the dominant norms of the host culture. No country or culture can claim to set up a 'gold standard' of norms and values, which the rest of the world is expected to follow.

What the proponents of the assimilationist policies keep forgetting is that people do not jettison their 'cultural baggage' when migrating to another country. What many politicians and indeed a host of other well-meaning individuals do not appreciate is that all of us are firmly rooted to our own culture. The roots run deep. They extend over several centuries. One can no more sever one's attachments to a culture than a tortoise can leave its shell. People bring with them not just their unique skills and qualifications and experiences. They bring with them their hopes, their aspirations, their ambitions, and of course their fears (known and unknown) and their uncertainties. Their own cultural beliefs and values, their traditions, their religious practices, their customs, their rites, rituals and ceremonies, their dietary practices, their family structures and, equally importantly, their own language(s) are an integral part of their upbringing. No immigrant in that sense ever travels light. No immigrant ever sheds his or her cultural legacies and acquisitions easily.

From a social psychological point of view, the mixture of cultures within the mainstream of British society provides exciting opportunities to academics, scholars, clinicians, doctors, health professionals and a host of other interested care-providers, for learning and acquiring insights into a variety of multicultural issues. For instance, several fundamental questions can be raised. How do people from different cultures bring up their own children? What constitutes child abuse in their culture? What are the parameters which they consider important in the socialization process? What are their attitudes and values towards women, towards the sick, the infirm and the elderly? What rules govern their family structures and kinship patterns? How do they grieve and mourn for their dead? How do they perceive members of the host culture, and vice versa? How do they attempt to relate to one another? To what extent do they succeed or fail to succeed in forming meaningful relationships with members of the host culture? What are the factors which lead to failures and successes? What effect do the dominant values of the host culture have on their own system of values? How far do their own values impinge upon the values of the host culture? In addition to clear psychological insights it also becomes possible to tease out the social, economic and political consequences which are likely to occur when people of different cultures, speaking different languages, imbibing different moral values, share and/or compete for available resources

related to occupations, housing, medical care, and so on. What are the short-term and long-term consequences which are likely to occur in such a culturally diverse society?

It is beyond the scope of this book to address ourselves to all the issues raised above. This book is concerned with one important feature of the broad canvas that has been painted above. It deals with the very vital issue of considering the types of counselling and psychotherapeutic services which might be offered to people of different cultures living in Britain. What are their needs? What is the best way of meeting such needs?

A book of this nature could not be the creation of one or two persons. In planning this book, the Editors decided to call upon the expertise of people working in this area, inviting each of them to share their experiences in areas of counselling and a variety of related issues surrounding this difficult yet exciting field. They have all worked in the areas of multicultural, multiethnic counselling, and are intimately conversant with the major issues surrounding this delicate and sensitive area of work. The fact that more questions have been raised than have actually been answered, is in itself commendable. Given the delicate nature of counselling, it is certainly more desirable to raise intelligent and sensitive questions which at present may be difficult to answer than provide instant answers which, upon reflection, aided by one's experience, may turn out to be false. Several profound and thought-provoking questions have been raised throughout the book.

Even within an 'ideal' monocultural setting (what constitutes ideal, remains an open question), the field of counselling is beset with known and unknown difficulties. For instance, one is not always clear whether one is *actually* helping one's clients to determine their own life goals, or whether one's involvement as a counsellor or a therapist has had any positive effects upon the psyche and the eventual behaviour of the client. Sometimes it becomes inordinately difficult to define what one means by a positive outcome. One may find that one's definition is at total variance with those of other counsellors. Although one may formulate a set of interesting hypotheses, one may not be clear as to what it is about the counselling process that leads to a positive (or negative) outcome. One feels handicapped by one's inability objectively to test those hypotheses. What complicates the problem further is the fact that there isn't any one guiding theory of counselling to which all counsellors subscribe. There are several competing and complementary theories of counselling, each with its own traceable origins, and its own sets of assumptions, its own formulations and approaches, its own methods, and its own expected outcomes. Followers of a given theoretical approach often tend to ignore if not deride other theoretical approaches. This of course makes the task of evaluating the efficacy of theories an exciting but extremely difficult proposition.

But when it comes to counselling people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds the above problems get compounded. Cross-

cultural counselling is like venturing into uncharted psychic territories. One might find oneself moving into areas about which very little is known. For instance, one may be unfamiliar with the language of the client, one may have little knowledge of the cultural background of the client, one may find that the client's 'world view' is different from the counsellor's and so on. And moreover what may be known may not, upon reflection, turn out to be anything of any significance. There are several such issues, including the cultural and the racial setting within which counselling occurs, to which competent and informed counsellors would need to be sensitized. Many of these issues which, in a sense, are integral to cross-cultural counselling, have been addressed by the experts contributing to the making of this book.

The book contains eight chapters in all. The first, written by Don Rawson, Graham Whitehead and Mohan Luthra, considers the challenges of counselling in a multicultural society. Adopting a historical approach, the chapter offers valuable explanations and insights into important terms such as culture, race, ethnicity etc., and then goes on to examine the problems of counselling in a multicultural society. Written against the backdrop of contemporary British society, the chapter presents models that would help counsellors to understand cultural diversity. To highlight the issues involved in cross-cultural counselling, the authors offer a fascinating detailed case study as an Appendix to their chapter.

The second chapter, by Pittu Laungani, considers the notion of culture from several different theoretical perspectives, and examines the manner in which culture(s) influence and impact upon the acquisition of one's identity. The chapter presents a theoretical model which allows the reader to understand the fundamental differences and similarities between Asian (Indian) cultures and Western (British) cultures in terms of their salient beliefs and values, which exercise a powerful influence on their private and social behaviours. The chapter argues that an objective knowledge of the salient features of another culture can be a valuable asset in counselling.

Fred Roach, in the third chapter, examines the entire problem of cross-cultural counselling against the backdrop of racism: personal, societal and institutionalized. The chapter highlights the major racial problems which are likely to arise in cross-cultural counselling, and offers invaluable and sensitive insights into how counsellors might be trained to deal effectively with such problems.

In Chapter 4, Waseem Alladin highlights some of the Western models of counselling, examining in the process, the underlying theoretical assumptions of such models. He then considers the question of whether a transcultural model of counselling can be accommodated within the mainstream of Western counselling. He argues that some of the features of the indigenous models of counselling may not be compatible with Western models, and proposes a unique and yet workable solution to this dilemma.

The fifth chapter, written by Zack Eleftheriadou, outlines the specific counselling needs of those who come from different racial or cultural backgrounds. The chapter illustrates how a counsellor can take into account the client's cultural context. She is acutely aware of the dangers of generalizations that can occur in undertaking such an exercise, and offers rational approaches to dealing with this very important issue. She provides an excellent overview of the multicultural population of Britain from several different perspectives, which form the basis of the further development of her main thesis.

In the sixth chapter, Pittu Laungani discusses the suitability or the adaptability of the client centred model of counselling in relation to the ethnic minorities in Britain. After discussing the origins and the main features of the client centred model, he offers a sharp critique of the model, arguing that there are inherent limitations within it which would restrict its uses on Western clients. Moreover, when used with members of ethnic minorities, the client centred model is likely to be unworkable. He then offers a culture centred model (elaborated in Chapter 2) as a replacement for the client centred model.

In Chapter 7, Stephen Palmer is concerned with the extremely important problem related to effective counselling across cultures. He discusses a variety of issues which affect one's search for effective counselling. Several pertinent arguments are raised, several theoretical orientations and empirical approaches used by counsellors in Britain and in the United States are examined. He argues that the multimodal approach, with relevant modifications, would provide counsellors with a workable model which they could use with members of ethnic minorities.

The eighth chapter, also written by Stephen Palmer, describes the multimodal model in depth, and demonstrates how a multimodal perspective, first articulated by Arnold Lazarus, can be developed in individual counselling programmes. The versatility of this programme, which allows the counsellor to modify it to 'suit' the psychological and cultural needs of the client, make it eminently workable.

Each chapter includes four suggested discussion issues to help initiate further reflection and deliberation. Lecturers and trainers may also find suitable essay subjects in some of the discussion issues. The book also provides readers with the addresses of several organizations and agencies related to counselling in Britain (see Appendix 2). It needs to be emphasized that the book offers readers a clear insight into theoretical, practical, social and applied perspectives on multicultural counselling – set against the background of contemporary British society.

1

THE CHALLENGES OF COUNSELLING IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Don Rawson, Graham Whitehead and Mohan Luthra

The practice of counselling has boomed in recent years. At the same time, counselling skills have been assimilated as an allied activity in many professions (such as social work, primary health care, education and even business consultancy). This has been attended by a proliferation of training courses offering a wide range of theoretical perspectives. Yet despite such expansion, there is cause for concern that counselling is set within a historically and culturally narrow structure. This is at odds with the increasingly multicultural society. The spread of training opportunities has evolved from a background of mostly psychodynamic, cognitive behavioural and humanistic traditions. Though these have much to offer, they are deeply embedded within a particular monocultural framework.

As McLeod (1996: 108) cogently summarizes, 'On the whole, the theory and practice of counselling and psychotherapy have served the dominant groups in society and largely ignored the problem of people who are disadvantaged against.'

Considerable demographic movement in the UK in the post-war years has resulted in transcultural communication being a necessity for many people using counselling skills. Multiculturalism demands the counselling profession expand its compass, and offer much more than is currently available.

Wrenn (1962) best describes the challenge, in positing that the transculturally competent counsellor needs to overcome 'cultural encapsulation'.

Terminology and contemporary discourses: the meaning of ethnicity, race and culture

The use of language is a sensitive area in cross-cultural studies. The term 'minority', for example, although frequently used to refer to some ethnic

groups can be construed as insensitive by people living in areas where the term is statistically incorrect and inappropriately implies being outside the mainstream and hence of less social importance. Rack (1982) promotes the term 'cosmopolitan' to replace 'ethnic minority', which has now become a euphemism for a disadvantaged group in need of help.

Ethnicity can be a euphemism for race but is more commonly used to denote common origin. The concept thus overlaps with cultural and other identities. *Race* refers primarily to inherited physical characteristics. The biological basis for differences might have some evolutionary and health interest (for example, the function of skin pigmentation in adapting to climatic differences). Since, however, the concept reduces to gross appearance (skin colour, body shape, hair type etc.), its meaning is constrained by social and political values. Its pejorative derivative 'racism' amounts to a set of beliefs that one group who are identifiable by their physical characteristics are thereby of less value or inferior to another.

Culture has pedigree as a sociological and anthropological concept. It denotes how people live their lives through their particular beliefs and social practices, including religion and family customs. The *across cultures* epithet preferred in this volume currently retains positive connotations. Sadly, however, where there is such a powerful set of social values, words can quickly cascade into negative associations. It may be that in a few years time, even the word 'culture' will be read as yet another outmoded euphemism for the same negative stereotyping.

Appropriate language selection is also an essential part of the transcultural process in counselling. This, however, is a tall order, and fear of using the wrong words, terminology and responses, no matter how well intentioned, can be all too easily misconstrued in cross-cultural communication. The reluctance of some practitioners to tackle culturally sensitive themes can no doubt be explained by this difficulty. Goldsborough (1996) asks why even the mention of equal opportunities reduces many to boredom, anger or anxiety, and concludes that awareness-raising exercises can, if badly handled, be attacking rather than challenging and supportive of change.

Terminology in this field has evolved considerably in recent years, with multiculturalism becoming a significant force in the development of academic debate and social policy. Pedersen (1996) argues that multicultural theory is a 'bottom up' social movement. That is, multiculturalism has developed as social migrations have brought different cultures together which then highlight similarities and differences. Pedersen (1996) cautions, however, that the thinking behind the label multiculturalism has as much to do with defending social, economic and political colonization as with the desire to celebrate differences.

Different terms have become current in the debate surrounding cross-cultural counselling, with influential writers advocating particular phrases. They portray a distinct emphasis in the recognition of cultural

difference. D'Ardenne and Mahtani (1989), for example, give preference for the active, reciprocal/relational and dynamic associations of *trans-cultural*. Others include *cross-cultural* (Pedersen, 1985), and *intercultural* (Kareem and Littlewood, 1992).

Subtle changes from major to minor

We are, of course, more context-bound than we think. Problems may arise where a minority cultural pattern is at variance with the dominant culture's time frame. Equally, it may offer legally sanctioned transitions which are at odds with the traditional mores of minority cultures.

Burnham (1986) also identifies problems inherent in time-related cultural patterns. For example, some of our customs are prescribed by law, such as children must attend school from the time they are 5 years old. Others, however, such as marriage and leaving home may be determined by other cultural forces. As Burnham (1986: 38) aptly summarizes, 'Such events signal cultural-specific rules.'

The greatest consequence for counsellors is to understand different practices in child rearing and the development of the family life cycle (Carter and McGoldrick, 1980). The literature on mid-life matters for different cultural groups, for example, is very sparse (Brown and Able Smith, 1996). This is significant given the advancing social demographic trend. Namely, a whole new ethnically diverse generation will soon be at the age where retirement becomes a major life transition.

Robbins (1996) reports that there is evidence that in many cultures the roles of men are changing and thus critically affecting help-seeking. The degree and pace of change, however, varies from culture to culture. Professional counselling is seen by Nigerian men as inappropriate where they support a large extended family. In Greece it is seen as an admission of weakness. This is also reflected in British regional and class differences. Northern working men are said to be similar in their attitudes to the Greeks. In the South, in contrast, middle-class men are more likely to accept the need for professional help.

Models to help counsellors understand cultural diversity

McGoldrick et al. (1982) published the first comprehensive attempt to map diverse ethnic groups in terms of cultural history, values and ethnically identifiable characteristics. In the USA a number of texts have since added to this stock of factual information on the cultural patterns of various ethnic minority groups. Little similar information has been collated in the UK (though Karmi, 1996, has been found useful, if somewhat brief). Krause and Miller (1995), however, are critical of this approach as almost being a travel guide for the counsellor to tour through the cultures of their clients.

In sounding cautions on the colonialism of psychological therapies and the implied racism of 'factual' stereotypes, Krause and Miller (1995) wish to challenge assumptions of cultural uniformity. Instead, a framework is suggested of 'good enough' transcultural understanding. As Krause and Miller express (1995: 155), 'We have no choice but to communicate with our clients through cultural codes.'

Fernando (1995) advocates a 'Relativistic multi-systemic approach' to problems of mental health and also emphasizes that culture is not fixed. Strong identification of ethnic diversity and cultural differences can lead to a view of culture as preset in a monolithic framework, whereas culture is constantly developing. Fernando (1995: 206) posits, 'culture of a group is something that "emerges" from society at large, including historical knowledge but by no means dominated by traditions.'

Most therapeutic models take little account of the complexity of relationships in the extended family. D'Ardenne and Mahtani (1989) contend that therapeutic models almost all have an emphasis on the self which undervalues the place of family and culture. The experience of clients brought up by many 'mothers' or other forms of collective child rearing practices may simply be beyond the explanatory reach of therapeutic models predicated on assumptions of dyadic parental units. Kareem (1988) describes the experience of a Nigerian client who was 'stuck' in accounting for his relationship to his mother. The client, however, had been fed by nine pairs of breasts. Cross-cultural counselling requires more than acceptance of differences, it demands knowledge and appreciation of divergent social structures and a sophisticated understanding of sociopsychological development.

In the Western world the dyadic relationship remains a significant social unit (Bubenzer and West, 1993). The nature of coupling, moreover, is voluntary, in contrast to the inherited ties and arranged alliances which sometimes characterize extended families. Against this, it should be said, some Western people, especially women, stay involuntarily in marriages because they fear the alternative; either social isolation following separation/divorce or financial disadvantage.

Models of the psychological functioning of black clients have been proposed with the aim of helping therapists improve the therapeutic process. Jones (1985), for example, proposes an interactive model for working with black clients which moves through the following stages:

1 Reactions to racial oppression.
2 Influence of the majority culture.
3 Influence of the client's culture.
4 Individual and family experiences and endowments.

Notice that the direction of exploration is opposite to the usual route of psychotherapeutic work (that is, from large macro influences towards more local influences of family). Other practical ways of engaging black

clients at the early stages of therapy have been put forwards in order to build a treatment relationship (Jenkins, 1985).

The politics of identity

Erickson (1968) proposed that identity is a construct that represents a combination of individual uniqueness plus a striving for continuity of experience and group solidarity. He went on to hypothesize that the quality of an individual's psychological adjustment was dependent upon their personal identity (that is, one's feelings and attitudes towards oneself), their reference group orientation (that is, the extent to which one uses the value systems and culture of particular groups to guide one's feelings, thoughts and behaviours) and how they ascribe identity (that is, an individual's conscious affiliation or commitment to a particular group).

In colonial societies, identity is a central issue for people in a minority situation. The context they belong to is a matter of social and political empowerment as well as psychological wellbeing. Counsellors need to understand the psychological correlates of accepting an identity that has been conferred rather than being self-constructed.

Much postmodernist writing implies that identity can almost be chosen and that multidimensionality and fluidity of identities is a new phenomenon. In societies which have long been made of multiple ethnic and religious identities (pluralist societies), however, this has long been accepted as the social norm. Historically it has never been documented to be a source of psychological dysfunctioning. In any case, a number of forces from within ethnic communities and from the outside (such as Westernization and racism) shape the nature of identities of various ethnic groups in a British setting.

If the postmodern thinking about identity is to be believed, identity confusion is likely to be higher amongst the indigenous young people reared on a diet of rationalist certainties of modernism and very prone to the feeling of being alone in a culture much imbued with individualism and privacy. Hence, for many within the British Asian community the idea of being an Asian coexists (sometimes comfortably, sometimes not) with the idea of being a Muslim, another long distance identity without national identity. The Chinese also have a long distance affiliative non-nationalist identity. This is well known and owned by the various Chinese communities, aided further by the emerging economic culturalism which refers to *the Chinese way*.

Gilroy (1993) has attempted to establish the idea of a new distinct identity of being *Black Atlantic* for the African-Caribbean people, who are increasingly intermarrying into the indigenous white British population. For the growing number of children of mixed origin the experience of belonging to a black identity is a more important feature of their

identity than skin colour. To this end Gilroy endeavours to develop a non-racialized identity whilst avoiding the pitfalls of ethnonationalism as well as Afrocentricism.

Struggles with dual identity are perhaps strongest in cases of trans-racial adoption (Jardine, 1996). Being manifestly part of one racial group on the outside and another adopting group on the inside, these people find themselves unable to voice their concerns about racism, unable to relate to their racial self and of being a stranger in that group. Jardine pleads for counsellors to take the cultural background of such clients into consideration, and acknowledge their experience of racism. The transculturally adopted have experiences synonymous with that of ethnic minority and black groups.

Cross (1971) provides a model of Black racial identity development entitled 'The negro-to-black-conversion-experience': This describes the attainment of positive identity via the following five stages:

1 Pre-encounter.
2 Encounter.
3 Immersion-emergence.
4 Internalization.
5 Internalization-commitment.

Gilroy (1993) adds another stage in which the individual does not see being an antiracist as the sole conception of their being.

The stages describe a shift from low self-esteem and acceptance of inferiority, through anger and guilt in becoming aware of oppression, through immersion in the world of 'blackness', to a developing sense of liberation. This culminates in a major psychological shift from negative to positive self-concept. The latter is said to be accompanied by realistic perceptions of individual position in society, and leads to challenges and activism.

The model, however, is not intended to be linear and applicable to every minority. It should not be assumed that all black and ethnic people start at the pre-encounter stages. Many young people have a positive sense of themselves and their racial identity from childhood. Furthermore, the extent to which a person is likely to start at the beginning will depend upon the extent to which they belong to a colonial experience of cultural imperialism.

Racism and transcultural counselling

Arguably, the responsibility of how and when to raise issues of racism rests with the counsellor, not with the client. D'Ardenne and Mahtani (1989) contend that transcultural counselling cannot, though, rectify racism and poverty, though d'Ardenne and Mahtani (1989) take a positive view of antiracism in their work and maintain that their position on

culture is not neutral. Rather, they acknowledge the ethnocentricity of many practitioners and assert that counselling should be equally available to all cultural groups.

McLeod (1996: 150) is also critical of complacency in the mainstream. As he cogently describes, there is, 'no systematic attempt within humanistic therapy to assimilate the lessons of feminism or to confront the experience of racism and colonialism'.

Racism awareness training does not, however, enjoy a good reputation. If not handled sensitively, it can become a form of reverse racism, individually blaming white trainees who are made to feel personal guilt and responsibility for racism in society. The inevitable result is either disempowering of the trainee or a hardening and retrograde movement to a hidden racist position. Consequently, victims of such inept training become defensive. Ultimately this leads to Political Correctness (PC). As Goldsborough (1996: 11) aptly describes, PC is an 'Increasing reliance on taboo rather than debate [which] encourages anxiety in individuals and soon develops a veneer of adherence to a set of rules and correct language.'

Progress can be made, though, from a willingness to learn from mistakes. Negative criticism in contrast can frustrate progress leading counsellors to a tight-lipped reluctance to deal with cross-cultural issues. Clearly, an atmosphere of confidence is required, not a climate of fear.

The counselling relationship clearly demonstrates dynamics which point towards a power imbalance and hence the challenge to practitioners to give careful consideration to the possible expression either overtly or covertly of racial stereotypes. Again, this task is not an easy one for practitioners to approach and this question may be easily dismissed. Most practitioners will rightly insist that their intentions are strictly neutral, that they treat all their clients the same (meaning without favour or intentional prejudice). And no doubt this is true. The problem, however, is more shadowy.

Kareem (1988) notes that expectancy and dependency are always a part of the therapy process, and this is greatest when the client has a deprived background. Even the perceived need to have counselling can inadvertently reinforce stereotypes of inadequacy, that something is wrong with them because they are from a minority group. With sufficient repetition and indoctrination, victims of racism can come to believe it of themselves. Transcultural counselling, therefore, should have a liberating function, to help free clients from the sense of powerlessness which labelling reinforces.

Service provision and access

The post-war years have seen significant demographic shifts in the European communities. Practitioners are required to respond to a wider