

Multiculturalism and Social Justice Statement

Bryan P. Range

Multiculturalism and social justice mean understanding the current multicultural and social justice issues that are present in our society today, their historical context and how these issues present and are maintained systemically. In addition to understanding these current and historical trends, advocacy and action are essential to needed social change. The foundational notions of multiculturalism (cultural competence) and social justice are offered by Sue and Sue (2008) in their text titled *Counseling the Culturally Diverse: Theory and Practice*; awareness, knowledge and skill development. Although Sue and Sue's model has the essential ingredients of developing cultural competence, I have found Chung and Bemak (2012) multi-phase model of psychotherapy, counseling, human rights and social justice (MPM model) to be the evolution in cultural competence. The MPM model includes a social justice and human rights component which states "helping professionals must be risk takers, take a proactive, leadership role, and assume a social advocacy position with regard to their clients personal, social, political and ethical rights" (p. 93). Furthermore, the MPM model elucidates discriminatory structures even within the structure of mental health. For example, hypervigilance, which has a negative and pathological connotation, doesn't view the necessary and beneficial vigilance African Americans develop as an appropriate adaptation to realistic and pervasive race-based trauma. My efforts to embody the MPM model include producing research that addresses the systemic, and subtle, nature of discrimination throughout society such as the example provided above.

As a Black American and a member of one of the most marginalized groups in America, the ways in which I have chosen to take proactive leadership role is by dedicating my research to addressing current racial issues that affect the Black community today. I have authored an article with my advisor and several of my colleagues titled *Mass Trauma in the African American Community: Using Multiculturalism to Build Resilient Systems* which looks at the killings of

unarmed Black Americans as a mass trauma experienced by the Black community. I have also chosen to write my dissertation on race-based trauma which looks at the effects race-based traumas, such as the killings of unarmed Black Americans, can have on Black Americans and what societal, relational and personal factors contribute the development of a resilience in this population. As a clinician, I have adopted the MPM model which has 5 components (a) mental health education, (b) group, family and individual psychotherapy, (c) cultural empowerment, (d) indigenous healing and (e) social justice and human rights. Being in private practice allows me to shape the therapeutic process in a way that is considerate of the client's culture such as reducing my fee if necessary, decreasing paperwork, connecting culturally diverse clients to relevant community resources and events as well as being present in a culturally sensitive manner. For example, I understand that minority clients tend to have a low-context orientation which is a focus more on how something is said versus the literal words that are said. Majority culture tends to have a high context orientation which places more importance on what is literally said versus how it is said. In addition, I find that I validate my clients culturally relevant struggles as they relate to my own and work to empower them through education and "acquiring the skills and abilities that are necessary for them to master their world" (Chung & Bemak, 2012, p. 86) with self-confidence, perspective, and appropriate networking. In regard to service, I have been a mentor for young men and women for many years; Big Brothers Big Sisters and TRIO Student Support Services Professional Mentor program. I am also a volunteer for the Restorative Justice program here in Iowa which seeks to prevent youth from acquiring a criminal record after committing some offense or crime by participating in a victim-offender mediation process. These cases consist of young Black males who need a voice as the offender. Teaching entails discussing and educating students about current multicultural and social justice issues such as

microaggressions, their historical context and how students can play an active role in preventing such issues in their professional (being culturally competent) and personal (speaking up against racist ideas at home) lives. Lastly, I feel it is essential for researchers, clinicians, supervisors and instructors to be aware of and not perpetuate a common oppressive structure within our society which is placing the burden for change on those who are oppressed as opposed to the system that has done the oppressing. For example, therapists can wrongfully place the burden of change on the oppressed and marginalized client by treating and seeing them once a week, a basic structure of therapy, when the responsibility for change would be best directed upon the oppressive and systemic structure. By merely, seeing this type of client only can communicate that the client is or has the problem and perpetuate or/and replicate systems of oppression.

### **References**

Chung, C. E., & Bemak, P. F. (2012). *Social justice counseling. The next steps beyond multiculturalism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Sue W. D., & Sue D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.