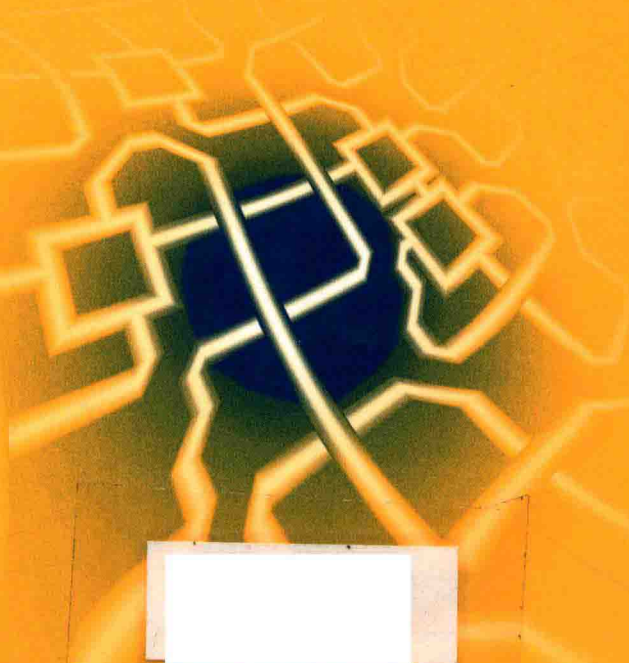# DIVERSITY PERSPECTIVES

FOR

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

EDITED BY

JOSEPH ANDERSON
ROBIN WIGGINS CARTER

Diversity Perspectives for Social Work Practice

Editors:

Joseph Anderson

Robin Wiggins Carter

Boston   New York   San Francisco
Mexico City   Montreal   Toronto   London   Madrid   Munich   Paris
Hong Kong   Singapore   Tokyo   Cape Town   Sydney

For related titles and support materials, visit our online catalog at www.ablongman.com

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1   RRD-IN   07 06 04 03 02

Diversity Perspectives
for Social Work Practice

Greetings! I am pleased to see we are different. May we together become greater than the sum of both of us.

—Vulcan Greeting, *Star Trek*

People connect on the basis of being similar and grow on the basis of being different.

—Virginia Satir, *Conjoint Family Therapy*

. . . Everything now . . . is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, re-created from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: "God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!"

James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

. . . at the treaty of Lancaster in Pennsylvania, anno 1744, between the Government of Virginia, and the Six Nations . . . the Commissioners from Virginia acquainted the Indians by a speech, that there was at Williamsburg, a College with a Fund for Educating Indian youth; and that, if the Six Nations would send down half a dozen of their young lads to that College, the Government would take care that they should be well provided for, and instructed in all the Learning of the White People. [The Indians' spokesperson replied:]

  . . . we know . . . that you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in those Colleges, and that the Maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinc'd, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily.

  But you, who are wise, must know that different nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our Ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some Experience of it; Several of our young People were formerly brought up at the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but, then they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either Cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a Deer, or kill an Enemy, spoke our Language imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing.

  We are however not the less oblig'd by your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it; and, to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia will send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take great Care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them.

—Benjamin Franklin, *Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America*

Dedication

To our families: Wandarah, Bailey, Sean, Caitlin, Stephen, Simone, and Brent, and to our diverse colleagues and students who provide support and challenge to our ongoing professional development.

Preface

Social workers, in the context of their practice and their central values and ethics, must develop competencies for working with and on behalf of diverse populations. This book contributes to preparation for this practice. It presents perspectives and conceptual frameworks for understanding ethnocultural differences, the dynamics and consequences of oppression, and diversity in relation to vulnerable or at-risk populations.

This book covers substantive knowledge. It also provides direction on how to learn continually about diversity and its meanings and consequences for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities that we serve. It organizes the presentation of these social work-derived diversity frameworks in a manner designed to aid the reader's comparative and critical analysis and synthesis.

Following the schema developed by one of the editors and introduced in Chapter 1, the book presents an overview and analysis of twelve relatively distinct frameworks. These include the central, or core, frameworks of the (1) *strengths perspective* and the (2) *empowerment approach*; the ethnocultural frameworks of (3) *ethnic-sensitive social work practice* and (4) *value orientation*; the oppression frameworks of (5) *people of color*, (6) *dual perspective*, (7) *ethnic-centric*, and (8) *social justice*; and the vulnerable life situations' (9) *ethnographic*, (10) *communication*, (11) *feminist*, and (12) *constructivist* frameworks. The book concludes with consideration of these frameworks and diversity content in general in social work education and practice. Thus, the diversity content in this text derives from diverse frameworks.

The content also evolves from a diversity of authors. Among them are women and men, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Caucasians; Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Buddhists; and those with diverse sexual orientations. Their teaching areas cover practice, diversity, human behavior in the social environment, and/or policy.

One thing the editors and authors have in common is their affiliation with a single social work program, California State University, Sacramento. This is no accident. Most faculty who contributed to this book have published some of the earliest as well as more recent work on several of these diversity frameworks and on other diversity issues and content. They develop and teach curricula to prepare students for competent diversity practice in one of the most diverse social work programs in the nation. Also in common, and evident in this text, is their commitment to diversity competence in social work's contribution to the pluralistic community of the future.

The editors especially acknowledge our colleagues at California State, Sacramento, for their scholarly and thoughtful contributions to this book. Their work is truly the heart

of this work. Special encouragement, patience, and support for this project came initially from Judy Fifer and more recently from Pat Quinlin and Alyssa Pratt at Allyn & Bacon. The editors are grateful for the collaborative and encouraging manner in which they worked with us.

Contents

PART VII • *Curricular and Other Implications*   **227**

1

Introduction and Organization: Diversity Perspectives

Joseph Anderson

The organization and writing of this book come at the birth of a new century—a critical era. Whatever the projections for the future, there is a central recognition that the promises and problems of diversity will be confronted in all their natural and socially constructed forms. The Chinese appear quite accurate in using two graphic characters to represent the concept of crisis, the root from which the English language derives its term "critical." One character stands for opportunity and the other for danger. This current critical period, then, presents a potential turning point in human history and in growth through diversity.

Social Work and Diversity

Social work needs to be at the heart (if not a large part of the heart itself) of turning the corner toward enhancing well-being and accomplishing social justice—the two tests that society and the social work profession must pass in addressing diversity issues and the potentials and obstacles in evolving as a healthy global community. The NASW Code of Ethics clearly defines social work's diversity-related mission and ethical obligation to serve both individuals and society. The code calls for using knowledge, values, and skills to understand and respect difference, to protect and empower those most vulnerable to marginalization and oppression as a result of their difference, to change discriminatory practices, and to promote social justice in all social work. It conceives this practice as beneficial both to individuals and society in their inevitable interdependence.

Social Work Education and Diversity

The 1994 Curriculum Policy Statement of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) required educators to provide educational objectives and content regarding human diversity,

social and economic justice, and populations-at-risk. These accreditation standards, separating these three closely related areas, reflect the current state of our social work knowledge base regarding diversity. Building this knowledge base both within and outside the social work profession has been fraught with ideological differences—and, of course, conflicts—many of which appear in this book, some readily and others more subtly. Often, ideological conflicts evolve from the lack of acknowledgement that different theories serve different purposes. These theoretical frameworks spotlight different parts of the stage in the overall diversity drama.

Webster's simplest definition of ideology is "visionary theorizing." Despite any ideological differences, it is safe to say this book's authors and other social work professionals, for the most part, have their "eye on the prize," envisioning the diversity mission as central to the professional function of facilitating contexts for self-actualization of each and all to the greatest extent possible. On this common ground stand the passion and vision of those who commit their work to increasing diversity competence.

The authors of this text are among those who believe that social workers in the twenty-first century will need to practice with consciousness, commitment, confidence, and competence on behalf of diverse populations. Such practice will require not only substantive knowledge but also the ability to "learn how to learn" about diversity's meaning and consequences for individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. In professional education, much of this learning evolves from the development and use of conceptual frameworks.

Conceptual Frameworks

Conceptual frameworks are theoretical perspectives and formulations constructed to interpret, explain, and resolve particular challenges faced in practice. Theoretical models direct attention to particular practice dynamics; relate concepts with one another to interpret these dynamics; and provide guidelines or principles for responding to these dynamics consistent with professional purposes and values (Anderson, 1981). A major task of professional education is the student's development of conceptual frameworks that establish a basis for practice competence and a foundation from which to build ongoing competence development. This learning is akin to what Bruner (1966) called "cognitive structuring." Such inquiry applies general principles to specific problems and draws general principles from these problem-solving experiences. In this sense, conceptual frameworks, such as those discussed in this text, serve as a "working heuristic of discovery" (Bruner, 1966, p. 618).

Perspectives and Frameworks in Text

This book organizes the presentation of social work-derived diversity frameworks to aid students' comparative and critical analysis and synthesis and to provide a springboard for further study and development of their own and the profession's knowledge base for practice. This book presents an overview and analysis of twelve relatively distinct frameworks created to serve objectives within three overarching perspectives—*ethnocultural diversity,*

oppression, and *vulnerable life situations*—and it connotes their differences and their overlaps. Figure 1.1 depicts the overall conceptual framework for this text. The circles represent the three separate and overlapping perspectives. Within the circles and their overlaps are placed the specific frameworks covered in subsequent chapters.

Central Frameworks

At the core of this diagram and integrating the three major perspectives are the *strengths perspective* and the *empowerment approach*. All of the discrete conceptual frameworks are consistent with a vision to base social work practice on a strengths perspective (rather than a deficit, pathological, problem-in-person-not-in-system orientation) (Saleebey, 1997) and to infuse diversity practice with significant assumptions, principles, and concepts from this perspective. Chapter 2 covers the *strengths perspective* as applied to diversity (Wright & Anderson, 1998). All of the frameworks also, to some degree, advocate for making empowerment (Gutierrez, 1990; Parsons, 1991) a central aim of social work practice and for incorporating essential principles and concepts from the empowerment approach (Lee, 1994; Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998) into diversity practice. Chapter 3 reviews the *empowerment approach* and its core principles and concepts (Anderson, 1997).
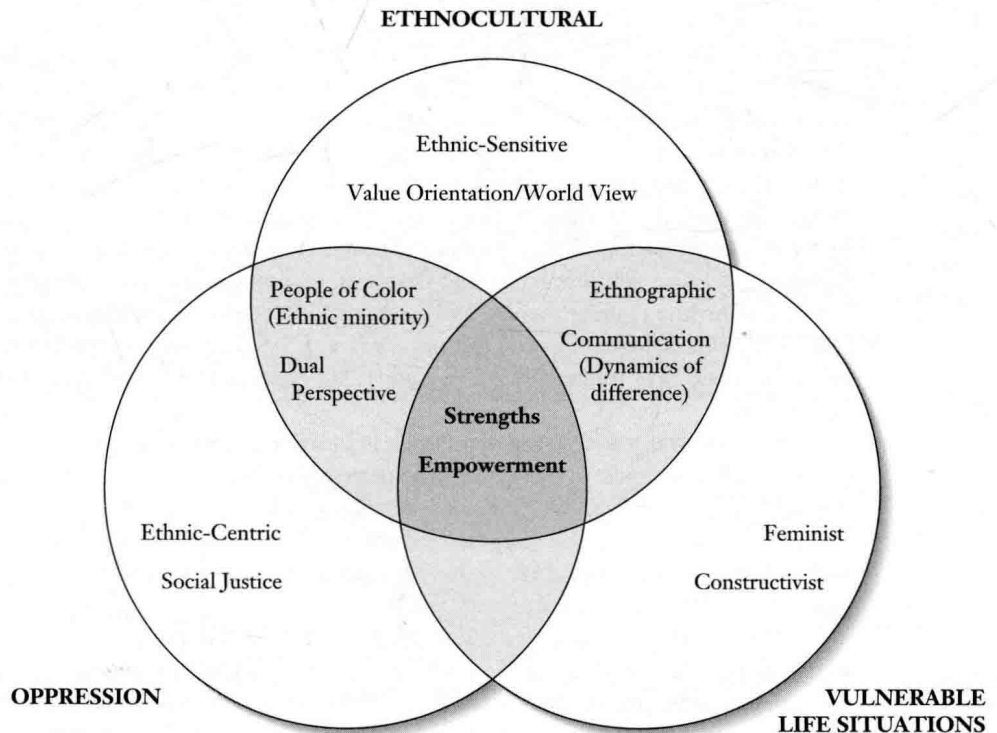

FIGURE 1.1 *Social Work Diversity Perspectives and Frameworks*

Ethnocultural Perspective and Frameworks

Parts II and III address the *ethnocultural diversity perspective* (Lister, 1987). The common defining element of frameworks within this perspective is the relationship of ethnicity to culture. Ethnicity here refers to self-conscious collectivities of people who, on the basis of a common heritage or subculture, maintain a distinct identity among themselves and in relation to other groups in a diverse, multicultural society. This discernment of difference affects their sense of personal identity, loyalty and belonging. Diversity of ethnic groups evolves from perceived or actual cultural differences that are socialized into particular value orientations and normative dispositions for behaviors. Two of the predominant frameworks for sensitizing social workers to (and, we hope, not stereotyping) ethnocultural differences are *ethnic-sensitive social work practice* (Devore & Schlesinger, 1999; Cox & Ephross, 1998) and *value orientation* (DuBray, 2000; Anderson, 1992, 1997) or *cultural world view* (Dana, 1993; Anderson, 1997). Part III presents the ethnic-sensitive practice framework in Chapter 4 and the value orientation/world view framework in Chapter 5.

Oppression Perspective and Frameworks

Overlapping the ethnocultural perspective are two frameworks within the *oppression perspective*. The common defining element of frameworks within the oppression perspective is the combination of prejudice and power. The 1997 *Social Work Encyclopedia* defines *Oppressions* as follows: "Simply stated, oppression is an institutionalized, unequal power relationship—prejudice plus power" (Wambach & Van Soest, 1997, p. 243). The predominant oppression frameworks in social work have evolved primarily from concerns about ethnics of color. Frameworks that overlap with the ethnocultural perspective entail a combination of concepts to understand and appreciate members of these groups through their distinguishing cultural heritage and their survival and growth in the face of oppression and marginalization. These frameworks all include recognition of the use and abuse of power by a Eurocentric sociopolitical and cultural power structure that idealizes, favors, and grants privileges to those who are white and devalues, exploits, and deprives of privileges those who are nonwhite (Pinderhughes, 1994). Part III includes frameworks in this overlap: the *people of color (ethnic minority)* framework (Lum, 1996, 1999) covered in Chapter 6, and the *dual perspective* framework (Chestang, 1980; Norton, 1978; Anderson, 1988) covered in Chapter 7.

More centrally addressing oppression in practice is the *ethnic-centered* framework, as developed, for instance, in the Afrocentric perspective (Scheile, 1996, 1999). This perspective shifts the center from which to view ethnics of color toward their intra- and inter-group relations and away from the marginalized position that dominant social work perspectives, and dominant cultural world views, have historically constructed these groups. Part IV presents this ethnic-centered framework in Chapter 8.

The contributors and frameworks represented in this book value social justice in social work practice. Chapter 9 more predominately addresses oppression and injustice through the social justice framework (Gil, 1994). At its core, this framework requires continual development of critical consciousness on the part of practitioners, service consumers,

and society, and it is grounded in three fundamental values: self-determination, distributive justice, and inclusion (Swenson, 1998; Prillettensky & Gonich, 1994).

Vulnerable Life Situations Perspective and Frameworks

Also overlapping the ethnocultural perspective are two frameworks within the *vulnerable life situations perspective*. Victims of both ethnic exclusion and all forms of oppression become vulnerable to disempowering life situations. Thus, all three circles in Figure 1.1 overlap at points; however, the *ethnographic* framework (Bein & Lum, 1999; Green, 1999; Anderson, 1997) covered in Part V, Chapter 10, and the *communication* or "dynamics of difference" (Gudykunst, 1998) framework covered in Chapter 11 have in common with frameworks in the ethnocultural diversity perspective their focus on how the strengths and sufferings affect the vulnerable life situations of particular people and how those people's experience of and response to the immediate dynamics of difference affect the helping and situational context. In short, these frameworks are designed to discover how those we serve define themselves ethnoculturally and how they can identify for practitioners the differences that have affected their past and current life situations. The ethnographic and communication frameworks shift our focus from examining the "culture in the group" to discovering the "culture in the person" (Anderson, 1997).

Many people with cultural and other diversities come to us in social work because of vulnerabilities specifically related to their socially constructed devalued roles and statuses. Part VI discusses frameworks addressing the needs and issues of some of these groups (the Council on Social Work Education in the Curriculum Policy Statement identifies them as "populations-at-risk": people of color, women, and gay and lesbian persons) and includes the *feminist* framework (Bricker-Jenkins & Lockett, 1995) covered in Chapter 12 and the *constructivist* framework (Laird, 1998) covered in Chapter 13.

We hope the perspectives and frameworks in this book collectively contribute to social work students' developing a more comprehensive and differentiated knowledge base as they learn to practice with and on behalf of diverse populations. Part VII, the last part of this text, considers the collective curricular implications of all the perspectives and frameworks in Chapter 14 and a summary and conclusion in Chapter 15.

To promote understanding of each chapter's unique contribution as well as the comparative and critical analysis and synthesis, contributing scholars followed a common outline for each chapter:

1. A summary of the framework's major precursors, developers, and contributions;
2. A presentation defining the framework's core concepts and their interrelationships within the model;
3. A development of five to ten principles or guidelines for applying the framework in social work practice, with particular attention to foundation or generalist practice;
4. An example of the framework's application to a particular practice situation;
5. An assessment of the framework's major contributions and limitations as applied to practice;
6. A selection of key annotated sources for further study of the framework; and

7. Discussion questions to promote critical thinking for learning about and using the framework.

Conclusion

This book presents diversity perspectives and conceptual frameworks as a central part of a knowledge foundation for social work practice. For pedagogical purposes, it covers the perspectives and frameworks in separate parts and chapters while recognizing their overlaps and the value of their integrative use in competent practice. Each chapter covers and emphasizes the coherence and contribution of one framework. Each distinct framework also has its limitations to illuminate and inform practice with the multidimensions of diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. The authors hope that students learning about similarities and differences in applying these frameworks can then use them differentially and more integratively in their practice. The authors also hope the perspectives and frameworks discussed here can lead students to develop basic skills for working with persons of any cultural background.

Among the skills that the authors promote are:

- The knowledge of one's own and one's client's specific values, beliefs and cultural practices;
- The ability to respect and appreciate the values, beliefs and practices of all clients, including those who are culturally different, and to perceive such individuals through the cultural lenses of their clients instead of their own;
- The ability to be comfortable with difference in others and thus not trapped in anxiety or defensive behaviors;
- The ability to control—or even change—assumptions, stereotypes, and false beliefs, and therefore feel less need for defensive behavior;
- The ability to think flexibly and to recognize that one's own way of thinking is not the only way;
- The ability to behave flexibly, demonstrated by a readiness to engage in extra time, effort, and energy (Pinderhughes, 1994, p. 266) required to sort through general knowledge about a cultural group and to see specific ways in which knowledge applies or does not apply to a given client;
- A critical consciousness to understand the causes, consequences, and dynamics of all forms of oppression;
- The ability to let others teach us about the differences that make a difference for them;
- The ability to facilitate personal, interpersonal, and political empowerment; and
- The use of self to envision and enable social and economic justice for the benefit of individuals, society, and the global community.

References

Anderson, J. (1981). *Social work methods and processes*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Anderson, J. (1988). *Foundations of social work practice*. New York: Springer.