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Thinking Through Culture

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To explore the relationship between culture and psychotherapy and counseling, I would like to begin by offering some ways of “thinking through culture(s),” a phrase I borrow from Shweder’s (1991) book on cultural psychology. I ask students of psychology and practitioners and teachers of psychotherapy and counseling to consider the cultural realm in the broadest terms, and to think deeply about issues that may not be an ordinary part of their professional training and discourse. I invite readers to join me in considering the existential meanings and significance of culture at a time when a great deal is at stake in our understanding and views of culture(s).

To set a framework for understanding culture, I refer to the fields of anthropology and cross-cultural psychology and the more recent development of cultural psychology. From these points of departure I hope to bring attention to the cultural underpinnings of psychological theory and practice, including the cultural appropriation of identity and views of psychological and social well-being. I will consider the contributions of cross-cultural psychology, transcultural psychiatry, and social constructionism to a cultural view of psychotherapy and counseling. My overall goal in this book is to examine along with the contributing authors the professional and societal implications of viewing psychological practice from a cultural perspective. With the help of cultural theories and critical perspectives, and a growing awareness of the politics of culture, I argue that for the therapeutic practitioner as well as the public, being able to think through culture(s) is a matter of great urgency. We are in a time of immense cultural change and cultural

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conflict. This is not to imply that cultural understanding was any less important in history. For as long as there has been human society, culture has provided prescriptions for living, and both symbolic and material means of being and interacting with the other. We can only know culture from our experience of participating in social living. Thus, cultural understanding is simultaneously a reflexive or self-referencing effort and an empathic or other-directed endeavor. In the therapeutic context, this ability to stay on both the personal and the social plane requires the practitioner to integrate the personal with the professional in thought and action. For this reason, I have asked the contributing authors to be transparent about their beliefs and values, and to share how they have integrated their personal worldviews with their professional worldviews in working within the cultural realm.

Following are several ways of thinking about culture that have implications for theory and practice in the psychotherapy and counseling field as well as psychology in general.

Culture and Ethnicity as Sources of Human Diversity

The study of cultures and cultural forms of human diversity historically was undertaken by cultural-social anthropology and cross-cultural psychology. From questioning the conceptual and methodological limitations of these subdisciplines has come cultural psychology (Shweder, 1990; Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). Shweder (1991) defined the field of cultural psychology as “the study of the ways subject and object, self and other, psyche and culture, person and context, figure and ground, practitioner and practice, live together, require each other, and dynamically, dialectically, and jointly make each other up” (p. 73). It is a nonreductionistic approach to understanding the interrelatedness of aspects in the human domain that are of interest to psychotherapists and social scientists. Cultural psychology, which emphasizes the cultural-historical embeddedness of psychological processes (Cole, 1996), is informed by interdisciplinary ideas and the study of culture using cross-paradigm methods. This cross-discipline perspective that I believe is helpful for the purposes of this book acknowledges, but is not identical to, theory and research in cross-cultural psychology.

Cross-cultural psychology as a field has focused on the study of differences between Western and non-Western cultures. Psychologists and other social scientists have brought this science-based knowledge to bear on issues of practice in a multicultural environment. There is a significant body of literature on cross-cultural counseling, mental health, psychiatry, and psychotherapy (e.g., Al-Issa, 1995; Castillo, 1998; Gielen, Fish, & Draguns,

2002; Marsella & White, 1982; Marsella & Yamada, 2000; Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2002; Tseng, 1999). Comparisons of Eastern and Western concepts of self (Marsella, DeVos, & Hsu, 1985) and reports on culture-bound manifestations of psychological disorder (Simons & Hughes, 1985) have informed the mental health field.

Journals such as the *Asian Journal of Counseling*, *International Journal for the Advancement of Counseling*, *Transcultural Psychiatry*, and *World Psychology* have reported theoretical and practice developments in different parts of the world. In spite of a relative lack of research on the efficacy of applying Western psychotherapy and counseling to populations in non-Western societies, many countries tend to adopt models of psychotherapy originated from the West. At the same time, most American professionals have not shown a great deal of interest in the theory and research on other groups and cultural traditions that may inform intercultural practice (e.g., Bond, 1996; Paranjpe, Ho, & Rieber, 1988). Where there is an attempt to consider such cultural knowledge, the application of other cultural traditions to therapeutic practice requires critical evaluation. For example, Eastern cultural traditions portrayed by the elite of society may not reflect the cultural realities of the general population under conditions of social change (Hoshmand & Ho, 1995). The internalized culture and identity of a given individual cannot be presumed on the basis of ethnic origin and cultural tradition. While viewing Buddhist psychology and Western psychology in complementary terms, Michalon (2001) further pointed to the limitations and dangers of using an alternative system of belief to replace more culturally congruent concepts of self and psychological practice.

Interest in indigenous psychology (Heelas & Lock, 1981; Kim & Berry, 1993) has led some therapists and counseling practitioners in non-Western societies to reject Western approaches in favor of approaches that are congruent with or derived from the local culture. Indigenous culture provides native ways of knowing what is salient and congruent with the local ethos, and what are credible ways of addressing human problems. Indigenous approaches, however, need to be qualified by judicious adoption and judgment (Yang, 1997). The question remains as to whether it is always more effective to follow indigenous healing practices than to adopt Western psychotherapy and counseling in non-Western contexts (Shek, 1999). We need both psychological analysis of emic or indigenous concepts and practices and indigenous analysis of etic psychological concepts and practices (Kim, Park, & Park, 2000). What complicates the answer to this question about the role of indigenous psychology is the degree of globalization and value-pluralism in contemporary society (Weinrach & Thomas, 1998). Although cultural pluralism promotes diversity and inclusiveness,

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American models of cultural identity development that have added a cultural dimension to Western models of personality development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Helms, 1990), have not fully accounted for all world cultures and the effects of globalization. Cultural relativism in Western psychology and the culture at large has not allowed serious attention to the existential meanings and value questions pertaining to human change. This is evident in the challenges experienced, for example, by those who wish to consider issues of spirituality in secular psychotherapy (Helmiak, 2001).

It is therefore important to understand the philosophical underpinnings and cultural values in our paradigms of human change that may exclude certain considerations. One way of evaluating our philosophical and practice assumptions is to learn about psychological theory and practice in other cultures, as in the comparison between Chinese and American perspectives on counseling (Ryback, Wan, Johnson, & Templeton, 2002). An example of philosophical difference concerns the existential meanings of happiness and suffering. Buddhist psychology illuminates the inevitability of human suffering (De Wit, 1996), in contrast to the Western cultural tendency of expecting psychotherapy to be a means of ending suffering and restoring happiness. Perhaps the most salient feature of the Western worldview that differs from non-Western cultures stems from the Cartesian, dualistic assumption of object-subject split that resulted in reductionistic models of psychology and medicine and continue to influence the field. Modernization of society further contributed to mechanistic and materialistic worldviews. These reductionistic and materialistic views are in contrast with more holistic worldviews and models of healing that integrate the spiritual and phenomenological realms with the somatic and behavioral realms. As pointed out by several authors in this volume, part of the criticism of Western psychotherapy comes from the limitations of the reductionistic, materialistic worldviews associated with its theory and practice. These worldviews appear also to be connected with the individualistic bias in Western psychology. American individualism and its religious roots are reflected in concepts of self and society in Western psychology (Sampson, 1988, 2000). Such biases become a concern when cross-cultural theories and research in the West have increased the likelihood of studying the “other” by predominantly Western assumptions and standards. The cultural dimension of individualism versus collectivism is concerned with the relationship between personal autonomy and social obligation. The existential implications of individual autonomy and sociality or heteronomy that emphasizes the relational, as Del Loewenthal discusses in his chapter, point to cultural differences on a moral level.

Given the potential limitations and blind spots in a particular worldview, the hope is that cross-cultural understanding with respect to diverse models of human development and psychological and social well-being can broaden current horizons. Efforts toward integrating different cultural orientations have included exploring how principles of Eastern healing and transpersonal and relational models of self in Eastern cultures can enhance Western models of psychotherapy (Ajaya, 1983; Atwood & Maltin, 1991; Kakar, 1991; Steinberg & Whiteside, 1999). Integration can also be at the personal level, the type of integration that is featured in this book. Murgatroyd (2001) described her spiritual understanding in relation to psychology and counseling from the perspective of one raised in a Buddhist tradition and trained in a Western mental health profession. This literature on the integration of cultural traditions spans a broader scope than what is typically covered by American textbooks on counseling those who are culturally different.

Though serving as a useful resource in understanding human diversity, the value of cross-cultural knowledge is limited by increased cultural assimilation and hybridity resulting from migration and globalization. Hermans and Kempen (1998) suggested that we view culture as moving and dynamic. Cultural differences are no longer bound by geography and ethnic origin. Duan and Wang (2000), for example, reported accommodating both individualistic and collectivist values in a contemporary Chinese context of counseling. Culture-specific approaches run the risk of stereotyping particular cultural groups when global developments have resulted in more rapid cultural change and greater latitude in identity choices than ever before. There is evidence of youth internalizing multiple cultural identities in a globalized world (Jensen, 2003). Cultural studies have been concerned with the role of media and telecommunication in the shaping of identities and societies (Ferguson & Golding, 1997; Lewis, 2002). They suggest that in trying to understand the other and all the differences that represent "otherness," we must learn about not only cultural attitudes, values, and assumptions, but also the diverse cultural sources and processes of appropriating identity. John McLeod, in his chapter, addresses the use of cultural resources and processes in psychotherapy and counseling. In his chapter on Native Hawaiian identity, William Rezendes points to the group history and the experience of acculturation and culture loss. Their work implores us to be cognizant of the moral, social, and political implications of identity in our globalized contemporary world (Hoshmand, 2003b).

Whereas cross-cultural psychology has emphasized cultural variations as scientific phenomena, we need a much broader understanding to comprehend the multilevel implications of cultural issues that can be afforded by multiple disciplines. Cultural psychology, broadly conceived, can be about

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understanding more than scientifically described differences, including issues related to multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity

Multiculturalism as a social ideology points to the politics of identity and issues of social equity. Taylor, Gutmann, Rockefeller, Walzer, and Wolf (1992) approached multiculturalism in terms of the political recognition of groups with different identities. Social psychology and peace psychology have called attention to identity-based conflict as the most salient feature of intergroup violence (Hoshmand & Kass, 2003). From identity politics and culture wars (Friedman, 1994; Sampson, 1993) to concerns about the normative role of culture in selfhood and society (Adams, 1997), there is much at issue in human existence. Due to the hegemonic nature of the scientific discourse in psychology and the therapeutic professions, however, normative issues often enter into the world of psychological practice in unexamined ways or result in difficult dialogue in the profession. Fowers and Richardson (1996) cautioned against cultural separatism and proposed a hermeneutic perspective for evaluating cultural values. In arguing for more engagement in discussing cultural differences, their attempt to link multiculturalism to the moral traditions and ideals of the West was interpreted by some as elevating the Western traditions. There has not been an easy way for the profession to enter into effective dialogue on culture and identity as politics of difference. As Loewenthal and I comment in subsequent chapters, ideological thoughtfulness and the ability to discuss the politics of identity require related experience and professional socialization that seem lacking in most training programs.

The multidisciplinary field of cultural inquiry, on the other hand, has been so full of controversy and intellectual debate that even anthropologists have questioned the value and meaning of the culture concept (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Brumann, 1999). How culture is supposed to develop in an age of globalization and how cultural forces should define human society in a diverse world are among the questions raised by anthropologists such as Clifford (1988) and political historians such as Huntington (1996). One of the problems is that ethnic and cultural groups that have historical or geographical affinity have been treated as mega-cultures. They include the Western civilization, the Africano, and what has been labeled as Orientalism (Said, 1994). Such mega-culture approaches have made it even more difficult to appreciate within-culture differences and ethnic and national differences.

Cultural historians and political theorists (e.g., Lewis, 1993; Said, 1994) have further discussed the complex issues of culture in a changing world

order. Huntington (1996) dramatized the differences between mega-cultures as a clash of civilizations. In a postcolonial age, the study of cultures should assume new meanings. It appears, however, that neoliberalism and neocolonialism have both endorsed capitalism as an organizing principle for the present world order (Schirato & Webb, 2003). Due to patterns of economic and political domination and unequal power, the livelihood and well-being of many groups are at stake. Loewenthal poses critical questions in his chapter about this state of world realities. Practitioners need to be aware that cultural imperialism is a concern for those vulnerable to domination. In interviewing clients from diverse international backgrounds about their experience of psychotherapy in a Western context, Seeley (2000) found cultural resistances that reflect concerns about power imbalance. Clients use a number of ways to protect their indigenous identities from therapeutic tampering. Culture as a descriptive source of human diversity is now entangled with issues of global understanding, identity politics, and social justice.

From understanding culture as a source of human diversity, to recognizing the importance of culture learning in a constantly changing world, some American practitioners have looked to multiculturalism as a community standard and ontological given. The counseling field has responded to changing demographics by emphasizing multicultural competencies for practitioners (Abreu & Atkinson, 2000; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). The American Psychological Association (2003) has also published guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change. Psychotherapists and counseling professionals are expected to engage in culture learning and be responsive to cultural differences in the worldviews and expectations of their clients. Some of these differences are couched in terms of specific attitudinal and behavioral characteristics to be matched with the appropriate interventions. As suggested earlier, however, culture as scientifically depicted difference does not fully account for the possibilities and significance of culture as negotiated identity and social reality.

Psychotherapy and counseling, viewed as a cultural enterprise embedded in social and political context, is about addressing more than descriptive differences across individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds. There is an increasing need to consider ourselves and our clients as world citizens in a particular social and political order. In both local and global contexts, therapists are faced with challenges in culture learning as well as issues of positionality and power. The authority granted professional practitioners embeds us in political structures of social control (Varenne, 2003). Therapeutic practice, like the medical system, is intertwined with the political economy and, in some instances such as communist countries, more

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obviously defined by political ideology (Tseng, 1999). The fact that political aspects of human interaction are also part of the cultural, multicultural counseling and psychotherapy must address the politics of difference and issues of social justice (Vera & Speight, 2003). Otherwise, it will have a limited role in producing social change. Chasin and Herzig (1994) proposed systemic interventions for the sociopolitical arena of practice, attempting to integrate the personal, professional, and political. Comaz-Diaz (2000) emphasized the ethnopolitical context of therapy and the importance of bearing witness to clients' experience of racism and oppression. Liu and Pope-Davis (2004) further pointed to the interaction between classism, race, and cultural factors in psychotherapy and counseling. Practitioners should be conscious of the social and political history represented by the client as well as the international and local dynamics affecting the client's identity experience. Dana Becker, Susan Gere, and William Rezendes illustrate this consciousness in their chapters. John Christopher and Del Loewenthal urge us to uncover any disguised ideology in psychological theory and practice.

Part of the American literature on multicultural counseling has highlighted issues of race and the dynamics between the dominant Anglo culture and ethnic minority cultures (e.g., Helms, 1990; Helms & Cook, 1999; Sue & Sue, 2002). Yet, the discussion of the personal and the political has been secondary to teaching and learning about descriptive differences between ethnic groups and cultures. The dynamics of culture and identity in therapy are complex (Comas-Diaz & Jacobsen, 1991), and no less complicated in other professional and social settings. As illustrated in Rezendes's chapter, the negotiation of positionality in dealing with culture and identity involves symbolic representation, self-understanding, and interpersonal dialogue. For Susan Gere, the complexities of this process demand deep existential reflection and moral clarity. Therapists engaged in such negotiations with their clients must understand both the symbolic and lived meanings of culture and identity.

Culture as Symbolic Nexus of the Personal and the Social

Cultural psychology has philosophical affinities with the interpretive social sciences and semiotic disciplines that emphasize the symbolic and meaning-driven nature of human existence. Since Berger and Luckman (1966) wrote about the social construction of reality, there have been examples of cultural study as interpretive social science, such as represented by Geertz (1973) and Rabinow and Sullivan (1987). The emergence of social constructionism in the 1980s further contributed to the view of culture as meaning-making and

narrated existence. The postmodern literature on social constructionism and constructivism has influenced the psychology of identity and the theory and practice of psychotherapy (McNamee & Gergen, 1992; Neimeyer & Mahoney, 1995; Shotter & Gergen, 1989). As narrative theory found its way into the human sciences (Polkinghorne, 1988), narrative became a root metaphor for psychology (Sarbin, 1986). Narrative psychology (Hoshmand, 2000) can be considered an extension of cultural psychology that connects culture, identity, and human experience.

Studies of identity development in particular are increasingly focused on the cultural appropriation of stories that we live by. The creation of such stories and the cultural webs of meaning in which they are situated are seen as constitutive of identity and social existence, respectively. Examples of narrative views of identity and cognitive development include the work of Hermans and Kempen (1993), Howard (1991), Markus and Nurius (1986), and McAdams (1985, 1993). Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (1995) and White and Epston (1990) presented a narrative view of psychotherapy, as does John McLeod who writes about psychotherapy and counseling as meaning-oriented cultural work in this volume. In recent years, also as a result of constructivist influence, the cultural view of human dysfunction has gained currency. Neimeyer and Raskin (2000), for example, presented postmodern perspectives on the cultural and social construction of psychological disorder. Further comments on the cultural construction of dysfunction can be found in Dana Becker's chapter.

This reconceptualization of human dysfunction as cultural construction has affinities with meaning-making perspectives of psychotherapy (Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996) that are fundamentally based in a cultural view. Frankl's (1985) focus on meaning as the key to therapeutic change has been well supported by research on the psychology of meaning. People's sense of purpose and coherence in life, their ability to make meaning of adversity and loss, and their capacity for spiritual or other self-transcendence have been linked to health and wellness (Wong & Fry, 1998). The focusing-oriented approach in psychotherapy described by Doralee Grindler Katonah in her chapter explicates Gendlin's (1962) theory on the integrative and dynamic nature of meaning-making in human experience, and in the process of cultural appropriation and transformation.

The view of cultures as systems of meaning, and life in general as symbolically fashioned, also directs our attention to the understanding of culture as myth and cosmology. From Carl Jung (1998) to the popular contemporary writer Joseph Campbell (1988, 1997), there has been appropriate interest in these aspects of the cultural realm. Whereas cultural-social anthropologists have studied cultural cosmology especially in what may be

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considered exotic cultures, the psychological meaning of myth (Feinstein & Krippner, 1997; Lukoff, 1997) lends support to a holistic approach to culture and psyche. As William Rezendes and William Mikulas argue in their chapters, respectively, we need to understand the cultural cosmology of clients in psychotherapy, and to consider the wisdom offered by cultural traditions other than our own. To the extent that psychotherapists operate as metaphysicians (O'Donohue, 1989), we also need to examine our role in shaping the cultural cosmology of our society and clients.

For those interested in narrative psychology, one of the most useful concepts is what Bruner (1990) termed narrative knowing as culturally appropriated acts of meaning. He distinguished this mode of knowing, which constitutes much of clinical inquiry, therapeutic dialogue, and practice knowledge, from the hypothetico-deductive forms of scientific knowing that we also use in professional work. In the next chapter, I argue that psychotherapists and counseling practitioners rely on both narrative knowing and the knowledge and methods of psychological science in working with clients. Narrative and experiential therapies (Elliott & Greenberg, 1997; McLeod, 1997; Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997), in particular, focus on the conversational processes of cultural meaning-making. It is essential to understand such generic processes that connect language and experience, and thought and action. In the narrative conception of psychotherapy cultural scripts are subject to change and re-storying. The possibility for therapists and clients to accept or reject certain dominant cultural stories has many implications. John McLeod explains in his chapter how culture provides resources in the narrativization of experience and the appropriation of identity, and that psychotherapy can be the occasion to sort out cultural polarities and tensions in the search for the good life and what it means to be human.

Narrative psychology may be considered an aspect of cultural psychology, especially if we use cultural psychology as a metatheory (Hoshmand, 1996), a framework that will be developed further. From the standpoint of theoretical integration, the common narrative features of all counseling approaches suggest that a metalevel conceptual framework may be developed with cultural and narrative psychology. The relationship of culture, narratives, and meaning-making to the experience of psychotherapy is of interest to researchers such as those presented in Angus and McLeod (2004). Meaning-oriented approaches to psychotherapy are consistent with the view of culture as symbolic forms of constituting human experience. Understanding such basic processes is essential to a culturally informed psychological practice. The chapters by Grindler Katonah, McLeod, and others address such meaning-making as cultural processes.

Culture as a human creation is a view that has been reinforced by the postmodern philosophy that knowledge and much of human realities are socially constructed (Kvale, 1992). There have been varying degrees of emphasis on the primacy of the personal and the social in constructivist, narrative approaches to psychotherapy, and critical, constructionist approaches, respectively (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Leitner & Epting, 2001). For practitioners, the philosophical difference amounts to one's belief in the extent to which a person can reconstrue and re-story cultural existence, and how much to grant the societal constraints on possibilities of being and living. Some regard these two perspectives as "two sides of the same coin" (McNamee, 2004; Paris & Epting, 2004), consistent with Shweder's earlier definition of cultural psychology as encompassing the dialectical relationship between psyche and culture. Human beings are culture bearing and at the same time capable of self-creating. The notion that we can appropriate from culture what we desire for our identity may seem to suggest endless human potentials. Yet, human agency and control are also part of the makeup of culture, just as physical limitations are part of human constitution. It is more realistic to assert that culture offers both possibilities and constraints (Martin & Sugarman, 1999), a position that is helpful to therapeutic practitioners and their clients when contemplating choices in ways of being. This view acknowledges that the potential for human change is constrained by cultural, social, political, and biological givens.

Culture as Activities, Practices, and Institutionalized Ideology

Although many therapeutic practitioners tend to be most at home with the notion of culture as meaning-making, it is important to remember that culture is more than meanings and how we story human life. Vygotsky (1978) locates the cultural in human activity in social, historical settings whereby learning and cognition are understood as culturally mediated practices. Under the influence of pragmatism, the practice turn in philosophy has helped to promote this view of culture. It conceives of all aspects of human activity and what is institutionalized in human society as cultural in nature. Situating the psychological in the cultural-historical means that we must not allow the psychological to overshadow the ecological. This is important because psychotherapy is limited in its ability to address issues that require social and political solutions (Albee, 1990), a message conveyed in the chapters by Dana Becker, Susan Gere, and others.

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In proposing cultural theory as a framework for the history of psychological practice, Voestermans (1992) noted that as a practical science psychology is vulnerable to ideological influences. His formulation of psychological practice as a cultural phenomenon can be applied to psychotherapy as a cultural practice. There are rituals and ideologies characterizing such practices. Two common practices in the mental health field are psychological testing and the application of the diagnostic categories of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*. Their association with reductionistic biases and the medical model, respectively, is seldom questioned, as they have become institutionalized practices. In addition to enabling mental health professionals to describe individual differences, these practices also serve technocratic purposes in determining access to treatment resources, payment for services, and justifying particular interventions and placements of the individuals concerned. As institutionalized practices embedded in the political economy and society, they need to be evaluated as cultural practices that inform psychotherapy. Dawes (1994) questioned the scientific legitimacy of many of the diagnostic and therapeutic practices in common use. The chapter by Dana Becker here also touches on some of the issues arising from diagnostic practices.

Ratner (2000) proposed culture as a comprehensive concept that refers to cultural activities, values, schemas, meanings, and both psychological aspects and physical artifacts that are collectively constructed and distributed with human agency. Cultural understanding includes understanding the practices in which others participate, and knowing about the artifacts, cultural media, and intentions with which people construct their selfhood and identity. This point is illustrated with the Hawaiian culture by Rezendes in his chapter.

The role of human intentions or agency in the creation and appropriation of the cultural has significance not only for therapists and clients, but also for the therapeutic enterprise. We are responsible for the character of our profession and how we do our work. Reflective practice involves a reflexive understanding of the personal and cultural worldviews as well as theoretical assumptions that we bring into the therapeutic encounter. We cannot escape the fact that therapeutic practice, while appropriated from culture, is also a cultural system in itself. Thus, we have the term "therapeutic culture" that refers to the values, assumptions, social ideology, and practices that characterize the community of psychotherapists and counseling practitioners. There are value similarities among counseling practitioners, beyond differences in theoretical orientations (Consoli & Williams, 1999). We need to heed Scarr's (1985) caution that the shared beliefs, theoretical assumptions, and philosophical preferences of the psychology profession are unlikely to be challenged because they are products of our time and supported by the current ideology and culture. This is particularly important because of the role of

psychotherapists and counseling practitioners in the cultural transmission of values, as demonstrated by reported shifts in clients toward their therapists' value language and moral stances (Kelly and Strupp, 1992; Rosenthal, 1995).

Therapeutic practice cannot be separated from other social practices and historical contexts that impact the lives of professionals and clients. Ehrenhaus (1993) observed that the therapeutic motif appropriated from cultural narratives can serve social control functions, such as in the political containment of Vietnam veterans. As socially and politically embedded forms of practice that have their own cultural character, psychotherapy and counseling systems mirror their cultures of origin, and can be at times seamless with the popular culture that prevails in the everyday consciousness of people. Lasch (1979) described the cultural trend of the 1960s as one of narcissism supported by a therapeutic culture of individualism that continues to undermine social obligations. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1985) found a historic tension between individualism and social commitment in American culture, played out in the search for personal virtues and the good society. Bankart (1997) summarized the feminist critique of Freudian theory and the historical orthodoxy of psychoanalysis, showing that models of psychotherapy and their metaphysics are a function of cultural context and the times.

Cushman (1990, 1995) regarded psychotherapy in the United States to be syntonically with American culture in offering lifestyle solutions to clients who wish to be soothed the same way that they use consumption to fill their existential void. He provided a cultural history of psychotherapy in which he critically examined the role that psychotherapy has played in American society. Applying a hermeneutic perspective in framing psychotherapy as moral discourse, he pointed to the reluctance of therapists to examine the moral and political implications of their theory and practice. Due to the dominance of the scientific model in psychology and its ideology, value issues are seldom part of academic and professional discourse. He attributed this to the Western bias of using the ideology of objectivism to masquerade psychology as a physical science. Such scientific (as in scientism) biases are contrary to a cultural, humanistic understanding of the psychotherapeutic and counseling enterprise, a schism in the field that will be addressed in the next chapter.

Previously, I had proposed that a reflective profession would critically examine its philosophical foundations and cultural biases (Hoshmand, 1994). The question I want to raise here concerns how members of the therapeutic community can exercise their agency in shaping the therapeutic culture and its relationship to the larger culture. This can include being critical of the effects of cultural trends on psychological health and social well-being. When Mary Pipher (1995) voiced her concerns about the effects of the popular

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culture on the development of girls she saw in psychotherapy, she was acting as an agent of cultural change. When feminists critiqued traditional psychotherapy (Brown, 1994; Byrne & McCarthy, 1999), they are serving as cultural critics. Several of our authors refer to aspects of the popular culture that have created issues for the clients they see in their practice. The symbiosis between the therapeutic culture and society becomes more evident when we view culture and psychotherapy in moral and existential terms.

Culture as Moral Ontology and Existential Choices

The philosopher MacIntyre (1981) suggested that each culture offers its stock of characters that represent the embodiment of moral existence. Narrative identities are cultural products that reflect moral ways of being. Understanding human development and psychotherapy in cultural terms requires a moral consciousness, with several implications. One is that we have to acknowledge the moral nature of therapeutic practice in how we interact with clients. Sugarman and Martin (1993) formulated psychotherapy and counseling as a moral conversation, which they were able to support empirically. If psychotherapy or counseling is a venue for moral reflection, such as when discussing clients' intentions and purposes in life, then psychotherapists and counseling practitioners can more consciously engage clients in evaluating the moral consequences of their personal decisions and actions (Doherty, 1995), as well as monitor their own role in this process. Yet, as pointed out previously, the scientific assumption of neutrality combined with the value relativism that pervades contemporary American society and the therapeutic culture often absolve psychotherapists and counseling practitioners from responsibility as facilitators of moral reflection.

In writing about the psychologist as a moral agent, Peterson (1998) referred to the historic work of London (1964) and Mowrer (1967). London's view of the moral nature of therapeutic practice appeared to be grounded in his religious faith. His work suggests that the professional norm of keeping one's personal beliefs and values out of what is presumed to be scientifically neutral practice (an indication of scientism) does not always serve clients in therapy. Mowrer had argued that psychological "dis-ease" is related to social conscience, and that the modern "sickness of the soul" stems from loss of genuine human communion. Peterson's insight is that in spite of the rejection of the metaphysical in psychological science, psychological practice cannot be without deep moral understanding. Miller (2001) urged clinicians to reclaim moral discourse and acknowledge the moral commitments inherent in clinical work. His concept of moral engagement (Miller, 2004) is

consistent with a moral view of psychotherapy and counseling as a cultural enterprise. Whether we consider psychotherapy and counseling to be a response to demoralization (Frank, 1974), human suffering (Miller, 2004), or loss of human communion (Mowrer, 1967), the existential implications are clear. Loewenthal and Christopher in this volume write about the inherently moral nature of a therapeutic relationship. The case example in Susan Gere's chapter further illustrates the moral, existential nature of the therapeutic encounter and client narratives of identity and experience.

Cultural psychology reminds us that what constitutes virtue and moral ways of being are locally defined. Psychotherapists and counseling practitioners need to learn the cultural idioms and moral grammar of their clients' communities. It is likely that discernment of one's moral commitments and failed obligations is related to psychological well-being and distress because they are about a person's relationship with the community. In exploring the cultural roots of concepts of psychological well-being, Christopher (1999) proposed that it is a matter of moral vision and chosen ways of being. Given that there are particular cultural values and assumptions underlying theory and research on psychological well-being, we have to deconstruct the cultural assumptions of our theory and practice. Dueck and Reimer (2003) proposed that rather than impose the liberal tradition of American psychotherapy on clients, we should be sensitive to the moral traditions of our clients. This implies moral pluralism, which is not the same as moral relativism.

Richardson, Fowers, and Guignon (1999) conceptualized the moral dimensions of psychological theory and practice with a hermeneutic perspective that builds on narrative, dialogical views of psychotherapy. This hermeneutic approach to understanding self and others (Gadamer, 1977, 1989) presumes a nonrelativistic ethic while allowing for moral pluralism (Richardson, 2003). Through open dialogue and culture learning, we can broaden the cultural horizons by which we evaluate our own moral stances and other ways of being. Hermeneutic analysis, such as discussed by Eaton (2002), can clarify the moral reasoning and reflections of both therapists and clients. Coming also from a hermeneutic perspective, Christopher (2001) explored the cultural nature of psychotherapy as a moral encounter. Loewenthal and Snell (2001) argued for psychotherapy as the practice of relational ethics in the existential sense of being responsible for the client's responsibility to others. The normative role and existential implications of culture in selfhood, society, and therapeutic practice, that seldom have been part of scientific discourse, are included in a cultural view of psychotherapy and counseling as further developed in subsequent chapters.

Following a narrative, cultural perspective, I have argued previously for a view of psychotherapy as an instrument of culture (Hoshmand, 2001).

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Cultural psychology implies that we are not neutral observers of the development of society, but have a role in its development (Poddiakov, 2002). Psychotherapists and counseling practitioners can explore with their clients cultural ways of being, and at the same time critique cultural prescriptions for living. McLeod suggests in his chapter that if psychotherapy and counseling is the arena in which clients reflect on difficulties in their life space or personal niche (that is constructed from cultural resources), then the practitioner can assist in the search for new cultural resources or adaptation of existing ones to resolve such difficulties. The cultural work of psychological practice therefore involves valued possibilities and moral choices. Given Cushman's (1990, 1995) caution about the problem of complicity with a consumerist popular culture, we need to be more critical of the therapeutic enterprise in the types of cultural stories it privileges and the nature of the cultural resources it offers. The work of critical and discursive psychologists (Parker, 1999; Prilleltensky, 1994; Prilleltensky & Walsh-Bowers, 1993) and feminist authors (Brabeck & Ting, 2000; Brown, 1994; Worell & Remer, 1992) has contributed a critical perspective on the interrelationship between the therapeutic enterprise and society at large. A moral perspective that I believe is sorely lacking in professional discourse can strengthen this critical perspective, as expressed by some of our authors.

Rather than making scientific assumptions of neutrality, we need to bring a critical and moral perspective to the personal and social meanings of psychotherapeutic and counseling practice. Whereas science represents one system of rationality, from the standpoint of cultural psychology, there are multiple rationalities and moral realities (Shweder, 1986). There are as divergent moral goods and personal virtues as there are multiple communities (Tjeltveit, 2003). The old approach of attempting to maintain neutrality has to be replaced by a conscious attempt to acknowledge the moral spaces in which psychotherapists and clients are located as well as the role we play in enabling, questioning, or diminishing the client's moral possibilities (Benson, 2001).

If psychotherapy is involved in helping clients reflect on their moral understanding of self in relation to others and society, the psychotherapeutic and counseling enterprise should be evaluated by more than scientific criteria (Hoshmand, 2003a). I will summarize in the final chapter some of the ideas suggested by the authors in this regard. In particular, we should consider how issues such as individual freedom and social commitment, as reflected in cultural individualism and collectivism, are addressed in therapeutic practice. As Loewenthal frames it in his chapter, it is a matter of putting the other before oneself. We also need to understand what the realistic limits and moral implications are in attempting to solve social and political problems with psychological means. I explain in the next chapter

how a metalevel cultural perspective that includes existential, moral views, and critical perspectives can complement the science-based understanding of therapeutic psychology and counteract problematic scientism.

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