Multicultural
Social Work Practice
Multicultural Social Work Practice

Derald Wing Sue
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Derald Wing Sue’s book *Multicultural Social Work Practice* reflects the most important underlying principles of social work. These principles have too often been hidden from view by the power dynamics of our society. These individualistic and materialistic dynamics make it hard to think or operate in systemic ways that would allow us to be truly open to those who are culturally different and who are continuously marginalized without our society.

Dr. Sue’s compelling and comprehensive textbook demonstrates with dramatic clarity the primacy of multicultural issues for social workers. He shows that cultural competence is not an add-on to basic social work practice but rather reflects the fundamental principles for understanding clients and working for social justice. Dr. Sue has spent his entire career thinking through issues of multiculturalism, and now he has written what will surely become the classic social work text on the topic.

His clear understanding of the social work principles lies at the very center of his argument that multicultural understanding should be at the absolute core of social work activity. As he demonstrates so articulately, striving toward multiculturalism is crucial to achieving social justice, a goal toward which we all as social workers strive.

This amazing text is interspersed throughout with very rich illustrative quotations that help to demonstrate typical responses of clients, students, and faculty to issues pertaining to racism, White identity, White privilege, bicultural experiences and so on. One recognizes family, friends, colleagues, students, and clients in the many examples Dr. Sue has threaded throughout this extraordinary text. His quotes from the entire spectrum of responses to racism and multiculturalism are touching and powerful illustrations of the issues he raises. His case examples are extremely helpful. He challenges us to push past facile notions of cultural competence to realize that multicultural thinking is a lifetime educational process, which demands that we undo much of society’s teaching and open our hearts and our conscience to ways of thinking about the world that have been marginalized in our country for centuries. Dr. Sue covers the length and breadth of the issues in the field, including a summary of his own formulation of the stages of White identity development in the context of others’ descriptions of cultural identity from Black, Latino, and Asian perspectives.

Dr. Sue discusses many of the assumptions of traditional therapeutic practice: talk, the ambiguity of the context of social worker and client, and the expectation that the client will show insight, practice introspection, and reveal personal feelings. He demonstrates most powerfully how these expectations discount the values of the poor, women, and clients from nondominant cultural backgrounds.

Through his lifetime commitment to these issues, Dr. Sue has