Abstract-Multicultural counseling encompasses not only psychotherapy and/or treatment, but also social justice in a political arena. While this point has been argued against (Weinrach & Thomas, 2002), a number of mental health professionals working with Latinos in particular believe in the need for enhanced social justice action in their practice (Comas-Díaz, Lykes, & Alarcón, 1998). In line with this view, this article argues that the revolutionary pedagogical approaches of Paulo Friere (the educator), as well as the tactical military maneuvers of Ernesto Guevara (the guerrilla leader), and the political intelligence of Don Pedro Albizú Campos (the politician) can be used to deliver a "revolutionary" counseling approach when working with Latino clients. Given the effects of oppression on the basis of race, class, sexuality, and skin color that many Latinos have suffered.

Key Words-multicultural counseling, revolution, Latinos, colonialism, social justice

Introduction

The multicultural movement has been called the “fourth force” of counseling and psychotherapy (Pedersen, 1991) This movement has influenced the American Counseling Association as well as the American Psychological Association to rethink their training programs and their intervention practices while working with culturally different populations (Sue, 2001). This occurrence has not come about
without controversy or resistance. Certainly, while a number of multicultural counselors (multiculturalists) do take into consideration that the complexity of culture includes politics, colonialism, gender, and economic factors, another group of multiculturalists have continued to view multicultural counseling as any other form of traditional mental health counseling practices, which usually concentrates on psychopathology, individual disorganization, and dysfunction (Morris, 1999; Weinrach & Thomas, 2002). This position neglects the politics of race and ethnicity in the counseling process, in particular issues of social justice.

Consequently, it is believed that social justice must be included as an essential topic when counseling ethnic minorities (Comas-Díaz, Lyke, & Alarcón, 1998). As mentioned earlier, other multiculturalists in the field (D’Andrea, 2002; Duran & Duran, 1995; Sue, 2001; Suzuki, McRae, & Short, 2001) have echoed this sentiment. However, when exploring different program descriptions across the nation, through their websites it appears that social justice is rarely mentioned as a necessary ingredient of multicultural counseling training (Torres-Rivera & Phan, 2002). This is additional evidence of mental health professionals lack of preparation when they work with Latino clients (Arcaya, 1996; Padilla, 1995; Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002; Torres-Rivera & Phan, 2002). This population must be considered a product of colonialist psychology and as such victims of social inequity (Comas-Díaz, Lyke, & Alarcón, 1998; Duran & Duran, 1995; Fanon, 1965; Fernandez, 1994; Martín-Baró as cited in Aron & Corne, 1996; Memmi, 1966; Rivera Ramos, 2001). Consequently, social justice is not only an important element to consider when working with Latinos but also a neglected element that is needed in order to work effectively with this population.

Therefore, is imperative that mental health professional working with multicultural populations understands that multiculturalism is beyond psychopathology. That in fact it must include the effects of oppression on the basis of race, class, sexuality, the state, power, and economics (Caro Hollander, 1997; D’ Andrea, 2002; Fischman, 1999; Schaef, 1992; Sue & Sue, 2003). It must transcend academic multiculturalists and/or neo-liberal ideas that have concentrated on the rhetoric of doing the "right thing" without a call for action (Fischman, 1999; McLaren, 2000; Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Roberts-Wilbur, & Phan, 1999). Because the majority of Latinos in the United States are the product of colonialism and oppression based on skin color (Comas-Díaz, Lyke, & Alarcón, 1998; Fernandez, 1994; Memmi, 1996; Riestra, 1978; Warren, 2001), revolutionary or radical approaches to counseling that creates a sense of liberation among Latinos need to be used in order to work effectively with this population (Cesaire, 2000; Kebede, 2001). Freire (2000) stresses the importance of creating critical consciousness and the principle that knowledge for the sake of knowledge is useless. Although these ideas have been echoed by a number of mental health professionals (Ivey, D’Andrea, Ivey, & Simek-Morgan, 2002; Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett, 2001; Wilbur, 2002), it appears as if the multicultural movement has been tamed or reduced to books, lectures, videos, movies, and other less radical forms of learning to comply with political correctness and compassionate conservatism (Evans & Larrabee, 2002).
Ernesto "Che" Guevara indicated that new goals could not be achieved through old ways (Guevara, 1967). He also pointed out that models that teach people how to understand production of goods, distribution, and consumption of economic services and goods (i.e. economic models) must be investigated in details in order for change to be achieved. Therefore, it is proposed that revolution in counseling and psychotherapy is not about violence but about radical and/or aggressive changes that can be taught in training settings and more importantly applied in a practical sense to Latino clients.

For the purpose of this article, revolution is defined as a radical change in a situation or condition and/or change in the counseling paradigm. The key word radical does not mean evolutionary in nature, rather it is dynamical, spontaneous, and complex (Wilbur, 2002). The second word that needs to be defined is social justice, because many people conceive this term differently. Therefore, in this article social justice embraces the struggles of people everywhere who work for gender equality, democratic government, economic opportunity, intellectual freedom, environmental protection and human rights.

In other words, social justice means equality in every sense. In order to develop a theoretical framework for a revolutionary approach the following assumptions are made:

**Assumptions**

1. A number of multicultural counselors (multiculturalists) and other mental health professionals are more concerned with psychopathology than with underlying socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors (Morris, 1999; Weinrach & Thomas, 2002). Nonetheless, these factors contribute to psychopathology – affecting the latter means addressing the former.

2. Social justice counseling and in particular revolutionary counseling is a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationships among counseling, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the universities training counselors, and the social and material relationship of the wider community, society, and nation-state (Martín-Baró as cited in Aron & Corne, 1996).

3. Even when multicultural counselors have attempted to eliminate inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, disability, age, and language, often these battles have been reduced to classroom lectures, conference presentations and articles in scientific journals. Consequently, these methods only reach a small group of counselors and even fewer community based practitioners (Martín-Baró as cited in Aron & Corne, 1996).

4. The agenda of counselors has been reduced to politeness and to maintaining the status quo of those in power. Counselors’ professional appearances and socially acceptable presentation have become more important in their practice than helping clients with issues of inequality (Torres-Rivera, Wilbur, Phan, Maddux, & Arredondo, in press).
A number of Latinos in this country continue to operate from a colonized psyche or mental set. Latinos are not direct or pure descendants of the Spaniards. Indigenous cultures (Aztec, Mayas, Incas, Arawaks) and African culture have contributed to the development of the Latino identity and in some instances this contribution is more powerful than the contribution of the Spaniards (Riestra, 1978; Rouse, 1992; Sued-Badillo & López Cantos, 1986; Torres-Rivera, 2004; Warren, 2001).

Colonialism and colonial counseling

So, what is colonialism and how does it affect counseling approaches? The effects of colonialism have been well documented in a number of fields, including education, with the works of Fanon (1965), Memmi (1995), Freire (2000), Meléndez (1988), Fernandez (1994), Césaire (2000), Riestra (1978), and psychologists (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Martín-Baró as cited in Aron & Corne, 1996). Nonetheless, little attention has been given in the mental health counseling literature about how colonialists have affected counseling and other mental health interventions (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998; Kebede, 2001).

Furthermore, even less can be found on how colonialism has affected the helping professionals' practices in general (Duran & Duran, 1995; Kebede, 2001). This lack of information creates a problem because counseling and psychotherapy is described, understood and practiced from a single, reductionistic worldview that comes from the colonizer worldviews and not from the colonized worldviews (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998). Consequently, forms of knowledge are only recognized if they have colonizer characteristics. This phenomenon is particularly true for Latinos; one very important example is how psychologists in general have refused to use the self-given name of Latinos instead of the government imposed name of Hispanics (see page 68 of the 5th edition of the American Psychological Association manual) (APA, 2001).

Colonialism is a difficult concept to define, as it is a political, legal, economic, cultural and social phenomenon. The terms colonialism and imperialism are frequently used interchangeably, and they are terms more associated with the two major groups of Latinos in the United States (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans). Colonialism for the purpose of this article is defined as the domination of a group of people by foreign leaders, accompanied by injury to cultural pride, a degree of economic exploitation, denial of human rights, and the stifling of the colonized people to achieve control over their own political destiny. In order to restore people's dignity radical changes must occur, accompanied by the growing empowerment felt by these people as they take action (Kebede, 2001).

The process

A number of Latin American countries have found themselves in a middle of a movement in which indigenous people are reclaiming their culture away from the European influence (i.e., Spaniards, Portuguese, England, France). This movement has made clear that the influence of the indigenous culture in Latin
culture is stronger than ever before. Latinos in the United States are not immune to this movement as a number of Latinos have embraced not only their Native roots but also their African roots as in the case of the Caribbean Latinos (Cubans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans) (Olmos, Athas, Young, & Todd, 2000). However, this is not enough to reduce the lingering effects of colonialism (Cesaire, 2000; Fanon, 1965; Kebede, 2001; Memmi, 1965; Riestra, 1978), particularly because Latinos first had to endure the effect of colonization by the Europeans and later the effect of imperialism by the United States (Meléndez & Meléndez, 1993; Riestra, 1978). It is also necessary to deal with identity in turns of ethnicity, class, and politics. While a number of mental help professionals believe the task of changing political paradigms is more for the politicians (Morris, 1999; Weinrach & Thomas, 2002), in reality mental health people cannot work effectively unless they have firsthand knowledge of the discrimination struggles of the Latinos — struggles that are often related with skin color and poverty.

Paulo Freire Approach. Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian teacher, offered suggestions to empower students in Brazil that can be used as principles for revolutionary counseling. Specifically he pointed out the following points:

1. Knowledge alone does not translate into change. While this particular point has long been used by Alcoholics Anonymous based programs, for the most part this concept has been limited to substance abuse work (Straussner, 2001) and not generalized to all types of therapeutic interventions.

2. Only when knowledge turns into action will change occur. The fixation of many mental professionals to "mimicking science that leads it to celebrate an epistemology and research methodologies that wind up consecrating the existing order as natural and contributing to a homeostatic vision, distrusting change and disequilibrium" (Comas-Díaz et al., 1998, p. 779). This particular non-action has left a number of multicultural mental health professionals ineffective with Latino clientele.

3. The world must be approached as an object to be understood and known by the efforts of the clients themselves. Moreover, their acts of knowing are stimulated and grounded in their own being, experience, needs, and destinies.

4. The historical and cultural world must be approached as a created, transformable reality that, like humans themselves, is constantly in the process of being shaped.

5. Clients must learn how to actively make connections among their own lived conditions, their state of being, and their ongoing construction of reality. Meaning a real understanding of their history and present reality and not the history and present reality of their colonizers.

6. Clients must consider the possibility for new makings of reality.
7. Clients must come to understand how the myths of the dominant culture are indeed myths, which when manifested in reality contribute to oppress and marginalize them.

**Ernesto “Che” Guevara.** While, the influence of "Che" Guevara is mainly known in politics and economic forums, the way "Che" Guevara fought his guerrilla warfare can be use as a tool of liberation counseling for work with Latinos. We extract the following points from his strategy of warfare intelligence:

1. Tolerance is not a goal for multicultural counselors. Rather, understanding is essential, and the only way one can achieve a clear understanding of others is by going to the people and living with the people. During "Che" Guevara guerrilla campaigns he was able to become part of the working class, the indigenous people, and the unprivileged. This tactic allowed the "Che" to gain a first hand understanding of the people's struggle.

2. Radical changes cannot be achieved using existing routes. Bureaucratic systems create checks and balances to avoid changes. Therefore, anything that may be seen as a radical change will threaten the status quo of the system. Even if the system is believed to be an open system radical change may be perceived as a destabilizing force. For example, in the 2000 United States presidential election the electoral vote overruled the popular vote, which maintained a 25 year old rationale that the majority of the people are not sufficiently knowledgeable to choose who should lead their lives.

3. The psychology of the colonized must be taken into consideration. Oppressed people present symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder. The idea that normalizing the trauma of people who have been defeated by simply apologizing and asking for forgiveness does not restore oppressed peoples’ dignity nor does it increase self-worth ([Duran & Duran, 1995; Gusman, Stewart, Young, Riney, Abueg, & Blake, 1996; Kebede, 2001](#)).

4. Theory must be connected to practice. Similar to the suggestion of [Freire (2000)](#) that knowledge without action is meaningless, "Che" Guevara (1963) also thought that strategies on the drawing table were meaningless unless put into use in the field.

**Don Pedro Albizú Campos.** Don Pedro Albizú Campos, also known as the "Huracán del Caribe," offers very important teaching points that can be useful in working with Latinos. Don Pedro was an electrifying speaker whose discourse motivated workers and the poor in Puerto Rico to the point of national strikes and social changes in the 1950’s (as cited in [Silén, 1976](#)).

While he suggested ideas similar to those of Paulo Freire and "Che" Guevara, he also added two further ideas that may be applicable with Latinos from a social justice/liberation counseling perspective. The ideas are as follows:

1. Multicultural counselors must see themselves as critical, self-reflective agents of social transformation. Although as stated earlier a number of mental health
professionals in the United States still argue for the status quo (non-action approach), as evidenced by a lively discussion on the Counselor Education and Supervision Network listserv (CESNET) (Ingersoll, 2002), which included criticism for the "over" involvement of multicultural counselors with social issues, politics, and other non-counselor types of events (Weinrach & Thomas, 2002), people like Paulo Freire, Ignacio Martín-Baró, and Nancy Caro Hollander have vigorously reinforced that the ideas presented by Don Pedro Albizú Campos should be followed by mental health professionals if they want to be effective with Latino clients.

2. Multicultural counselors must observe what they do and not just what they say. Mental health professionals are highly scrutinized by all clients. Our actions are more telling than our words. Don Pedro emphasized change and sacrifice and, like the other leading figures discussed in this article, he paid with his life for walking the walk. We are not suggesting that mental health professionals should put their lives on the line but rather that they practice what they preach, rather than just talk.

Conclusions

In combining the three approaches to empower people from Paulo Freire (the educator), Ernesto "Che" Guevara (the guerrilla leader), and Don Pedro Albizú Campos (the politician), a number of themes emerge relevant to counseling Latinos. First among these is the idea of helping Latino clients to create consciousness of their oppression and discrimination as part of their healing process. Here, the goal is not only behavioral change, but also to help clients have choices. Another theme that is shared by these three powerful figures in the Latino culture is the idea that multicultural counseling is related to politics. This conclusion has also been embraced by Sue and Sue (2003) for a number of years now.

The identities of Latinos have been shaped by of social injustice, oppression and in some cases casualties of an ongoing war. Consequently, something that the Latino figures discussed in this paper continues to remind us it that the struggle for justice and a better life for Latinos in “America” (Meaning America the continent) is not over. The aftermath of colonialism is not something that is easily erased from the collective minds of oppressed cultures. Along the same lines is the idea that rather than rule out psychopathology first, socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors must be assess and evaluate first rather than just taken for granted. Additionally, multicultural counselors must understand that every revolution has been fought with the working class population as its vanguard — by the people for the people. Therefore, mental health professionals must be part of the masses and not merely agents of affluent elites. Our final but not least important point is that education about the different economic models must be part of all counseling interventions when working with Latinos. While it may not stimulate immediate behavior change, it can help to reduce Latino’s vulnerabilities and increase their empowerment to address problems as they
arrive in the life course, particularly in places where poverty still a major problem for Latinos.

References


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