

WHY WOULD A WHITE GUY WRITE A(NOTHER) BOOK ABOUT WHITE THERAPISTS AND THEIR CLIENTS?

We have all read plenty of books about psychology and counseling by White people about White people. Most are written from a “neutral” and “objective” (aka White) perspective. So why would a White guy write another counseling book about White people? Don’t we have enough of those already? Yes, we do.

What I hope to do differently is examine White supremacy from a critical perspective and identify ways counselors can work to dismantle it. I am aware that even with the best of intentions in writing this book, it breathes life into racialization and White supremacy, which are destructive ideas with devastating consequences. I also need to be clear that as a White person, I will always be limited in my awareness and understanding of Whiteness and White supremacy, but I know that White supremacy affects how I show up and practice my profession. My intent is to move forward recognizing that I am a 'work in progress' seeking a better understanding and approach to practice counseling in ways that are antiracist and decolonizing.

IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

During my training, I learned about stages of change (Prochaska & Norcross, 2001). The idea is that each of us approaches change with different awareness and motivation levels. In pre-contemplation, the person does not recognize that a problem exists or feels that there are more downsides than upsides to change, so they make no plans to make a change. In contemplation, there is a recognition of a problem and plans to make a change. In preparation, people are taking small steps to change and feel that it is worthwhile to do so. In action, one is actively changing and intends to continue to do so.

This book is for counselors and counselors in training who recognize that White supremacy is a structural problem, that it is more than individual behavior, that avoidance or denial is complicity, and that the harm to IBPOC far outweighs any harm from racism to White people. If you are in contemplation or preparation, this book is for you.

A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE

We are all racialized people. As such, I capitalize Indigenous, Black, People of Color, and White throughout this book.

I capitalize Indigenous, First Nations, Inuit, and Metis to show respect for the identities, governments, institutions, and collective rights that colonial governments have attempted to erase in Canada and the United States. I recognize that part of reconciliation is recognizing and respecting these terms.

I capitalize Black when referring to people of African descent in the United States and Canada to recognize both the rich history and racial identity. I know that renaming and reclaiming language have played significant roles in fighting for racial equality. I also recognize that in 1889, American sociologist W.E.B. Dubois advocated against using a lowercase “n” when writing “Negro,” stating, “Eight million Americans deserve a capital letter.”

I capitalize People of Color when referring to people who identify as Brown, Latinx, and Asian, recognizing the wide diversity of people included under this umbrella but shared experiences dealing with structural oppression.

I use the acronym IBPOC (rather than BIPOC, an acronym originating in the United States in 2010 for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) with “First Peoples First” because of the unique history and context of colonization, displacement, and cultural genocide that Indigenous peoples in Canada and the United States have experienced.

I also capitalize White when referring to people in Canada and the United States who identify with European ancestry. I believe that not capitalizing “White” leaves room for Whiteness to be invisible, which is a big part of the problem.