

FALL 2025

Counseling Theory Chronicles

International Institute For The Advancement of Counseling Theory



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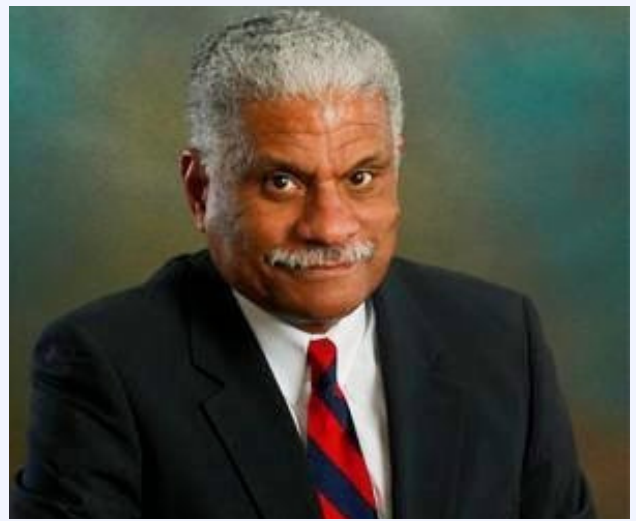
*from the Executive Director,
Dr. Ed Neukrug*

I'm very excited about our fall newsletter. In this newsletter, we highlight Dr. Courtland Lee.

Dr. Courtland Lee has attained international recognition as an expert in the field of counseling. He is author, editor, or co-editor of seven books on multicultural counseling, two books on counseling and social justice. three books on counseling African American males and has published numerous book chapters and articles on counseling across cultures.

Dr. Lee is Past President of the International Association for Counselling and a Fellow of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, the only American who has received this honor.

Dr. Lee is a Fellow and Past President of the American Counseling Association and of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development. In addition, he is a past President of Chi Sigma Iota, the international counseling honor society. Dr. Lee is former editor of the Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development and the Journal of African American Men.



Dr. Lee has served on the editorial board of the International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling. He has also served as a Senior Associate Editor of the Journal of Counseling and Development.

Dr. Lee has held faculty positions as a Professor of Counselor Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Virginia, the University of Maryland, and the University of Malta.



In addition to our interview with Dr. Lee, we have updates from our three subdivisions and exciting new additions to our website are upcoming. Please spread the word about IIACT as we continue to expand access to free materials and support services for those interested in, and teach, counseling theory. Some of the materials that are now accessible on our website, include:

- Theoretical orientation survey
- List of websites that focus on counseling theories
- Podcasts related to counseling and counseling theory
- Caricatures of famous therapists talking about their theories
- Audio stories from some well-known counselors and psychologists
- Hundreds of books and videos accessible through Interlibrary Loan
- World mapping project on counseling global counseling activities by IAC

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*“So, the snake wine
serves the same purpose
as the blue pill.”*



Interview with Dr Courtland Lee

Ed: Courtland, it's such an honor to have you as our guest interviewee for our Fall newsletter. I've so admired the impact you have had on the counseling profession, especially in reference to multicultural issues, global concerns, and your leadership in the profession. I look forward to hearing about you, and your career. Looking back on your career, what's been the most significant ways you've contributed to the global advancement of the counseling profession?

Courtland: I was involved with the International Association for Counselling (IAC) for over 30 years. I went to my first IAC conference in Helsinki, Finland, in the 90s and was hooked. The opportunity to meet counselors and counseling-related professionals from all over the world was really great. So, I got actively involved in IAC and ultimately became President of the association. With IAC I had the opportunity to travel to every continent except Antarctica, advancing issues of counseling. So, that was my main conduit into international counseling work.

Ed: From your career, what type of initiatives have you implemented that had a global impact on counseling?

Courtland: Well, one of the things we did was a collaboration between ACA and the IAC that investigated what counseling looks like in other parts of the world? So, there was a global mapping project of counseling, to get some sense of where counseling existed. When I say counseling, I mean where the profession of counseling existed in the world. Also, when I was president of ACA, I tried really hard to advance ACA's international efforts. ACA has traditionally, and it makes sense, seen itself as the American counseling association, focusing on issues of counseling in the United States.

Ed: On the one hand, you, as the president of ACA, wanted to learn what's happening globally. On the other hand, hasn't the ACA also played a role in helping other countries develop their counseling profession?

Courtland: We had to break out of the provincialism that we had about counseling and understand that we have a role to play in the global advancement of the profession. When I was ACA president in 1997-98 I tried to do that. For example, I invited the president and founder of IAC, Hans Hoxter, to come to the ACA Conference to do a presentation. I initiated an ACA Conference lecture series in his name. Mental health professionals from around the world were invited to the conference to present their work and the status of counseling in their respective countries. I also sponsored several other international presentations at the conference. So, I always tried to be a spokesperson for the importance of understanding and appreciating internationalism as one of the foci of the association.

Ed: I bet you had some challenges advancing counseling internationally. I'm just wondering how you might have addressed them.

Courtland: Well, one of the big ones was getting ACA leadership to see that you need to pay attention to what's happening in the rest of the world. It is important to understand that counseling works the way it does in this country because of our culture. However, it's not necessarily going to work the same way in some other culture. Yes, we have a role to play in helping countries develop the profession of counseling, but it has to be done within the cultural context of a country.

Ed: You've always seemed like a mild-mannered guy to me. I'm wondering how you have dealt with challenges interpersonally. For instance, when you saw something that's not being done ethically, how did you respond.

Courtland: I would take a deep breath and count to 10. One of the things that I've learned working internationally is that you have to practice diplomacy. So that means listening without judging, holding your temper, smiling when you really don't want to, and really just trying to remain calm. So, that's been a challenge, especially when you're dealing with people who don't quite get it with respect to the globalization of counseling. It's understanding that they don't have the level of knowledge and experience that you have. So, I try to maintain some degree of calm and civility.

Ed: What kind of successes or breakthroughs have you had in your global work?

Courtland: I think, and hope, I was catalytic in several countries where counseling was in its nascent form. For example, when counseling was just starting in Romania, we had a successful conference in Bucharest and helped the Romanian Counselling Association get off the ground. Also, about 20 years ago, I led a delegation of American counselors on a People-to-People ambassador program to Vietnam and Cambodia. That was interesting because counseling didn't exist in either country. We were warmly welcomed by educators and psychologists in our visits because they really wanted to understand what this "counseling" was all about. We even planted a seed to start a counseling profession in Vietnam. When we were in Cambodia, we had the good fortune to meet with the first class of counseling students who were studying at a university in Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Interestingly, the students were primarily Buddhist monks. The members of the delegation had a nice dialogue with them about counseling and what it might look like as a profession in Cambodia.

Ed: So how have you collaborated with counseling professions and organizations in other countries?

Courtland: IAC held a conference in Bratislava in Slovakia, which was catalytic in promoting the profession there. Also, IAC has been very instrumental in helping the Italian Counselling Association evolve. We've also worked very closely with counselors in Argentina. The Argentinians have a very strong counseling profession that's been operating for at least two decades. IAC has held two conferences in Buenos Aires and has also worked in Africa. There's not a whole lot of professional counseling in Africa, but IAC had a successful conference in Kenya 20 years ago and has also worked with professionals in Botswana, which has a very strong counseling association.

Ed: As you have been traversing the international counseling scene and the building of counseling throughout the world. What role has cultural sensitivity and cultural humility played in those efforts?

Courtland: One of the things that I've learned through my experience is the importance of cultural humility, which we are beginning to hear about in the counseling literature. My view of counseling has been significantly altered by my international experiences. I have learned I'm not here to be a missionary, I'm not here to tell you how to be counselors. I'm here to learn from you, to listen to you, and to figure out collaboratively how you can build your counseling profession, but with a high degree of humility on my part and always going in with the notion that my assumptions are going to be challenged.

Ed: So, having cultural humility is clearly important. What other advice would you give to emerging leaders in the counseling profession who are interested in global work?

Courtland: I think it's critical that people who are working overseas do not see it as a vacation opportunity. It's not about being a tourist, it's about being what I call a traveler. You're going into a new country and you're really trying to understand the culture. You are attempting to get outside of your comfort zone and experience the culture firsthand. I remember on the trip to Vietnam, we were walking through the streets of Ho Chi Minh City, which used to be Saigon. As you walk through those streets you see people selling bottles of wine with dead snakes in them.

Ed: Yeah. They're usually cobras.

Courtland: Right and members of our delegation were looking at this, and they were going, "Eww," and "That's disgusting!" When they found out what snake wine is used for, they really freaked out. The Vietnamese believe that snake wine promotes virility. This really unsettled members of the delegation. At that point I said, wait a minute, imagine somebody from Vietnam coming to the United States and they see a commercial for the little blue pill on television.

Ed: Hah! Yes!

Courtland: So, the snake wine serves the same purpose as the blue pill. What we're talking about here is cultural equivalency. This is how they view impotency issues as opposed to how we view them. So, the members of the delegation were beginning to understand that we can't place value judgments on things just because they are different from our experience.

Ed: Yeah, it's such a great analogy, thank you. Switching gears for a moment. Since we're both involved with IIACT, I'm wondering how your understanding of counseling theory has evolved through your international experiences.

Courtland: That's a really good question. It's continuing to evolve. You know, one of the things that's given is the Eurocentric nature of our theories. When I taught the theories class, I would tell my students that traditional theories were developed based on people who, by and large, had their basic needs met. Freud, Jung, Rogers, and others mostly worked with people of privilege. Well, many of the clients we work with do not come from privilege, and they do not have their basic needs met on a daily basis. This is true in many parts of the world. Also, the views of our theories have a Judeo-Christian orientation developed in a Western cultural context. So, we have to consider what counseling theories would look like if developed in a Buddhist context. In an Islamic context? And so forth. Or what they would look like with the poor or marginalized, and not the privileged.

Ed: Can you talk a little bit about some of the research you're now doing with the global division of IIACT?

Courtland: Our subgroup is doing a mapping project of South America. We are looking at perceptions of counseling theories throughout that continent. We have a phenomenal grad assistant, Kacey Bunting, who's interviewed professionals, not counseling professionals per se, but mental health professionals, psychologists, social welfare workers in a number of countries in South America. She has collected a significant amount of information, which we are trying to work our way through to see what kind of themes emerge. We are interested in how folks view our traditional counseling theories and whether they make any sense in their particular cultural context. Also, we are interested in exploring indigenous notions of helping that may have evolved. Then our goal is to focus on Africa.

Ed: That should really be fascinating, because there is so much diversity in Africa.

Courtland: Yes, language diversity, religious diversity, racial diversity, you name it, Africa has it.

Ed: Although we always knew South America was diverse, I think you found that it was much more diverse than you expected.

Courtland: Yeah, I hate to say it, but I've discovered there are some countries in South America I didn't know existed, such as Suriname, and Guyana. We're gathering data from countries like Brazil where little is known about the status of counseling. It is so different from much of the rest of South America. First of all, Brazilians speak Portuguese as opposed to Spanish. So, we're really excited because we have an interview set up with someone in Brazil.

Ed: I'm fascinated to see what you find. Thank you for doing all that. What do you see as the most pressing needs or opportunities for the global advancement of counseling in the coming years?

Courtland: There have been efforts to see if we can develop a set of transcultural counseling competencies. We have the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, which make sense for the United States, but do they make sense globally? I like the term transcultural as opposed to multicultural, because it implies one has the awareness, knowledge, and skills to move from Brazil to Botswana. Also, people have been talking about developing an international counseling code of ethics. This would be challenging because much of what is prescribed in our code of ethics in the United States isn't going to work on a global scale. A good example of this is confidentiality. We know that confidentiality is something that's really important in U.S. because we're an individualistic society overall.

Ed: Right. What does confidentiality look like in a collectivistic culture?

Courtland: That's an interesting question. What does confidentiality look like when people view themselves as part of a collective reality. Maybe we can come up with some kind of ethical framework that could then be applied across cultural contexts. Another thing to consider is can we develop a global counselor training paradigm? Also, can we develop a global counseling compact? Can I, if I'm practicing as a professional counselor in Brazil, take my credentials and practice in Botswana? I think that's, down the line, but a possibility as counseling becomes globalized.

Ed: Do you think there are certain skills, or maybe values, that are universal? Like, is listening critical to understanding a person? Is empathy important? And what about the use of questions?

Courtland: Well, one of the things that I've talked about is a universal helping paradigm. Certainly, some of the things that seem to be important in such a paradigm are listening skills and empathy. Years ago, I did research on indigenous helping practices around the world. I researched Shamans from Native American culture, the Curandero(a)s in Mexican culture, and the Mudangs from traditional Korean culture. They all do some of the same things that counselors do. So yes, there are some things that I think are universal to helping. Perhaps there are some concepts and practices that we could incorporate that would make a universal training module.

Ed: I find this so interesting. I'd love to know what impact your global efforts had on your own professional growth and perspective.

Courtland: Well, it certainly has affected the way I teach a diversity course. One of the things I try to get across is that global literacy precedes cultural competency. You can't be a culturally competent counselor if you're not a globally literate human being. Unfortunately, one of the things I've discovered working with students is that they're not very globally literate. They're bright, but they really don't know a whole lot about the world in which they live. They don't understand current events and how they impact the people they work with in counseling. They are

also reluctant to get outside their cultural bubble. Students are fascinated when I tell them about the things I've learned over the years about counseling through my travels. Now, you don't have to be a world traveler, necessarily, but you do have to have a commitment to being open to new experiences.

Ed: That makes so much sense. So, the focus of today's interview has mostly focused on international issues, but I have to ask you about your thoughts on what's going on in this country with DEI, being woke, and certainly issues related to immigration and ICE.

Courtland: I came of age in the 1960s, so I saw a lot between the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam, and all that. Those were really turbulent times. Even though they were turbulent, there was a sense of optimism. Because the world ultimately really did change for the better in many ways. I don't see that now. This is probably the most distressing period of my lifetime and it's only been 9 months since this administration has been in office. I wasn't alive then, but I have read and studied a lot about what Germany was like in the 1930s, and I have a real sense that we're living through what folks lived through in Germany during that decade. We are seeing, again, the rise of fascism.

Ed: I remember Carl Jung talking about dreams he had just prior to World War I. These dreams fed into a belief that something ominous was about to happen in the world. But, because I personally do not put a lot at stake in intuition, I'm going to hope that our feelings today about the world are not moving towards another dark time in history. Instead, let's hope that all the work you have done, and others are doing, is moving us toward a sense of community with one another and a deeper understanding of who we are globally.

Courtland, thank you so much for sharing history, knowledge, and most of all, a bit about yourself in this interview. I so appreciate you and what you have done for the counseling profession nationally and globally.

Updates

ACES Reception

We had a successful get together at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision's (ACES) national conference. Those who attended, and RSVP'd for the reception, met at the hotel and had drinks, appetizers, and discussed research and other issues related to IIACT. Hope to do something similar in the future. Look out for our next RSVP!

Division Updates

Global Subdivision: The Global Issues division is nearing completion of its exploration of helping/counseling theories in South America. Kacey Bunting has completed and transcribed interviews with helping professionals in all South American countries except Paraguay. Division members are currently engaged in conducting a qualitative analysis of the interviews using a template developed by Dr. Brittany Suggs. Results of the analysis should be available by spring of 2026.

Multicultural Subdivision: After successfully completing videos that highlight multicultural issues related to counseling theories, we have been in discussion with Cognella Academic Press about posting them on our website, and on Cognella's, and offering CEU's based on the viewing of the videos and taking some short quizzes.

Research Subdivision: The research subdivision recently finished a validation study of the new theoretical orientation scale. It is currently at a journal being reviewed for publication. We hope to post the new scale on the website in the next few months. We are also looking at developing a survey that can access practicing counselors and psychotherapists view of the most influential theorists of the 20th century.

Parting Words

Our next two newsletters will have some amazing articles. Look forward to an article on how the Western counseling theories and theorists, which are today often seen as toxic to marginalized and diverse individuals, were actually revolutionary in their time. Although needing to be adjusted to fit the needs of culturally diverse clients, they often challenged the archaic treatments of their times. Written by two Old Dominion University doctoral students, DeHaven Sawyer-Mays and Erica McSwain, I think you'll find this article fascinating.

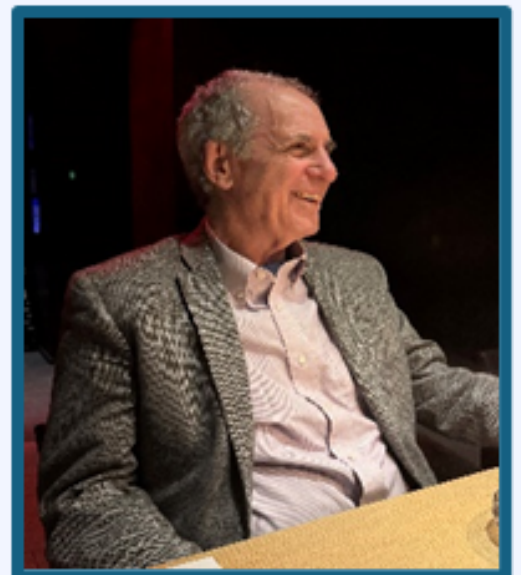
ALSO COMING SOON, AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. SYLVIA NASSAR. One of the architects of the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MSJCC) and an expert on multicultural counseling with a particular focus on Arab Americans, I think you'll find her thoughts on multicultural counseling intriguing and cutting edge.

Meanwhile, want to hear more stories or find other information about other theorists or theories? Visit us at: www.odu.edu/iiact. And, don't forget to take the theoretical orientation survey--see the next page.

Thank you!

Ed Neukrug

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What is Your Theoretical Orientation?

In addition to research, the Institute houses ample resources on the website. For instance, you will find an instrument in which you can assess your theoretical orientation.

This instrument, currently under revision and validation, examines the values and beliefs associated with 13 theories (15 in the revised version) and presents respondents with the theories and theoretical schools to which they are most closely affiliated.

It is available in English, Spanish, and Simple Chinese (Mandarin).

- Take the English version at:
<https://ww2.odu.edu/people/e/eneukrug/therapists/survey.html>.
- For Spanish and Chinese versions, go to: www.odu.edu/iiact.

