



Principles of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy

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"There is more to counseling and therapy than exists in the United States" (p. xv). No great revelation to *Transcultural Psychiatry* readers, to be sure, but a refreshing admission for a multicultural therapy book aimed primarily at American psychologists. This opening sentence to the editors' preface sets the tone for this volume. More pleasing still, by the third paragraph the editors are critiquing the tendency for American work on culture and mental health to remain focused on the major U.S. ethnic blocs. By contrast, this book aims to emphasize general principles, using numerous and varied examples to flesh out the meanings of these principles. Following up on their earlier handbook, *Culture, Therapy, and Healing* (Gielen, Fish, & Draguns, 2004), the editors set out to develop a briefer volume for nonspecialists; specifically, to develop a text that "may profitably be assigned together with other reading materials reviewing interventions with specific cultural groups" (p. xvi). We will evaluate the book with this overarching goal in mind.

The five chapters that make up Part I ("Conceptual Foundations and Ethical Considerations") cover a range of perspectives on how best to conceptualize the cultural shaping of mental disorders and therapeutic interventions. Coverage ranges from the anthropology of illness interpretation and a biopsychosocial approach to healing practices, reviews of cultural relativism, emics and etics, the social construction of race, and ethical issues. If we include the general conclusion chapter and the annotated bibliography that make up Part V, we have a wellwritten and largely cohesive mini-text that provides at least introductory exposure to important concepts. In contrast, Parts II through IV taken together read more like a collection of interesting papers rather than an integrated work. Part II ("Models of Multicultural Counseling") does begin with a solid review of the evidence-based literature in the area, a nice overview that fits well with the "textbook" goal and with previous chapters. The other two chapters are much more specific, however, tackling school counseling and group therapy with Mexican-Americans. While the chapters have their merits and the specific examples are informative, the reader does not finish Part II with any sense of having covered available models in multicultural counseling, or even a good portion of them.

Part III ("The Practice of Multicultural Counseling") is even more of a miscellany, starting with a single marital therapy case study of a Malay Muslim Man and a Hong Kong Chinese Woman, followed by an interview with a counseling psychology professor at the University of Kuwait. Both

chapters have stand-alone merit – indeed, they are unique, and at their best they make one want to peruse entire volumes of multicultural case studies and interviews – but they seem out of place here. The other two chapters in this section provide a creative "clinical toolbox" of suggested interventions that can be tried during group counseling or training sessions, and a look at clinical work with refugees. While we are critiquing the structure of these sections, we should acknowledge the welcome conceptual sophistication of this last chapter, which combines specific clinical examples with a critique of the Posttraumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis drawing from work by Ian Hacking and Paul Ricoeur. Finally, the two chapters of Part IV ("Psychological Healing and Counseling: Indigenous, Western, or Both?") each contain a reflection on how one might develop integrative therapies that include "Western" and "non-Western" elements: traditional healing with psychotherapy, Buddhism with psychoanalysis. Both chapters make for worthwhile reading, but again the reader may feel that these two examples are not sufficient to cover the question raised in the section title.

The study of culture and mental health is inherently interdisciplinary and students benefit from exposure to an array of approaches. We have here work influenced by cross-cultural, cultural, clinical, and counseling psychology, as well as anthropology and cultural psychiatry. Some of the authors are grounded in research, others in long experience with multicultural clinical practice. This kind of diversity reflects the field as it is, eschewing any pretense to a straightforward single approach. Similarly, the examples are diverse, taking the reader from racial categorization in Brazil, to refugee camps in Australia, to healing ceremonies in Laos. If a major goal here is to convince American trainees that one must think beyond American paradigms, this volume is a long-overdue success.

That said, we have concerns about the book's utility as a textbook. There are some nice features for trainees – suggestions for further reading, an annotated bibliography, effective introductions and summaries for most chapters – but the diversity of material becomes confusing in the absence of an authorial (or editorial) voice to help the novice interpret what they are reading. This issue even applies to the relatively coherent set of chapters in Parts I and V, especially with regard to degree of adherence to a universalist versus a relativist approach. Again, this is a fair reflection of the field and these are important debates. Nevertheless, these positions are often assumed by the authors and the debates

do not actually play out explicitly. For example, some chapters advocate an evidence-based approach to clinical intervention whereas others present case studies, seemingly unevaluated clinical suggestions, and reflections on novel combinations. The results are interesting, and surely there is room for a range of approaches, but the split also plays into the scientist-practitioner divide in professional psychology rather than helping to unite the two sides.

Principles of Multicultural Counseling and Therapy can be recommended to clinicians and trainees who are interested in opening themselves up to both the cultural and the theoretical diversity found in the multicultural therapy field. They will likely benefit from a close reading of Parts I and V, and can dip into the other chapters according to interest. For the instructor, the book offers a selection of readings that can be

chosen according to one's own interest and expertise. Rather than a primary text in need of supplemental readings as envisioned by the editors, this book probably would work better as a potential source of supplemental readings accompanying a primary text. The need identified by the editors and by scholars who responded to their earlier handbook has only been partially fulfilled; for psychologists at least, it may be that the needed primary text has yet to be written.

Reference

Gielen, U.P., Fish, J.M., & Draguns, J.G. (2004). *Culture, therapy & healing*. Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.