



Preface

When culture-specific information is presented or discussed there is always the danger that the information will form the basis of stereotypes; in other words, making generalizations about any cultural group is potentially misleading. More accurate or positive stereotypes may replace those commonly held, but they are still stereotypes. This issue seems unavoidable when attempting to present cultural knowledge in the hopes that it will broaden the range of assessment and treatment planning considerations counselors make with respect to a particular client. It cannot be overstated that regardless of the general knowledge that is available regarding a particular cultural group, every counselor must be open to meeting each client as a unique individual whose background, values, and other characteristics may or may not be similar to those of others within their cultural group(s).

This book is written primarily with respect to information about ethnic and cultural minority groups within the United States. Many of the general issues and recommendations related to counseling may be applicable to counseling cultural minority populations in other countries; however, the reader is cautioned not to overgeneralize from minority experiences in one country to members of the same cultural group in another country.

It was impossible to include all the relevant cultural groups in the United States. Many specific ethnic groups have not been included or are included only within the context of a broader ethnic group, often due to a lack of research on these groups. The concerns of all groups are significant, but unfortunately there has been comparatively little available research or published writing about some groups. New to this edition are chapters on Middle Eastern Americans and biracial/bicultural people. The most coverage has been given to groups who are numerically or politically most salient and where there is substantial existing counseling or psychology literature.

This book is part of the evolution of teaching a course on multicultural counseling since 1981. Over the years, the first author became increasingly dissatisfied with existing books on the subject because they tended to focus only on ethnicity and there were several other dimensions of cultural diversity that needed to be included in the class to meet curriculum and accreditation requirements, including gender, sexual orientation, physical disability, and aging. Eventually, she developed a course reader that sampled from existing texts and current journal articles. The drawback of this approach was that each writer had a different voice and often covered the material from a somewhat different approach, which was sometimes confusing to students new to the topic. In the end, it seemed that the best way to cover the topic of multicultural counseling, in the manner she felt necessary, with (1) a balance of etic and emic issues, (2) an emphasis on and respect for indigenous treatments, and (3) recognition of the complexity of multiple minority status (e.g., female and ethnic minority, ethnic minority person with a disability, etc.) was to write a book herself. Years later, you are now reading the results of that initial effort, which has now been revised and updated.

New to this edition, in addition to dedicated chapters on counseling Middle Eastern Americans and counseling biracial/bicultural people previously mentioned, are (1) the themes of social class considerations and spirituality have been infused consistently throughout the book, (2) case vignettes with thought questions and multiple reflections by the authors, (3) expanded cultural resource sections with annotations, (4) over 300 new references, and (5) additional coauthors who are diverse in ethnicity, culture, and areas of professional expertise.

The authorship of this edition was expanded to include a multicultural group of authors. We ourselves are a diverse group: a heterosexual Asian American woman, a gay European American man, a heterosexual African American woman, and a heterosexual Latina. We also bring a diversity of counseling expertise to our task with backgrounds in college counseling, community mental health, rehabilitation counseling, and school counseling. You may note some differences in our reflections to the case vignettes, which we feel is a good thing.

It continues to be our sincere hope that this book will be of some help to you along your own path toward multicultural competence.

A Note to Instructors and Training Directors

This book is envisioned as a primer, a general introduction to counseling issues for helping professionals. Ideally, students or trainees would

read one chapter each week as an overview of background, cultural, and clinical issues of importance. Each topic can then be supplemented by current specific readings either chosen by the instructor or the learners themselves. Many of the chapters list recommended resources for further cultural education. The case vignettes are provided with several questions to help focus discussions. Multiple reflections from the authors are included to convey different points of view and the message that there is no one correct way to counsel a client. The book is tailored to a college semester format, but can be adapted to a shorter term by assigning more than one chapter per week as needed. In a human service agency, school, or other clinical setting, this book can be used for staff and intern training as well as reference.