CULTURAL DIVERSITY
AND
SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

About the Cover

Born in Temagami, Ontario, Benjamin Chee Chee largely taught himself to draw and paint. His father died when Chee Chee was two months old and he lost track of his mother. One reason behind his drive for success as a painter was his ambition to be reunited with her. He was a prominent member of the second generation of the Woodland Indian painters, a native art movement that began in the early sixties and has since become one of the most important art schools in Canada. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he painted in a style influenced by modern abstraction. While most of the young Woodland Indian artists were content to follow the style of the movement's founder, Norval Morrisseau, in depicting myths and legends by direct and "primitive" narrative means, Chee Chee pursued a more economical graphic style, a reduction of line and image more in keeping with the mainstream of international modern art. At the age of thirty-two and at the height of a newfound success as an artist and print maker, Chee Chee died tragically by committing suicide.

Third Edition

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
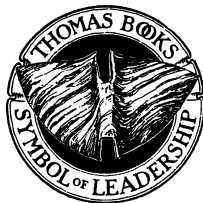
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PREFACE

In the 15 years since the second edition of our edited work *Cultural Diversity and Social Work Practice* was published, the profession has witnessed a number of positive developments pertaining to effective and culturally-respective psychosocial services. Foremost among these, in our opinion, is the emergence of the process model known as *evidence-based practice* (EBP). Introduced to the social work literature in the late 1990s, EBP has rapidly made significant inroads into social work education and practice at both the micro and macro levels (Thyer, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2008; Thyer & Kazi, 2004; Thyer & Wodarski, 2007; Vaughn, Howard & Thyer, 2009; Wodarski & Dziegielewski, 2002). As described in Chapter 1, this model reflects a systematic method of guiding social workers to make research-informed decisions about the selection of possible methods of assessment and intervention, given various practice situations. However, unlike precursor movements such as empirical clinical practice (Jayaratne & Levy, 1979) or empirically supported treatments (Chambless et al., 1996), EBP also stresses taking into account client preferences and values, the unique situation surrounding each practice circumstance, professional ethics, and one's own practice skills, in order to arrive at important practice decisions. EBP is a sophisticated model with great applicability to social work, including education in and providing culturally-sensitive services. Thus, this third edition includes content on this important practice development. Another important development has been increased attention to the design and conduct of credible assessment and evaluation studies that include large numbers of minority or oppressed groups. Some recent examples include articles by Gustafsson et al. (2009), Jani, Ortiz, and Aranda (2009), Leung, Tsang, Heung, and Yiu (2009), and Price and

Handrick (2009). These articles all appeared in the journal *Research on Social Work Practice* which has emerged as a leading resource for locating assessment methods and interventions useful with culturally diverse groups (see http://rsw.sagepub.com/).

.All chapters for this third edition have been completely rewritten, and we have drawn upon a largely new pool of experienced social work authors to craft each chapter. In almost every case one or more of each chapter's authors include a representative of the particular group being presented, thus providing a degree of "connectedness" or "immersion" with the group or clientele under discussion. As before we have included chapters relating to culturally sensitive practice with members from major racial groups, as well as other persons representing historically oppressed or marginalized populations. The term culture goes beyond the traditions of racial or ethnic groups and embraces any population which has developed its own distinctive traditions, norms, and values. There is a culture of the hearing impaired no less than there is a culture called Latino; of being Lesbian no less than there is a culture called Asian. And of course each such group is comprised of an array of subcultures–Koreans are considerably different from Japanese persons, and African Americans who recently immigrated from the Caribbean can be quite distinct from African Americans whose families have lived in North America for many generations. We hope our chapters faithfully reflect these distinctions.

We have been fortunate to add a fourth editor to this book, Laura L. Myers, Ph.D., who is the Director of the B.S.W. program at Florida A & M University, and many of the improvements in this third edition reflect her contributions to the editorial process. The Editors would like to dedicate this book to our children, and the hope that they live in a world ever more appreciative of the unique contribution every cultural group brings towards the rich tapestry of life, and in promoting a more socially just society.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

We are pleased that the favorable reception accorded to the First Edition of *Cultural Diversity and Social Work Practice* has generated sufficient demand for a revised and expanded Second Edition. Each previously included chapter is newly written and updated, and we were fortunate to be able to recruit authors for two additional chapters dealing with client groups we were unable to include in the earlier edition, chapters on persons with developmental disabilities, and persons with adult-onset physical disabilities. Each of these groups possesses significantly distinct attributes to warrant inclusion in a text on culturally diverse practice. There is precedent for this. Mary Richmond's (1917) class text, *Social Diagnosis,* contained chapters on practice with the "feebleminded" and blind individuals, as well as more traditional client groups such as women.

The reader will note that we have taken a largely atheoretical orientation to conceptualizing culturally diverse practice in social work in favor of a more broadly based empirical approach. In part, this is because we believe that the existing theoretical approaches are insufficiently developed to encompass the many aspects of diversity seen among social work clients, and in part we have found that the empirical research itself is derived from such a plethora of orientations that reconciling them in review chapters would be an insurmountable task.

The concept of cultural diversity is receiving considerable press lately, much of it controversial. In part, this is because the term itself is not well defined. For our purposes, we have adopted the point of view suggested by Marsella and Kameoka (1989): "Culture is shared learned behavior that is transmitted from one generation to another for purposes of human adjustment, adaptation, and growth" (p. 233).

Cultural diversity refers to shared, not idosyncratic, ways of behav-

ing transmitted to one by family and peers. Culture is *learned,* and such learned behavior is capable of being understood in terms of its past adaptive significance to the client and to the survival of his/her culture. All of us, social workers and clients alike, are immersed in a cultural milieu which affects our ways of seeing, believing, acting and reacting. When there is disparity between social worker and client, the potential exists for misunderstandings to arise and for a less than optimal helping relationship to develop. By understanding certain aspects of the culture experienced by a client, a social worker is better equipped to be of service, to assess, to plan, to cooperate, and to intervene.

The profession of social work has a long history of concern for individuals and groups who are oppressed or disenfranchised in our society. As is true today, much of early social work practice dealt with immigrant groups. Professional organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education have adopted formal policies which mandate social workers to be knowledgeable about cultural diversity, including the characteristics of racial and ethnic minorities and other so-called special populations, such as women. This book was written to provide social work practitioners and students with increased knowledge and sensitivity toward cultural diversity in social work practice.

As social work educators, practitioners, and researchers, we have been aware of the need for current, research-based information about client characteristics and special issues associated with race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and gender. While such information is available, it is typically scattered throughout the literature from several disciplines. Further, this knowledge is only infrequently made directly relevant to social work practice, policy, research, and educational concerns. *Cultural Diversity and Social Work Practice, Second Edition* is intended to bridge these gaps and to present to readers, in one source, a wealth of practice-relevant information about African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals, women, the aged, the developmentally disabled, and those with adult-onset physical disabilities. It is designed for both undergraduate and graduate students, as well as for practitioners who desire to enhance their skills in working with culturally diverse clients.

As editors and authors, the contributors to this second edition reflect the diverse makeup of the profession and society at large. We are men and women, coming from White, Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian backgrounds. Some of use are elderly, others comparatively young; our sexuality is expressed in differing ways; and some of us possess various physical disabilities. We believe that this diversity has enabled us to produce a book with greater integrity and credibility than a work any one of us could have authored alone. This reflects a fundamental fact of contemporary life: In diversity there is strength.

A central theme of this book is that knowledge about cultural diversity should encompass both historical information and current knowledge that is applicable to direct practice, human behavior, social policy, research, and education in social work. We are deeply committed to the advancement of effective, ethical, and culturally sensitive social work practice. We hope that this book contributes toward that goal.

As with the first edition, the editors would like to gratefully acknowledge the marvelous contributions of the individual chapter authors and to our culturally diverse students, friends, colleagues, and clients, who have so enriched our live.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The profession of social work has had a long history of concern for individuals and groups who are oppressed or disenfranchised in our society. Professional organizations such as the National Association of Social Workers and the Council on Social Work Education have adopted formal policies which mandate social workers to be knowledgeable about cultural diversity, including the characteristics of racial and ethnic minorities and other so-called special populations, such as women. This book was written to provide social work students and practitioners with increased knowledge and sensitivity toward cultural diversity in social work practice.

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CONTENTS

CULTURAL DIVERSITY
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Chapter 1

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND
SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE:
AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

Bruce A. Thyer and Laura L. Myers

The profession of social work has a long and admirable history of attending to issues related to diversity and oppression. Early on we focused our disciplinary attention to the provision of services to clientele who were those most often marginalized by mainstream society, those who were disenfranchised, and those who were oppressed. We also focused on those most significantly disabled, those handicapped by reasons of poverty, lack of education, minority status, age (including the very young as well as the very old), physical illness, and behavioral dysfunction. One early social work text contained chapters on social work with the very poor, the unemployed, the homeless, dependent children, the sick, the so-called feeble-minded, prisoners, and the mentally ill (Warner, Queen & Harper, 1930). Apart from this admirable attention to those most in need, we also as a discipline welcomed individuals from such groups within the folds of the profession itself. Academic programs in social work were among the first to accept African Americans and other minorities of color into undergraduate and graduate degree programs. For example, as far back as 1936, it was noted that: "Social work has taken the lead in solving some problems of personnel, notably those of the work of negroes, who in certain parts of the country find in this profession the first field freely open to them (Bruno, 1936, p. 300). But this is not merely ancient his-

tory. One of the earliest African American women admitted to Florida State University was Doby Flowers, who earned her BSW in 1971. In 1970, Ms. Flowers was crowned FSU's Homecoming Queen, which represented a significant landmark for the recently desegregated and formerly segregated (all white) university. However her road was not easy, as she noted:

> In December, one month after I was elected, an official with the gifts from merchants finally got in touch with me. She said she had been delayed because she couldn't find out where I lived. Not being award-ed the homecoming trophy . . . not being asked to attend out of town football games, not being invited to participate in the gubernatorial inaugural parade–that's what it's like to be a black queen at FSU. (Flowers, cited in Benton, 2006, p. 1)

Belatedly, the university attempted to make amends for these over-sights by commissioning a beautiful larger-than-life bronze statue of Ms. Flowers depicted as wearing her Homecoming Queen regalia and positioned this near the student union in January of 2004.

Similarly, social work very early on emphasized the pernicious influence of racism, bigotry and the unequal treatment of people, as in "Prejudice and racial intolerance are virulent infections to the whole of society . . . society has responsibility not only to allow opportunities for creative development and achievement but also to protect the lives and interests of *all* its members." (Hamilton, 1951, p. 18, emphasis added) and "Too long the welfare needs of the Negro have been neg-lected, resulting not only in the disadvantaged position of the Negro, but also in the unfavorable general health and crime rates of the South" (Guild & Guild, 1936, pp. 57–58). These were courageous opinions to hold and express in the early twentieth century and that social workers maintained them early on reflects well on the progres-sive values of the discipline.

We serve very diverse groups, we welcome members of such groups into the profession, and we stress issues related to valuing diversity in our academic training programs. For example, Table 1 contains select-ed statements found within the *Codes of Ethics* promulgated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 1999) and the Clin-ical Social Work Association (1997) positions, values and ethical stan-dards which all members of these two major professional associations

are pledged to support. It is clear that social workers are expected to uphold standards relating to the respectful treatment of all people, clients and colleagues, irrespective of their personal characteristics related to a wide array of factors. Some of these factors are obvious and commonplace, as in race, gender, and sexual orientation. Others are less commonly conceived of as embracing diversity, such as a person's religious beliefs or political philosophy. Such a broad conception of diversity is necessary since lingering elements of discrimination based on such factors remain, not just in society as a whole but also, troublingly, within the profession of social work (Thyer, 2005; Thyer, in press; Thyer & Myers, 2009a; Hodge, 2006; Ressler & Hodge, 2003).

This embrace of diversity is further reflected in the *Educational and Policy Standards* of the profession's sole accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008). Table 2 contains selected statements related to how academic social work programs (those awarding bachelors and masters degrees in social work) must address diversity issues. This is more than simply window dressing or aspirational. Programs lacking adequate representation from diverse groups will be critiqued. Not only must the faculty be diverse, but so must the student body and staff be similarly reflective of the locale's population. Documentation must be provided illustrating how the program strives to recruit diverse members, and uses internship agencies that serve diverse clients. These educational standards help preserve our historic commitment to working with and being comprised of members from diverse backgrounds.

Some Definitions

It is important to clearly understand one's terms when discussing highly value-laden topics such as diversity. I invite the reader to answer the following three questions by filling in the blanks:

1. "At the opposite pole to totalitarianism stands _____, the system which puts the liberty of the individual above all else and regards the state merely as a mechanism for minimizing people's interference with one another's freedom" (Guild & Guild, 1936, p. 19).
2. _____ refers to "The sociopolitical ideology that originally promoted personal freedom and limited