A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS AND FOREIGN CULTURES

Third Edition

A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS AND FOREIGN CULTURES

An Analysis of Relationships Between Ethnicity, Social Class and Therapeutic Intervention Strategies

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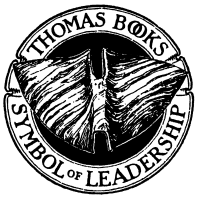

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To Our Students and Colleagues

PREFACE

If practitioners in the various helping career fields are to provide optimum assistance to clients from world cultures, they must understand both indigenous and foreign cultures. Unfortunately, except for a few courses which mainly focus on indigenous ethnic minorities, most higher education curricula provide future helpers with little information about world cultures. David Boyd and Jay Halfond (2000) argued convincingly that American universities stifle rather than encourage free-flowing discussions about their nation's diverse racial and ethnic groups. Even fewer programs focus on therapeutic intervention strategies which will allow practitioners to be optimally effective when dealing with peoples from other countries. For example, if practitioners are to understand traditional African Americans, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans, they must first understand traditional African, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican cultures. This revised edition includes additional information about peoples near and far. Similar to a once popular saying, we offer something old and something new. More than one-third of this edition is new.

The chapters in this book sharpen the focus on relationships between ethnicity, social class, and therapeutic practices. And we have broadened our exploration of answers to four interrelated questions: What do people want from their human services systems? What do they actually get from them? How effective are various systems? When and under what conditions will people change to another system? Explicit in these answers is the conclusion that sociocultural variables matter very much. As with previous editions, we focus on Western helping systems and juxtapose non-Western beliefs and therapeutic practices. Since the last edition, we are even more convinced that Western helping modalities are considered by many writers the

models of modern therapy. And that ethnocentric view is often grossly exaggerated. The differences in cultural beliefs and practices are illustrated clearly in the field of medicine, in which psychoanalysis is based. Peter Morley and Richard Wallis (1978) succinctly described the relationship between Western and non-Western medicine:

> Throughout the history of Western medicine, with a few exceptions, there has been a tendency to view traditional medical systems and beliefs from the vantage point of contemporary Western medical science, regarding them as not only "primitive," but archaic and largely irrelevant to both scientific medicine and the health of human populations. The emphasis has been on the quaint, but queer, customs and lore of the "savage." Imbued with the idea of progress, physicians, medical historians, and early anthropologists viewed "primitive" medicine as an early stage in evolutionary development. Traditional medicine, even as currently practiced in many non-Western societies, was therefore seen as a simple predecessor of complex modern scientific medicine. (p. 56)

We once again caution our readers to not make the assumption that traditional medicine and therapies are based on prelogical beliefs. The histories of world cultures do not corroborate such gross distortions (Sardar, 1998). It is both unwise and incorrect to define modern Western peoples as the epitome of scientific knowledge and other peoples as basically illiterate and unsophisticated. In fact, continuing our discussion of medical science, both Western and non-Western therapies are social rather than genetic phenomena. Morley and Wallis said it quite well: "While modern industrial man submits to the scientifically based *materia medica* of the allopathic physician, it does not necessarily follow that the former understands either the knowledge behind medical practice and its nosology, or the complexity of the treatment offered him by the latter" (1978, p. 15). This is the kind of ignorance we set out to combat in the first two editions of this book. We renew the effort fortified with additional information.

Central to our objectives are various ethnic groups' views of acceptable behaviors. Hence, we have stayed the course of an ethnoscience approach. *Ethnoscience* is the systematic study of a designated cultural group's way of life in order to obtain accurate accounts of the people's behaviors and how they perceive, interpret, and recreate their universe. The ultimate goal of any ethnoscientific study is to describe culturally relevant cognitive systems. We have done this by carefully analyzing selected data that have significant academic reliability and

validity. Specifically, we have drawn information from scholars in several fields of study that capture the essence of intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and organizational interactions. This method of study was pioneered by Bronislaw Malinowski (1922), who advised that "the final goal, of which an ethnographer should never lose sight, is to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision and *his world*" (p. 2).

People who come together from many cultural backgrounds have complimentary and conflicting beliefs and practices. And we describe those conditions from both an emic and an etic approach (Pike, 1967; Berry, 1990). The *emic approach* focuses on the social systems of a culture in their own terms, identifying both the cognitive units within the system and the classifications of their subunits. That is, we have tried to identify indigenous and foreign social values and practices. The *etic approach* seeks to discern features of social systems that cause them to be similar and different from each other. Using both etic and emic study findings, we compare and contrast modern and traditional helping practices. The goal of this activity is to identify and, when appropriate, suggest alternative transcultural helping strategies.

> Given the differences between emic and etic approaches to culture, it is not surprising that researchers taking each perspective have questioned the utility of integrating insights from the other tradition. A common tendency is to dismiss insights from the other perspective based on perceived conceptual or methodological weaknesses. . . . On one side, emic accounts based on ethnographic observation are often discounted on the basis of inconsistency across reports . . . and for inheriting misconceptions from cultural insiders. . . . On the other side, etic accounts based on survey data are often dismissed because researchers remained at a distance from respondents, potentially insensitive to how respondents were affected by their questions. (Morris et al., 1999, p. 781)

Perhaps researchers should select the approach that best serves their inquiry. For example, it may be that an emic approach is best in exploratory studies, and an etic approach is best for testing hypotheses. Although the two perspectives are usually delineated in terms of theory rather than research methods, we believe that both of them can be utilized with differing sets of methods. Further research might shed additional light on this academically dark area of inquiry.

Consistent with the previous editions, we do not provide infallible guidelines. While lists are presented, they are mainly to summarize

various thoughts gleaned from our own experiences and the materials cited in this book. The mercurial nature of helping relationships do not justify presumptuous dictums. Therefore we encourage a "be-it-yourself" approach because helpers need an attitude of "being for others." From this perspective, it is more important for practitioners to be aware of cultural similarities and differences than to be experts. To be aware and to care about the world, values and lifestyles of clients is a significant aspect of the helping professions in which practitioners try to promote positive cross-cultural relationships.

Our single-minded devotion to cultural inclusion accounts for the breath of our topics. We immerse the reader in research findings, personal narratives, and contradictory prognostications–all of which are inextricably entwined. There are things to lament in this book, including the absence of foolproof tips and techniques. But conflicted human relationships most often defy simplistic solutions. Indeed, the art of helping consistently defies the science of exact interventions or procedures. Consequently, our realism, pessimism, and optimism often converge in cavernous-like polemics in which debates begin but seldom end with finality.

Although this book is written primarily as an introductory text for students interested in pursuing careers as professional helpers, it should also be of value to experienced practitioners and reference librarians. The major foci are on multidisciplinary concepts pertaining to a potpourri of cultural groups, and special attention is paid to activities that will assist the reader to get in touch with his or her own beliefs about cross-cultural and cross-national helping. This is not a value-free text. Our beliefs are presented sparingly throughout the first nine chapters and extensively in Chapter 10. We offer a dialogue, not absolute principles. This, then, is a book to be actively read; it is written to initiate a human relations dialogue in which the reader is encouraged to agree or disagree with us. The following features of the book should be especially noted:

An interdisciplinary approach. Materials are taken from several areas in the academic disciplines of social and behavioral sciences, education and management. Out of this eclecticism can come cogent ways to understand cultural diversity and cultural inclusion. This, in turn, can provide a broad view of sociocultural factors affecting human relationships. As a general overview text, our book is not intended to exhaustively cover the topics discussed. We lay foundations for further study.

A spiral arrangement of content. Many of the topics discussed briefly in the early chapters are discussed in greater detail in later ones. This is not meaningless repetition. It is the proven process of expanding on topics in order to foster progressive knowledge. We believe that growth and learning should be cumulative and continuous. Chapter 1 provides a conceptual framework for understanding the historical connections of American and other peoples. Chapter 2 offers an in-depth look at selected issues pertaining to race and ethnicity. We examine the social umbilical cord that binds all peoples to each other.

Chapter 3 explores the origins and principles of the modalities that guide Euro-American helping professions. It also introduces a paradigm to show how cultural beliefs, personal beliefs, and individual behaviors intersect to create either stable or unstable persons. The conceptual framework discussed in this chapter is utilized throughout the book. Effective cross-cultural helpers are able to discern and adapt to the traditional cultural ethos of their clients. And that is done best by helpers who have a healthy, positive attitude toward themselves and their clients.

Chapter 4 highlights the importance of understanding the particular circumstances of clients or helpees and their families. It can be done through obtaining relevant information on cultural characteristics such as a client's place of origin; social and economic background; degree of acculturation to Euro-American cultures; familial traditions and values; personal beliefs, motivations, and expectations concerning mental and physical health care. This is the tedious process of looking at clients from their own world views.

Chapter 5 focuses on religion, spirituality, and faith healing as integral parts of health care systems and emotional healing processes. Special attention is given to Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Chapter 6 describes Far Eastern religions and philosophical schools of thought. Relatedly, we compare and contrast psychological therapies practiced in the Far East with those commonly used in the West. Although certain Western therapists were influenced by Eastern philosophies, therapeutic practices postulated in some Western psychological theories are at odds with Eastern values and mores.

Chapter 7 underscores the importance of knowing how to communicate effectively across cultural, ethnic, and social boundaries. Chapter 8 describes the process of empathically understanding the social and psychological backgrounds of clients in order to facilitate

cross-cultural helping. Suggestions are given to overcome barriers that impede communication, i.e., stereotyping, prejudice, and ethnocentrism. Several suggestions are offered for persons who work in cross-cultural settings. A review of etic and emic approaches might enhance their understanding: "The etic approach can be criticized for not taking important cultural differences into account. The emic approach can be criticized for placing too much emphasis on specific techniques as the vehicle for client change" (Fischer, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998, p. 28). Chapter 9 examines cultural differences in work ethics and motivation. It also correlates cultural characteristics with job satisfaction and leadership styles that may cause work-related stress and lawsuits. Finally, in chapter 10, we go to a whole other approach: we present subjective reflections of the lessons we learned while revising this book.

Critical incidents. In order to involve the reader with the information at a personal level, this edition includes end of chapter questions and additional critical incidents focusing on culturally sensitive issues and possible responses. Analyses of the responses further illustrate points made in the text.

Because social interventions are devised by and comprised of people, it is still our hope that the people who read this book will design and implement effective cross-cultural interventions. On a smaller scale, perhaps a few individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors will be favorably shaped by this text. The hazard in our approach is that the huge amount of data may frighten or immobilize readers. That certainly is not our intention. Instead, as with the previous editions, this one is written to continue the dialogue and actions started by countless individuals dedicated to producing culturally sensitive lay and professional helpers. We are grateful to the many persons whose perceptions and suggestions helped shape this book. Our foremost thanks go to Maria Cristina Calle of Italy, Amir Barsky of Israel, Katsuya Higuchi and Hiroshi Hasegawa of Japan, Klaus Grawi of Switzerland, De Lourdes Apodaca Rangel of Mexico, Nai-Hua Wu of Taiwan, and Thompson Olasiji of Nigeria. And, finally, we are indebted to Betty Leverich for her clerical assistance.

G.H.
D.S.L.
V.H.M.

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Chapter 1

AMERICA'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The once lauded American "melting pot" has never been completely realized. It is, instead, a dream of equality that has been deferred too long and for too many citizens, especially ethnic minorities (people of color). Currently, the national focus is on diversity, not assimilation. Buzz words beg the question of equality, however. United States ethnic group histories and lists of cultural contributions support the contention that members of each minority group, without some of them losing all of their indigenous ethnic identities, have become an integral part of a whole nation. Even so, the rising tide of prosperity that improved the lives of white immigrants in North America within two or three generations has generally taken longer to lift peoples of color above subsistence living.

But whatever their life circumstances, the citizens of the United States are not bound together as members of separate socioeconomic groups. They are members of different ethnic groups, affluent and poor, who are connected by history and destiny. And that locks them into the slogan "united we stand, divided we fall." We will briefly review how the various peoples of the United States have done much to push members of other groups down the socioeconomic ladder and to pull themselves up.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Initiated during the outset of colonialization and legalized after statehood, America became a haven for the persecuted, the ambitious,

and the homeless peoples of the world. "The New Colossus," a poem by Emma Lazarus inscribed on a tablet in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, gives voice to a promise that distinguishes the United States of America from other nations. It promises liberty and justice for "all." Accepting the beckoning call, large numbers of tired, poor, and huddled masses came willingly to this country. Others were taken there by force or coercion. Thus began the creation of a nation of migrants, immigrants, and slaves. Many Americans acquired secret, if not public, multiple ethnic and racial identities through birth. Most white immigrants of mixed lineage preferred to assume culturally nondescript identities. In an attempt to sever from themselves any direct connection with their migrant, immigrant, or slave ancestors, they became "white people" or just plain "Americans." Gradually, the task of retracing their families became too taxing or too insignificant. But alas, whether acknowledged or not, the effects of ethnicity and race dogged them. Disparate patterns of ancestral relationships and unequal economic opportunities gave life to buried identities. They could not wipe out their histories (Henderson & Olasiji, 1995).

The European Immigrant Melting Pot

At the time of the American Revolution, the relatively small non-Native American population was comprised mainly of English Protestants who had absorbed through marriage a substantial number of German and Scotch-Irish settlers and a smaller number of French, Dutch, Swedes, Poles, Swiss, Irish, and other immigrants. The colonies had a modest number of Catholics, and an even smaller number of Jews. And nearly all of the colonists treated Native Americans with contempt and hostility. Sometimes whites engaged in wars against Indians that came close to being genocide. Forcefully or cunningly, the natives were brutally driven from the coastal plains in order to make way for a massive movement of white settlers to the West.

Although Africans, most of whom were slaves, rapidly became a significant portion of the American population before the Revolution, as a whole, they also were treated harshly. Neither Africans nor American Indians were thought by most white colonists to be worthy of assimilation. The white peoples of the new nation had long since crossed European nationality lines to create a conglomerate but cul-

turally homogeneous society. It became common for members of different white ethnic groups–English, Irish, German, Huguenot, Dutch, Swedish–to intermarry. In fact, the English settlers and peoples from western and northern Europe engaged in a process of ethnic assimilation that caused some visitors from foreign countries to incorrectly describe the new nation as melted into one ethnic group: American. In reality, nonwhite Americans were rarely included in the national cultural pot.

During the 150 years immediately following the Revolutionary War, growing numbers of immigrants came to the United States from eastern European countries. They were the so-called "new immigrants." Overall, their socioeconomic status was just a notch above Indians and Africans. During the latter part of that period, slaves were emancipated, numerous Indian tribes were conquered and forced to relocate to reservations, portions of Mexico's land were taken, and Asians began emigrating to the United States. It is also important to note that the English language and English-oriented cultural patterns became even more dominant. Despite a proliferation of cultural groups within identifiable enclaves, Anglo-conformity ideology gave succor to racist notions about Nordic and Aryan racial superiority. In turn, that rhetoric became the platform for nativist politicians whose agendas included exclusionist immigration policies favoring western European and northern European immigrants.

Nevertheless, western Europeans and northern Europeans who spoke English as a second language were discriminated against, too. The slowness of some of those immigrants, particularly Germans, to learn English exacerbated the situation. Also, their tendency to live in enclaves and establish ethnic language newspapers were friction points. Members of Americanized groups regularly chided or physically attacked non-conformists: "If you don't like it here, you can go back where you came from." But that hare-brained solution was too simplistic and too short-sighted. Immigrants from all countries and cultures, even those deemed socially and religiously undesirable, were needed to help build the new nation–to farm the fields, mine the ore, lay the railroad tracks, dig the canals, settle the prairies, and otherwise provide much needed human labor.

Beginning in the 1890s, peoples from eastern and southern Europe were the numerically dominant immigrants in the United States. That prompted some of their critics to spout racist statements, even in pub-