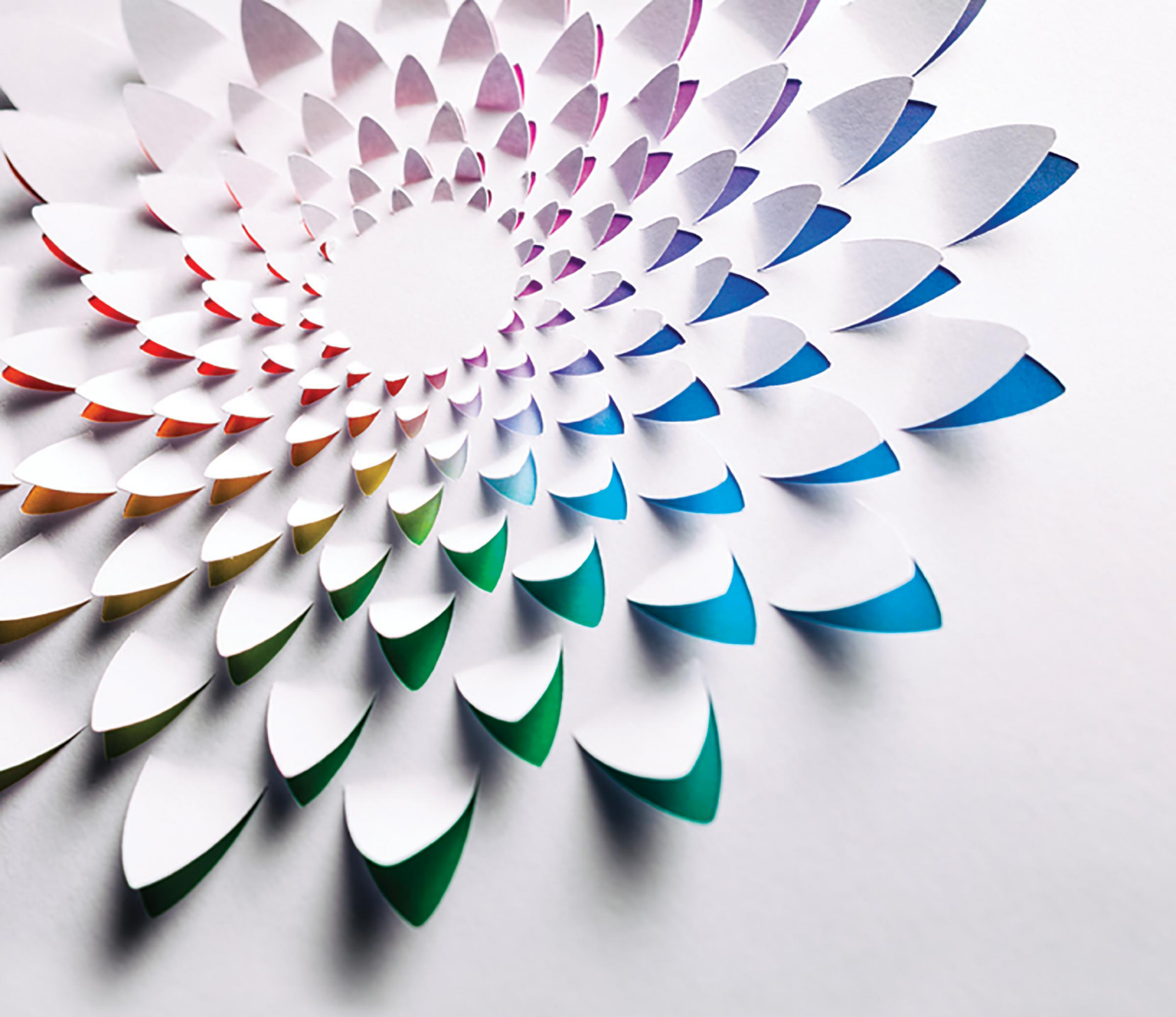

GARRETT McAULIFFE and ASSOCIATES // THIRD EDITION

CULTURALLY ALERT COUNSELING

A COMPREHENSIVE INTRODUCTION

Culturally Alert Counseling

Third Edition

To the survivors of Black 47 and their progeny. May they remember the work of healing knows no boundaries.

Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 800 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

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Culturally Alert Counseling

A Comprehensive Introduction

Third Edition

Garrett J. McAuliffe and Associates
Old Dominion University

SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
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FOR INFORMATION:

SAGE Publications, Inc.
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
E-mail: order@sagepub.com

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Preface to the Third Edition

Counselors enter the field to effect changes in people's lives. That is a given, as shown in countless admissions essays. "I want to help others," most counselors declare. This book is dedicated to that goal, but with an expanded target. Instead of focusing only on the individual, the writers of this text aim at a broader effort. Our aim echoes the original focus of the so-called father of counseling, Frank Parsons, who declared that the fundamental purpose of counseling was social improvement. Counselors might wonder how they might effect such change. After all, we are not politicians. Thus counselors may not understand their role in bigger social change. Lest counselors believe that the social change endeavor is overly optimistic, it should be noted that we have seen remarkable social changes in the past 50 years. Despite setbacks and miles to go, racial relations have improved in many respects since the 1960s. Out of the bad old days of overt racism has come a beginning awareness that it is not OK. And yet a more covert racism lies near the surface of everyday discourse, cloaked in the guise of "all lives matter" (which they do) and "build more walls." And in the vein of women's and sexual minority rights, a positive shift in attitudes and some laws have aimed at more equity. But racism, sexism, and heterosexism have not vanished.

The work of improving inclusion and social equity thus remains. For those positive social changes that have occurred, some credit can go to the counselors, writers, and activists of each era. With such progress, we remain hopeful. However, positive human relations are never a guarantee. We must remain vigilant. We must be ever restless to ensure that dominance by the powerful is challenged at every turn, that they do not reign unquestioned and supreme as they often have and still do in many cases. As author Robert Kegan says, social change does not pass on through the genes, but it requires constant education. In the same vein, Frederick Douglass was adamant: Power concedes nothing without a demand. And your work as a counselor is to demand social equity.

Culturally alert counseling is moral enterprise. It is an effort at *tikkun olam,* the Hebrew word that refers to renewing or repairing the world. Culturally alert counseling is an attempt to include all other human beings in the great work of helping and healing, with no exceptions. That work is guided by counselors' constant vigilance about their cultural assumptions, about their clients' worldviews, and ultimately, the norms that guide their organizations, their communities, their nation, and the world. Those norms have often represented the hegemonic sovereignty of the mainstream. As a result those who are on the margins, commonly sexual minorities, nondominant racial and ethnic groups, women, and those who are poorer are disregarded. Instead, we return to Parsons's original intent that counseling is ultimately about social improvement.

Counselors can no longer in conscience leave anyone out. Such inclusion has not been easy for human beings over the centuries. Class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity and religion have been used as dividers. Counselors, above all professionals, are asked to look into those great divides, to see themselves in others, to see others in others, to know the rich differences among mixed-up human beings, and to relish the great similarities. The philosopher Richard Rorty explains this obligation as "reminding ourselves to keep trying to expand our sense of 'us' as far as we can . . . [to include] the family in the cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the mountains, then of the unbelievers beyond the seas (and, perhaps of all . . . the menials who, all this time, have been doing our dirty work)." Rorty's words reflect the personalist dictum that every person has inherent worth. Rorty asks us to stretch our vision, making an intentional effort to honor people whom we might instinctively think of as "they" rather than "us." To know others as they are, by knowing them well, is our obligation as counselors. And that is a central purpose of this book.

FOUR GUIDING DIMENSIONS BEHIND THE BOOK

The third edition of this book is an even more comprehensive text for emerging counselors and psychotherapists of all kinds. It continues to be written with four guidelines in mind. Each has been addressed in this third edition. The writers hope that these dimensions make this book both useful and inspiring. They are *depth, breadth, readability, and applicability.*

Depth refers to two levels. First is the conceptual depth, or framework, that is presented in the notion of constructivism. Constructivism is here defined as the simple idea that all human beings make meanings in their own culturally influenced ways. Constructivism reminds counselors to be humble, to realize that they are always making sense, and to take responsibility for the sense that they are making. To aid in that sense-making, further conceptual frameworks are provided in this book for the journey. In the first three chapters, the notions of critical consciousness, ethno- or culture-centrism, privilege, social stratification, pluralism, dominance and nondominance, and oppression are examined in hopes that they might guide the reader through the remaining chapters.

The second dimension of depth lies in the quality of the subsequent chapters on ethnic and social groups in this book. Chapter authors who are known experts in each culture or topic have been recruited and vetted to provide the most accurate and meaningful insights into the human conditions of each cultural group.

Breadth is the second of the four impulses that led to this book. This revision further expands the inclusion of significant social and cultural groups that counselors are likely to encounter. The notion of culture can be writ large, and it is here. New chapters on counseling refugees and immigrants and counseling military veterans have been added to the previously new chapter on counseling and disability. As was emphasized in the previous editions, culture no longer only refers to race or ethnicity. Clients' and counselors' worlds are also culturally constructed through the lenses of social class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and religion. And now large populations represented by refugees, immigrants, and military veterans, with their particular needs, are also included. This book therefore honors those populations with corresponding chapters. Before I lose some readers, let me note that this book also speaks to white European American middle-class men. Members of the so-called dominant groups also face challenges based on their cultural assumptions. Counselors need to know that, and members of this group need to know themselves.

Readability continues to be a third major impulse that led to the writing of this book. Much textbook and academic writing on culture and counseling continues to suffer from the malady of academic prose: It is overly abstract, insufficiently illustrative, and often wooden. To remedy this problem, the editor selected writers who could bring out the power of this material in vital, rich ways. Thus the text is littered with vignettes, anecdotes, figures, and exercises that make the concepts come alive. We have tried to make the writing clear and accessible. It has helped this author immensely to have been an English major and English teacher in the past to the chagrin and benefit of chapter authors.

Finally, *applicability* guided the writing of the book. A comprehensive analysis of current practices led to the final chapter on actual skills to be used in culturally alert counseling. Counselors are practical people. They must act. Multicultural counseling skills have at best been alluded to and untested in the past. This book continues to stretch that boundary by presenting explicit sets of counseling skills that might be used with culture in mind. It should be noted that there are complementary videos available through Sage publications to accompany some of the chapters in this book. Those videos illustrate skills for a number of the specific populations in this book. They are useful for demonstrations in class.

Here is a brief summary of the topics in chapters that are upcoming. As counselors and students of counseling, you are also asked to know yourself well to better know others. At the end of the first two chapters, you will perhaps be less likely to project your cultural assumptions onto others; you will be more likely to listen and wait. Then Chapter 3 launches into the topic of human equality, with a description of social stratifications and how to challenge those that are harmful through advocacy.

The journey then leads in Chapters 4 and 5 to explorations of ethnicity and race—topics that include all readers. No one is left out of this book, whether they are in a dominant or majority group or in a less-powerful minority. The following seven chapters (Chapters 6 through 12) describe specific ethnic groupings. In those pages, readers will come to better know both themselves and others. Next, in Chapters 13 through 19, are readings and activities devoted to exploring the wide worlds of social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability, immigrants and refugees, and military veterans.

As mentioned earlier, the book ends with an expanded depiction of the key skills for doing culturally alert counseling. Such skills can be confusing for the counselor. Culturally alert counseling is not a specific counseling theory but rather an application of skills to particular populations at times. Chapter 20 is an attempt to clarify the very practice of culturally alert counseling. With exposure to actual counseling skills, readers will be better equipped to apply the understandings that they have learned and try them out in solidarity with

those now-familiar others. These skills are vividly illustrated by the complementary six-part training video series *Culturally Alert Counseling: Working With African American, Asian, Latino/Latina, Conservative Religious, and Gay/Lesbian Youth Clients.* One of the six videos parallels Chapters 18 and 19 and comes with this text.

Enhancements of the Third Edition

This third edition of *Culturally Alert Counseling,* after six years of feedback, success, reconsideration, and pondering, continues to be a labor of love for me and all of the coauthors.

A revision should significantly enhance a prior version of a book. And so I expect that we, the authors, have done so. Change for change's sake only speaks to restlessness. Change for improvement's sake speaks to a responsible enhancement in a book. We have chosen the latter route. Many of the authors are the same experts on each topic from the successful first edition. Two of the chapters, namely, the one on European Americans and the one on gender, have been completely rewritten. Other authors have revised their work with the wisdom of six years of living, reading, and testing.

So we have built on the first two editions with wisdom that can be gained only from experience. Here are a few of the new and revised elements in this second edition:

- A new, comprehensive **chapter on counseling refugees and immigrants**. This topic was long needed. The chapter is the result of an international recruiting effort to find experts on this continuing and ever-expanding population, whose mental health needs are often ignored in the popular literature. The coauthors from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, offer insights that speak to the empathy and understanding that is required for these groups.
- An original and new **chapter on counseling military veterans.** Erin Kern brings a fresh understanding of military culture and of military veterans' unique challenges.
- Expanded treatment of **bisexuality** as an often minimized and ignored topic in the field (Chapter 15).
- Placement of the topic of **transgender** in the chapter on gender. This has been a response to input from members of the transgender community that there is a gender phenomenon, not only a sexual orientation matter. The reader, however, might wish to include the section on transgender in the readings for Chapter 15 on sexual minorities.
- A new section on **microaggressions and gender** and expanded treatment of **nature and nurture** in the development of sex and gender in Chapter 14.
- Creation of a **"class genogram"** activity for counselors to use and an expanded treatment of class-alert counseling practices, including presentation of a new section on **class-alert client assessment.**
- Expanded descriptions of the **growing South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Latino/a ethnic groups** in the United States and counseling practices for these groups.
- A completely revised chapter on **Native Americans.**

THE CHALLENGE TO COUNSELORS

Let us go back to the original impulse behind this book. I asked some years ago, "Why is there a book on culturally alert counseling at all?" We cannot take this for granted. In my work with international populations, I have noted that this topic is not required for the training of counselors in many countries. It is therefore somewhat of an anomaly outside of U.S. and Canadian contexts. Counselors and other countries, when seeing this book and this certification requirement, express a wish that their communities would offer such education.

The work of counseling is like almost no other work. It is difficult. Complex. Personally challenging. Ambiguous. Emotional. Concrete. Abstract. It takes a particular kind of person to encounter other human beings in their uncertainty and pain, to hold them, and to journey with them on the bumpy road to becoming more fully human. Those of you who have chosen to accompany other human beings through their doubts and discoveries must therefore be prepared. There is much to learn and try, and try again, and learn.

It was once perhaps simpler. Counselors assumed that they worked with the individual shorn of any cultural dimensions. Now we have acknowledged the cultural component is intertwined in the life stories of

every person. Clients bring with them ancestors, parents, religious teachers, ethnic models, and neighborhood friends. There are films seen and lyrics heard. There are the aunts and uncles of childhood, the siblings of yesterday and today, the weddings, the memorial services, and the dinner table conversations. All are represented in clients' memories, in their strivings, their manners, and in their morals. All sit with the client before you. Thus the work of counseling is now made larger by our recognition of these presences in the room.

The field did slog on for many years without a full appreciation of these silent, and noisy, presences in clients' lives. But there was a cost. Members of nondominant groups and poor folks didn't seek counseling, or dropped out early, when the field was seen as a white middle-class endeavor. I know this fact personally—this lower middle-class Irish American kid from Queens had no access to counseling, nor would go for it, even if he were lost, anxious, scared, confused, or addicted. And we were all of those. The community didn't support personal exploration or vulnerability. The working-class environment didn't usually value probing for personal meanings and seeking right relations with others. But to counseling I did go—only after it seemed acceptable to tell all to a stranger. We also feared that counselors might not understand our ethnic group or our religion. And sometimes they didn't. Counselors of the time rejected religion as superstition but prayed to the god of analysis and insight. They didn't know that they were engaged in a great classist enterprise of trying to heal the white upper-middle class. Counseling must now be bigger than that. It must embrace the complexity that culture brings. That is the only way to do this good work. With the inclusion of culture into the work of counseling, we extend possibility of human solidarity that we so long for.

Garrett J. McAuliffe
Old Dominion University

Addendum to the Preface for the Third Edition: The Use of Non-Binary Pronouns

The writers of these chapters have struggled with how to deal with what I will call the great gender pronoun debate. As persons who are transgender have been recognized both in public spaces and in the field of counseling, the binary pronouns of *she/he, her/him,* and *her/his* have been found lacking. They do not represent the fluid gender identity of many persons who are transgender. As we write these words, the move to use words such as *they, them,* and *their* to represent the singular rather than the plural is increasing. We recognize the importance of shifting to gender nonbinary language. A number of these chapters have acknowledged the emerging shift by using nonbinary pronouns. We chose the inclusive pronouns *they, them,* and *their* to represent the singular person, although grammatically incorrect as of the time of this writing, to reflect the range of transgender identities. We, the authors, ask for your understanding and encourage you to use gender-fluid language.

We believe that inclusion and empowerment are more important than adhering to rigid grammar rules!

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About the Editor

Garrett J. McAuliffe has worked as a counselor educator, counselor, and school teacher for over 40 years. In his professional life, he has strived to increase equity in society through his counseling, teaching, and writing. He is particularly committed to empowering learners. Toward those ends, he has taught in the public schools of New York City and counseled at the community college and university levels in Massachusetts, where he also served as the director of learning assistance programs at Greenfield Community College. Since 1988, he has been a counselor educator at Old Dominion University, in Norfolk, Virginia. He grew up in a tightly connected extended family in a multiethnic neighborhood in New York City and is the grandchild of Irish immigrants. He received his Bachelor of Arts magna cum laude in English literature, with Highest Honors, from Queens College of the City University of New York, in 1971. He was named to Phi Beta Kappa for his academic performance at Queens College in 1971. He took from his undergraduate education both a love of ideas and words and a desire to turn ideas into social and personal change actions. Toward that end, he pursued his graduate counseling studies at the University at Albany and at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, receiving his doctorate in 1985. In his time at Old Dominion University, he has produced six books, over 80 articles, more than 35 book chapters, and six training videos. His great love continues to be teaching, in all of its forms.

About the Contributors

Joshua Abraham is currently a doctoral student in the Counselor Education program at Old Dominion University. He holds a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from West Chester University. His research interest is in the college student population.

Nancy E. Adams is a Clinical Professional Counselor in Las Vegas, Nevada. Although she works predominately with children with a keen focus on how children are affected by trauma, Nancy spent several months at the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada as a volunteer crisis counselor for hospital staff affected by "1 October" (the 2017 Route 91 Harvest Country Music Festival mass shooting). It was during this time that Nancy was recruited to help establish the Nevada Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force where she currently serves as co-chair. Nancy has been described as having a unique and exceptional ability to connect with individuals from all age groups and cultures. When she is not connecting with children and their families, Nancy can be found researching the importance of school-based mental health services for which she is an ardent proponent. She has also been known to edit doctoral dissertations and company policies "just for fun."

Rachel Carretta, M.A., is currently a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Her research interests include LGBTQ mental health issues as well as the sociocultural factors impacting women's psychological well-being.

Mona Danner is Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Old Dominion University. Social inequalities, crime control policies, pretrial justice, and globalization comprise her primary research and teaching interests. Dr. Danner has presented at conferences throughout the U.S., in Europe, Latin America, Australia, and at the NGO Forum held in conjunction with the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing, China. She regularly conducts workshops on issues for women in academia and on the process of negotiating academic contracts. A reviewer for numerous scholarly journals, she has served as associate editor or on the editorial board of four journals, and as a reviewer for NIJ and NSF grants and for departmental and graduate programs, in addition to having held a number of administrative positions including Associate Dean at ODU. Dr. Danner has published op-eds, been featured in television and radio interviews, and been quoted by the popular print media.

Edward A. Delgado-Romero received his doctorate in counseling psychology from the University of Notre Dame. He is the Associate Dean for Faculty and Staff Services and Professor at the University of Georgia. His primary research interests are multicultural psychology and Latino/a psychology. He is an elder of the National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA), an association he helped found.

Jhokania De Los Santos is a doctoral candidate in the Counseling Psychology program at the University of Georgia. She holds a Masters of Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Integrative Health Services from Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research interests focus on the delivery of mental health care to racial-ethnic minority groups with a focus on integrated care and linguistically competent services.

Karen Eriksen received her doctorate from George Mason University and her Master's degree from California State University, Fullerton. She previously conducted leadership training and was the President of the Eriksen Institute. Previously she directed a counselor education department and taught at several universities. Prior to that, she practiced as a Licensed Professional Counselor and Marriage and Family Counselor in Virginia, Michigan, and California. She has specialties in family therapy, addictions, survivors of sexual abuse, and the intersection of spirituality and counseling. She has authored or co-edited 12 books on counselor advocacy, counselor education, diagnosis, life skills, values, parenting, and creativity. Her research and publication areas are counselor preparation, constructive development, multiculturalism, and spirituality. Dr. Eriksen has been active in leadership of several state and national professional associations.

Kathy M. Evans is an associate professor and program coordinator for Counselor Education at the University of South Carolina. She received her doctorate in counseling

psychology from the Pennsylvania State University. Her research, publications, and national presentations address issues important to African Americans, multicultural and feminist issues, and multicultural career development. In addition to serving on the editorial board for the Journal of Counseling and Development, she has held national and regional offices in several professional counseling organizations.

Jesse Fox, Ph.D., earned his degree from the University of Central Florida and most recently spent several years on the faculty at Loyola University, Maryland. He has experience working with a range of clinical populations that spans a college counseling, outpatient addiction treatment, community mental health and private practice.

Jasper (J.T.) Garrett is a retired state/county health director in North Carolina. As a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, he learned under several Medicine Men and Women. He holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He is author and co-author of numerous article and written five books on Cherokee cultural ways and traditions. He has been a student and now elder himself with over 50 years studying Cherokee cultural heritage, language, and traditional teachings. His vision and life passion has always been to encourage a better understanding and appreciation of the "old ways" in American Indian culture and heritage. He is retired from the U.S. Public Health Service, Indian Health Service where he had the opportunity to travel to and work with most of the 565 tribes in the U.S.

Michael T. Garrett, Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, is a consultant and certified/licensed school counselor. He holds a Ph.D. in Counseling and Counselor Education and a M.Ed. in Counseling and Development from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. As author and coauthor of more than 90 professional publications dealing with multiculturalism and social justice, group work, wellness and spirituality, school counseling, children and adolescents, and counseling Native Americans, Dr. Garrett has sought to advance professional understanding of working with diverse populations across therapeutic and educational settings and integrating indigenous healing practices as a way of bridging the cultural gap.

Yvette Q. Getch received her doctorate in Rehabilitation Education and Research from the University of Arkansas in 1996. She has over 30 years of experience in the field of rehabilitation and disability. She is currently an associate professor at the University of South Alabama. She has more than 50 publications and her primary research interests include the impact of childhood chronic illness and disability on the family, school accommodations for children with chronic illness and disabilities, advocacy issues for children and adults with disabilities, and social justice advocacy for individuals from traditionally marginalized populations.

Edwin Gómez is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at East Carolina University. He earned his doctorate from Michigan State University in Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Urban Studies. He has M.S. from Rochester Institute of Technology in Hospitality and Travel Management and an M.A from Old Dominion University in Linguistics, with a specialization in English as a Second Language. His research interests include urban recreation issues, sense of community in neighborhoods, and recreation issues related to racial and ethnic group inclusion.

Patricia Goodspeed-Grant is an emeritus professor in the Department of Counselor Education at the College at Brockport, State University of New York. She holds a doctorate in Counseling and Human Development from the University of Rochester, an M.S. in Organizational Psychology from Springfield College in Massachusetts, and is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in New York. She specializes in qualitative research methodologies. Her research and writing interests center around the meaning of work and unemployment, the loss of relationships through death or divorce, issues related to social class and counseling, and the emotional aspects of obesity and weight loss.

Lisa Grayshield, an enrolled member of the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling & Educational Psychology at New Mexico State University. She holds an M.A. in Counseling and Educational Psychology, and a Ph.D. in Counseling and Educational Psychology, both from the University of Nevada Reno. Dr. Grayshield's research interests focus on Indigenous Ways of Knowing (IWOK) in counseling and psychology, specifically, the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge forms as viable options for the way counseling and psychology is conceptualized, taught, practiced, and researched. She serves the local community as a board member for Indigenous Nations for Community Action (INCA).

Tim Grothaus is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and Human Services at Old Dominion University. He received a doctorate in counselor education from the College of William & Mary after serving almost 20 years as a school counselor, teacher, therapist, coordinator of a youth leadership development program, and youth minister. His primary research interests include: cultural responsiveness, social justice, school counseling, and counselor development.

Julie Hakim-Larson is a Professor of Child Clinical Psychology at the University of Windsor in Ontario. She received her Ph.D. in Life-Span Developmental Psychology from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and received postdoctoral training in Child Clinical Psychology. She is a licensed psychologist in Michigan and Ontario. Her research interests include emotion and families, and mental health and culture. Since 1997, her research has included collaborative projects involving Arab Americans in Southeastern Michigan, which has the largest concentration of immigrants from the Middle East in North America.

Tara Hill is an Associate Professor and Director of the School Counseling Program at Wright State University.

Siqi Huang is currently a doctoral student in the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Windsor. She holds a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of Windsor. Her research interests include intergenerational conflict in Chinese Canadians and multicultural issues in both research and clinical settings.

Shelley A. Jackson spent 10 years working as a school counselor prior to becoming a counselor educator. She received her doctorate in 1997 from Georgia State University. Since 1997 she has worked as a play therapist in addition to teaching full-time at Walden University. She has published in the areas of school counseling, expressive arts therapy, and counselor supervision. Her research and contributions to the literature in the area of bibliotherapy and counseling with children have been cited frequently. Her approach to teaching is student centered. She is mindful of the interaction between student's professional selves and their personal selves. She believes that who you are as a person, is part of who you are as a counselor, therefore, her own personal interests follow closely to her professional interests.

Adrianne L. Johnson, Ph.D., LPCC-S, earned her doctorate in Counselor Education from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville in 2007. She is an Associate Professor in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. She has published and internationally presented on various topics related to best practices and approaches in clinical mental health counseling, higher education, and diversity inclusivity. She is the Executive Editor for the Journal of Counseling Practice and the Past-President of the Ohio Counseling Association. Scholarly interests include counselor training and social justice in the field of counseling.

Sara Keshavarzi is a doctoral candidate in the adult track of the Clinical Psychology program at the University of Windsor, Ontario. She holds a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from the University of Windsor. Her research interests include immigrant and refugee stress and coping, identity development, culture, and religion.

Bryan S. K. Kim is a Professor of Psychology and Director of MA Program in Counseling Psychology at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. He holds a PhD in Counseling/Clinical/School Psychology (Counseling Psychology emphasis) from the University of California at Santa Barbara. His research focuses on multicultural counseling process and outcome, the measurement of cultural constructs, and counselor education and supervision. Dr. Kim is Editor of *The Counseling Psychologist,* Associate Editor of *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development,* and Past Editor of *Asian American Journal of Psychology.* He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (Divisions 17, 29, and 45), Asian American Psychological Association, and International Academy of Intercultural Research.

Dr. Ben C. H. Kuo is a Full Professor of Clinical Psychology and the Director of Multicultural Clinical and Counselling Research Group at the University of Windsor, Canada. As a researcher, Dr. Kuo is actively conducting studies and publishing in the areas of cross-cultural psychology and multicultural counseling/psychotherapy. As a clinician, Dr. Kuo has worked and treated international students, immigrants, refugees, racial/ethnic minorities and non-minority individuals in U.S., Canada, and Asia. In addition, Dr. Kuo is an experienced and active clinical supervisor who teaches and supervises Clinical Ph.D students in working with refugees and culturally-diverse populations. Furthermore, Dr. Kuo has lectured and taught internationally in Taiwan, China, Thailand, New Zealand, Russia, Brazil,

Poland, U.K., and Canada, as a distinguished visiting professor and/or teaching faculty. Dr. Kuo has received multiple distinctions for his research, teaching, and service, including the *University of Windsor Outstand Research Award: Established Researcher/Scholar Category* in 2017, the *Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences' Dr. Kathleen E. McCrone Teaching Award* in 2017, and the *Mary Lou Dietz Equity Leadership Award* in 2019.

Chris Leeth received his doctorate from the University of Texas at San Antonio. His research interests include gender roles, masculinity, bullying, and health and wellness.

Karen L Mackie is an associate professor (clinical) in the Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development at the University of Rochester. She holds a doctorate in Counseling and Human Development from the University of Rochester and is a licensed mental health counselor and permanently certified school counselor in New York. Her scholarly and research interests include feminist and cultural studies perspectives on the work of counselors and counseling, post-modern approaches to therapy with families over the life-course, creativity and improvisation in counselor education and supervision, and critical perspectives on gender, race and social class within counseling theories and practices.

Sylvia Nassar is currently a Professor and Program Coordinator of Counselor Education at North Carolina State University. Applying the lens of social justice and advocacy both domestically and internationally, she has served in a variety of clinical mental health, schools, and college settings over the past 30 years. Her background includes a doctorate in counselor education and professional counseling license. Her scholarship spans multicultural, gender, and career development issues, with a special focus on Arab American acculturation and ethnic identity development. Dr. Nassar is currently co-editing a special issue for the Journal of Counseling & Development on operationalizing the Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies, of which she is a co-developer.

Christina R Noel received her doctorate in special education from Vanderbilt University. She is currently an associate professor of special education at Western Kentucky University. She teaches courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs. She is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and her research interests include individual and classroom behavior management practices and international perspectives of inclusive educational practices.

Lori Notestine is a full-time Instructor and coordinator of the Clinical Mental Health program in the Department of Counseling & Human Services at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. Her research interests include women's and gender issues and intimate partner violence. She earned her Master's degree from Gonzaga University and her doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her primary interests include women's and gender issues in counseling, working with survivors of intimate partner violence, and gatekeeping in counselor education.

Yong S. Park is an assistant professor in the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California. He earned his doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology from the Counseling/Clinical/School Psychology program at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research interests revolve around the cultural and psychological aspects of providing professional services to Asian Americans. More specifically, he is interested in examining how relational expectations, family dynamics, and racism experiences affect the counseling process and outcome with Asian American clients.

Ashley D. Paterson is a Psychologist working for the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board. She works with students who have neurodevelopmental disorders as well as mental health challenges. Many recently immigrated to Canada with their families. She also works in private practice supporting adults with a range of psychological needs. She completed her doctoral training in clinical psychology at the University of Windsor, Ontario. Her research focused on identity development and acculturation within families of ethnically diverse backgrounds. Specifically, she examined psychological outcomes as they related to acculturation, enculturation, and social support among Arab youth living in Canada. She also examined the role of sibling conflict in identity development.

Erin Kern Popejoy is an assistant professor in the Counselor Education program at the University of Arkansas, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She received her doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Erin has worked in a variety of clinical settings, including private practice, community agencies, and residential substance abuse. Her research

interests include military populations, grief and trauma, use of creativity in counseling and supervision, and personal and professional identity development.

Tarrell Awe Agahe Portman holds professional licenses as a K-12 school counselor, school psychological examiner, licensed mental health counselor, and teacher. She earned her MA degree in Guidance and Counseling from Southeast Missouri State University, and received her Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville. Her research is focused on the Translation of Theory to Practice in Counseling as it interacts with three specific areas of counselor development (supervision and consultation), multiculturalism (particularly American Indians and giftedness), and education reform (action research in education).

Cristalís Capielo Rosario received her doctorate in counseling psychology from the University of Georgia in 2016. She is currently a tenure-track assistant professor in the Counseling and Counseling Psychology at Arizona State University. Capielo Rosario's programmatic research centers on understanding the sociopolitical, cultural, and individual determinants that explain health disparities among Latinx, particularly Puerto Ricans. She also writes about multicultural competence and multiculturally informed ethical standards.

Dr. Daya Singh Sandhu, Ed.D., NCC, NCCC, NCSC, LPCC, has been serving as the Director of Research and Professor in the doctoral program of Counselor Education and Supervision at the Lindsey Wilson College, Columbia, Kentucky since August 2014. He is a distinguished emeritus professor of research and chairman of the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology at the University of Louisville from where he retired in 2014. Dr. Sandhu has served the profession of counselor education and supervision and counseling psychology with distinction for more than 35 years. Dr. Sandhu is a prolific author and researcher who has published more than 125 articles in refereed journals and authored or edited 15 texts including two books in Punjabi Poetry. Dr. Daya Singh Sandhu served as the National President of the American Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) (2009–2010). He also chaired several national committees of the American Counseling Association including, ACA Research and Knowledge Committee, ACA International Committee, etc. Dr. Sandhu is a Fellow of the American Counseling Association and Diplomate of the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA). He launched the Association of Mental Health Counselors of India on May 4, 2010, currently affiliated with the Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, Punjab India. Dr. Daya Singh Sandhu received Senior Fulbright Research Fellowship for India three times (in 2002, 2010, and 2017).

M. Szymanski, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Psychology, specializing in counseling psychology, at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and Editor of the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. She has published more than 95 journal articles and book chapters. Her research focuses on examining how external oppression, internalized oppression, traditional/restrictive gender role socialization processes, and culture influence individual experience and psychological and relational health among members of marginalized groups. She also examines positive identity, resilience, activism, and well-being despite the challenges associated with a marginalized status.

Renée Taylor is a Doctoral Candidate in Adult Clinical Psychology at the University of Windsor. Her research primarily focussed on the cultural, psychological, social, and systemic factors that influence psychological help-seeking among Black Canadians.

Sherry C. Wang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Santa Clara University. She earned her BA in Psychology from Smith College, and her MA and PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at the University of Illinois-Chicago, where she had a rotation opportunity working with survivors of political torture. She was formerly an Assistant Professor at the University of Southern Mississippi, where she expanded her focus from immigrant and refugee mental health to examine barriers of care for African Americans living in the Deep South. Her research interests are focused on the sociocultural determinants of ethnic minority health disparities, such as the role of cultural context, stigma, and oppression in health outcomes (e.g., hazardous alcohol use, risky sexual behaviors, HIV). To better understand how individual and systemic factors perpetuate oppression, she draws from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches.

Chet Weld has been a Christian-based counselor for 35 years. Presently, he serves as a marriage and individual

counselor at Renewal Centers Counseling Services, Tucson, AZ. Licensed by the Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners, Dr. Weld earned his B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan University, his M.Ed. in Counseling and Guidance from the University of Arizona, and his Ed.D. in Counseling Psychology from Argosy University. Dr. Weld is certified by the International Board of Christian Counselors as a Board Certified Professional Christian Counselor and has published in The Journal of Psychology and Theology and other journals.

Cyrus Williams is an associate professor in the Counseling Department at Regent University. He holds a Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of Florida and a Master's in Counseling from the University of Hartford. Dr. Williams' primary research interests include: multiculturalism, advocacy counseling, addictive behaviors and career development. Specifically, he focuses on applying non-cognitive variables, such as hope, resilience and strength-based interventions to at-risk populations.

PART I

Key Concepts

Culture and Diversity Defined

Garrett J. McAuliffe

1

If indeed we could sustain a life in which we would only meet people from our own culture . . . we might need to learn only the rules of our own culture and adhere to them. But such a world is rapidly disappearing if not already gone.

Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads*, 1998, p. 208

[My book] celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. . . . It is the great possibility that mass migration gives to the world, and I have tried to embrace it. . . . Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings. Like many millions of people, I am a bastard child of history. Perhaps we all are, black and brown and white, leaking into one another . . . like flavors when you cook.

Salman Rushdie on his novel *The Satanic Verses* (Rushdie, 1992, p. 394)

Nothing human is alien to me.

The Roman writer Terence

The three quotes that open this chapter capture the fundamental message of this book: Counselors must embrace the kaleidoscope that is human diversity while at the same time remembering that all humans have much in common. With that paradox in mind, the counselor can be ready to do ethical, culturally alert counseling.

COUNSELING AND CULTURE

The field of counseling cannot be separated from the study of culture. After all, counseling began in the early 20th century with an earnest attempt at social reform by helping poor, orphaned youth to make good life choices. In that tradition, the work of counseling can be seen as a hopeful, and a moral, enterprise. Counselors embrace a world of possibility, as difficult as that may be at times.

The Dismissal of the "Other"

Clients come to counselors wounded by the slings and arrows of living. Some of those wounds are created by other humans, humans who find the "other" to be distasteful, foreign, dismiss-able. Some people have been heard to say, "After all, they are 'not like us,' and we cannot understand them because they are . . . gay, black, disabled, Jewish, Christian, poor, white, rich, Asian, Mexican, female, Arab, atheist, or Anglo." And the list of exclusions goes on.

Counseling: A Hopeful Venture

By contrast, counselors commit to a hopeful vision: They imagine a world in which there are fewer such wounds. And they help create that world. Counselors embrace a moral vision of human solidarity; they commit themselves to principles that go beyond any particular group or place. Counselors cherish the "unexpected combinations of human beings," to quote Salman Rushdie (1992), that is the world and always has been. Those combinations include the Latino/a migrant worker in North Carolina, the African American father in Seattle, the transgender adolescent in Louisiana, the Muslim immigrant in Michigan, the evangelical Christian in Texas, and the white Southerner in Georgia. And those are but a few descriptors for the ineluctable human diversity.

The Risk of Stereotyping

Oh, and it must also be said right away that no one individual "is" any one of those categories. The reader must immediately be warned that this book is not a venture into stereotyping. People bring their own versions of the cultural story to life based on unique socialization experiences and individual temperament.

So counselors are hereby welcomed to a world of "mélange" and "hotch-potch," a world in which their own points of view must be continually extended as "newness" enters. This book is indeed a "love song to our mongrel selves." The following vignettes will demonstrate the themes and movements of that song. It is a song that the reader must learn to sing, sometimes while improvising, but always with great heart.

The counselor is a middle-age American white male of second-generation Irish ancestry who was raised Catholic in a working- to lower middle-class neighborhood in Boston. He is middle class and heterosexual. His client is a 53-year-old Boston fire captain who is also Irish and Catholic.

The counselor and his client probably share many cultural similarities, such as a tendency to suppress negative feelings, especially sadness and pain; appreciation of having fun with groups of people (called "good craic," pronounced "crack" in Irish); an inclination to liberally drink alcohol at social gatherings; enthusiasm for a good song or a sentimental occasion; appreciation of "the talk" as a means of elaborating on experience; a predisposition to indirectness in expressing feelings; and the use of humor, especially sarcasm ("slagging"), as a substitute for intimacy. The counselor may, therefore, make some assumptions about his client without asking. Although the counselor will need to confirm these hunches, they will give him a head start in probing his client's worldview.

Yet the counselor and client, for all their similarities, may not see the world through the same eyes. In each of the following areas, counselor and client differ. For example, when discussing his marital difficulties, the client cannot conceive of divorce. In addition, he does not expect his wife to be interested in sex. Unlike the counselor, he does not like to show his feelings or even tell them to anyone. He hides physical discomforts, even from himself. He believes that drinking to excess is an acceptable social practice. He considers his age to be "old," and therefore he engages in no physical exercise. He is uncomfortable with "darker people," as he calls them, and considers immigrants to be ruining the city he loves. He belongs to Irish organizations and trumpets Irish accomplishments whenever he can. Finally, he believes that homosexual relationships are unnatural and immoral. Each of these views contrasts significantly with the counselor's perspectives as the counselor has questioned the inherited norms of his traditional ethnic culture and attempted to construct a more multicultural set of values.

A Korean couple and their 15-year-old son come into the public school counseling office unannounced one morning as the children are arriving at school. These recent arrivals to this rural community in western Kansas moved from Los Angeles for a job opportunity. Their son has been in the school for two months and seems morose, commenting that he has no friends among the largely Anglo-American student body.

The school counselor, who is a heterosexual European American, the grandson of Swedish immigrants, immediately begins making empathic responses to their concerns, mixed with exploratory open questions about their feelings and the meaning of the situation to them. The counselor probes into how the parents are feeling about the move and about leaving their homeland. The parents respond with few words and many silences.

The counselor then tells them that he would like to meet with their son alone to understand his perspective more clearly. He has been taught to encourage students to think for themselves and to express their views in these situations. After hearing the son describe his hesitance at engaging other students in conversation and banter, or about joining any student organization, the counselor calls the parents back into the room.

He then suggests that the parents teach their son assertive behavior and that the family members practice direct communication of needs and requests at home so that the son will learn how to have his needs met. He teaches them basic assertiveness principles about believing in one's individual rights, making eye contact, having a firm vocal tone, and clearly stating one's needs without necessarily apologizing or empathizing with others' situations. He further directs them to keep a daily record of successful assertive exchanges. The counselor hopes that this will help their son, and them, adjust to life in this new area. He asks them to come back the following Monday at 9 a.m. to tell him how it has worked. However, the parents do not show up. Furthermore, they take their child out of the public school the week after and send him to a nearby religious private school.

As demonstrated by the first vignette, culture pervades all counseling exchanges. Even though the counselor and client share the same ethnic culture, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and religion of origin, they are having a cross-cultural encounter because their experiences of those cultures differ significantly. The counselor and client have been enculturated into the same Irish Catholic ethnic group, but each has a different relationship to that culture. There is clearly more to culturally alert counseling than meets the eye.

The second vignette also demonstrates the complexity of culturally alert counseling because the counselor's presumption of Western communication styles and individualism likely resulted in the clients not returning. Here the culture clash was more obvious—an individualistic, direct European American style encountering (unsuccessfully) a collectivist Asian tradition. The counselor lost the clients by promoting an individual, rights-oriented, confrontational communication style that is better suited to the European American notion of assertiveness. The Korean clients instead saw their primary allegiance as being to the group, namely, the family and the community. That message included keeping negative feelings to oneself in favor of harmony for the group. The counselor had also failed to show any knowledge of Korean culture. That is unfortunate because such knowledge might have engendered trust. In addition, the counselor did not acknowledge the family's cultural isolation and thus failed to connect the clients with Korean persons and resources in the community. Finally, he did not acknowledge the social prejudice that is likely adding to some of the isolation and feelings of displacement.

In these two examples, the themes that will permeate this book emerge. A primary theme is that all counseling encounters are multicultural, in that the cultures of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion, and social class are always present. In these two vignettes, each of the following important counseling-related themes are embedded: attitudes toward health maintenance, sexuality, alcohol use, expectations of intimacy with a life partner, socialized gender roles, the valuing of emotional expressiveness versus emotional control, the level of acculturation to a dominant culture, ethnic identity, and being in a nondominant culture versus a more privileged one. And these are only two vignettes. The contemporary counselor is likely to be confronted with many more culturally saturated situations, for culture is everywhere in each human being's life. Culturally alert counseling is therefore defined as *a consistent readiness to identify the cultural dimensions of clients' lives and a subsequent integration of culture into counseling work.*

Preview of the Chapter

This chapter establishes a foundation for culturally alert counseling by responding to two of the three fundamental questions that must be asked of culturally alert counseling. First, the question "Why are culture and culturally alert counseling important?" is examined. The second question discussed is: "What is culture and culturally alert counseling?" The third and most critical question, namely, "How does one actually do culturally alert counseling?" will be addressed in each chapter, with a culmination in Chapter 20 on key practices in culturally alert counseling.

The current chapter is divided into three major sections. It begins with the aforementioned "Why" and "What" segments, followed by a presentation of the fundamental multicultural counseling competencies.

"WHY" CULTURALLY ALERT COUNSELING?

Whenever two people meet, it is a multicultural encounter. All individuals see the world, and are seen, through culturally infused lenses. Those lenses include ethnicity, race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ability status. Each client, and counselor, also brings a family-of-origin discourse to the encounter, with the accompanying assumptions of how to communicate, what is valued, and other relatively automatic norms. Two individuals never meet purely as individuals, for all humans are socially constructed; that is, they make meaning through their socialized lenses. Until relatively recently, little attention has been paid to culture by mental health professionals. And while the multicultural dimension of counseling has been maturing in the past two decades, there is still much to be learned (D'Andrea & Heckman, 2008).

There are at least two arguments for culturally alert counseling. One is inevitability. The other is equity.

Inevitability

One argument for culturally alert counseling is the inevitability of cross-cultural contact. More than ever before, people encounter cultural diversity daily in their schools and neighborhoods and through media. The quote from Robert Kegan (1998) that opens this chapter describes this sea change. He goes on to iterate the inevitability of cross-cultural encounters.

> Diversity of cultural experience may once have been the province of the adventurous, the open-minded, and those too poor to live where they wished. Tomorrow it will be the province of all. (p. 208)

Counselors can no longer assume that all they need to do is treat clients as somehow "pure" individuals. If that were the case, then culture wouldn't matter. But these words from sociologists Carol Aneshensel and Jo Phelan (1999) give the lie to the extreme individualist position:

> There are pronounced group differences in the course and consequences of mental illness . . . differences that . . . point to the . . . powerful influence of the social factors that differentiate one group from another. The impact of gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status are apparent at virtually every juncture. (p. xii)

Equity

A second argument for culturally alert counseling concerns equity and inclusiveness. The counseling field is dedicated to equity, that is, access for all people to the things that matter in society, like good education and jobs (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of this topic). This commitment has a long tradition, dating to the origin of the field in the early 20th century.

Inclusiveness is closely related to equity. Who creates the counseling practices, from what perspective? With whom in mind? Counseling cannot be an exclusive endeavor for middle-class dominant-group members. Counseling theories and practices are products of culture, despite their being considered universal. Counseling practice has been embedded in a largely heterosexual, male, middle-class, European, and European American perspective, which emphasize cultural notions such as self-actualization, human rights, achieved identity, choice theory, and autonomy.

These towering Western ideas have produced much good for some, reducing human suffering and increasing human potential, and are therefore to be honored. However, they have left others out. Stanley Sue and Amy Lam noted the inequality in mental health practice:

> Women, ethnic minorities, gay/lesbian/bisexuals, and individuals from lower social classes . . . have been subjected to detrimental stereotypes,

> have not been targeted for much psychological research, and are often underserved or inappropriately served in the mental health system. . . . There is an increasing urgency to provide effective treatment to these groups, as reflected in the "cultural competency" movement, which tries to identify the cultural knowledge, skills, and awareness that permit one to effectively work with clients from diverse populations. (2002, p. 401)

Examples of being "inappropriately served" include the following: Lesbians and gay men have been treated as maladjusted. Women have been seen as overly dependent and emotional and have been encouraged to follow limiting life paths. Many persons of color have been ignored; they, in turn, viewed counseling with suspicion.

That dominant-group bias is no longer possible. Nondominant groups of people have asserted their rights to be heard and to be dealt with. There is no going back to the previously mentioned "bad old days" of white, male, middle-class hegemony over cultural norms, values, and assumptions. "We are everywhere" is the refrain of formerly silent and voiceless minorities.

Here are some of the facts about diversity and culture in the United States:

- African Americans comprise about 13.4% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017a).
- Nationally, students of color constituted a majority in the public schools in 11 states and are a majority overall in the Southeast (Southern Education Foundation, 2010).
- Sixty-two percent of people entering the U.S. labor force are women and racial or ethnic minorities (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).
- Gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons make up at least 7% of the population and seek out counselors at high rates (Kane & Green, 2009; Rivers, McPherson, & Hughes, 2010).
- In 2016, there were 2,523 single-bias hate crime offenses against members of the LGBTQIA+ community (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018).
- Gender roles have become unclear for many, leading to distress over family and career commitments (Williams, 2003).
- In the United States, 74% of adults believe in God (Harris Poll, 2003).
- Asians are the largest recent immigrant group to the United States, comprising 35.9% of new immigrants in 2017 (Department of Homeland Security, 2017).
- The Latino/a community has become the largest ethnic minority in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b).
- African Americans continue to experience segregation and bias in housing and jobs, and their poverty rate is double that of European Americans, despite significant economic gains over the past 30 years (Parisi, Lichter, & Taquino, 2011).
- The median wealth of white households is 10 times that of black households and 8.3 times that of Hispanic households (Dettling, Hsu, Jacobs, Moore, & Thompson, 2017)

These facts matter for two reasons. One is ethical responsibility, and the other is professional self-interest.

Ethical Responsibility

In the case of ethical responsibility, counselors must have an internal commitment to equity in their lives. To undergird that stance, the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics preamble states, "[Counseling members] recognize diversity and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts" (ACA, 2014). Therefore, counselors must ask themselves, "Whom are we serving?" "Are these statistics important for our work?" "Are we part of the problem of, or the solution to, social inequity?" And "How are we acting to change the conditions that lead some people to have fewer obstacles, whereas others must scramble through the thicket of hidden and overt bias, limited opportunities, and legacies of deficit?"

Professional Self-Interest

The second reason for the urgency of culturally alert counseling is professional self-interest. If counselors are not convinced of its importance, their credibility will be challenged by both clients and

employers (Sue & Sue, 2008). Clients will ask, "Can you be trusted to help me?" A counselor's livelihood may depend on the answer. For example, counselors who adhere to an insight-oriented practice may lose clients from cultural groups who eschew public emotional expression and expect direct problem-solving action for life concerns. Such can be the case for many people from so-called collectivist cultures, such as traditional American Indian and East Asian cultures, where individual emotions are often considered secondary to group welfare.

This section on the "Why" of culturally alert counseling should end with a reminder: Culturally alert counseling is for all people, not only members of nondominant groups. *All* counselors and clients are "cultured." Every reader of this book has been constructed through many discourses that surround them, including white European American discourses, middle-class discourses, male discourses, heterosexual discourses, and Christian discourses. Culturally alert counseling is a way of recognizing the social influence in human life. That will become clearer in upcoming chapters of this book.

THE "WHAT" OF CULTURE AND CULTURALLY ALERT COUNSELING: KEY NOTIONS

This section explores the key notions of *culture* and *diversity*. These two notions are foundational. They pervade all chapters of this book. First, definitions are provided. Then related concepts are discussed, including the pervasiveness and invisibility of culture and the notion of discourse.

Defining Culture

Culture is defined here as the attitudes, habits, norms, beliefs, customs, rituals, styles, and artifacts that express a group's adaptation to its environment—that is, ways that are shared by group members and passed on over time. There are two parts to this definition representing internal and external dimensions to culture. Most obvious are the external expressions, the customs, rituals, and styles. But the internalized dimensions of culture are especially important for the work of counseling. They are represented by "attitudes, habits, norms, and beliefs" in the definition described. Those internalized assumptions inform clients' expectations about relationships, their career aspirations, and their self-esteem, to name just a few impacts of internalized culture. Internal aspects of culture that counselors might encounter include the following. In each case, the counselor needs to be mindful of the cultural dimension and bring it into the work.

- A middle-class African American teacher is uncertain about how to express herself in a culturally congruent way in the largely European American school in which she teaches.
- A man is so bottled up emotionally that he drinks, broods, and isolates himself because he doesn't feel able, as a male, to ask for help or to show sadness.
- A working-class 20-year-old woman can't imagine pursuing a medical career because she "doesn't know where to start" and can't imagine delaying paid work for school, plus she doesn't know where the money would come from for her training anyway.
- A Chinese American daughter of immigrants cannot figure out how to put together family loyalty with her desire to move across the country on her own to try an acting career.
- A gay 16-year-old boy is infatuated with another boy in the high school but is terrified of being found out.
- A Southern Anglo American woman would like to express her negative feelings directly but has learned "proper manners" so well that she finds herself being angry at herself for not saying what she feels.

In each of these cases, culture can be both an opportunity and a barrier. Either way, culture is a consistent presence in the counseling room. To start the personal journey, you are invited to explore your cultural identities in a beginning way by completing Activity 1.1, Introductory Cultural Self-Awareness.

Culture: Pervasive and Invisible

Culture is so pervasive in people's lives that it can be likened to the water that surrounds a fish or the air that humans breathe—in other words, an ambient element outside of their consciousness. Much of what individuals assume to be individual "choice" is instead culturally constructed and automatic. This invisibility can lead to individuals being ignorant about how saturated a

Activity 1.1 Introductory Cultural Self-Awareness

Activity 1.1 begins your exploration of the realm of culture by asking you to define your current understanding of your own cultures.

Description of Activity:

This introductory exercise occurs in two phases. You will respond to each cultural group in terms of two notions: name of group(s) and general status of groups. After you put your responses in the boxes, write your thoughts about doing each phase on the second page of this activity, in the spaces provided, or as otherwise directed by your instructor.

First, complete Phase 1 on the following Cultural Group Memberships Worksheet by naming the cultural groups that you belong to across six categories. Then write down your thoughts on doing this phase.

Cultural Group Memberships Worksheet

Directions for Phase 1: What follows are five cultural categories. As you consider each of the categories in the far left column, name your own particular group identity in the second column under Phase 1. Use whatever label makes sense currently to you. Do Phase 1 first, and then read the directions for Phase 2. (Note: You may be asked to share as many of these as you are comfortable with.)

Cultural Group Categories	**Phase 1: NAMES A name for your current group membership(s):**	**Phase 2: STATUS Whether this group is generally dominant or nondominant in many contexts:**	**Phase 3: IMPACT One way in which each social group membership affects your life:**
Ethnicity			
Race			
Social class, or SES (e.g., upper-middle class, poor, working class)	**Of origin:** **Current:**		
Gender			
Sexual orientation			
Religion	**Of origin:** **Current:**		

Comments on Phase 1: What thoughts came to you as you tried to name your cultural groups?

Directions for Phase 2: When directed, note in the next column on the worksheet whether you see each of your groups as "dominant" (e.g., generally in a position of greater power and/or favor at the current time and place)

(*Continued*)

(Continued)

or "nondominant" (a group whose access to significant social power is generally limited or denied) in most contexts (e.g., occupations, standards for language, beauty, power, presence, or access to resources). The issue of dominance/nondominance will be taken up more extensively in Chapter 3.

Comments on Phase 2: What thoughts do you have on naming your groups' statuses?

Directions for Phase 3: Think of one way in which each cultural group membership affects, or has affected, your life. This can be a general effect or a specific event from the recent past.

This cultural group membership activity is aimed at stimulating your awareness of your being "culturally constituted," that is, being made up by your cultures. It is meant to begin your movement toward what Paolo Freire (1993) called "critical consciousness," which is one of the major aims of this book. That topic is discussed later and in Chapter 3.

dominant culture is in a society. For example, what were once seemingly universal standards in American life are now seen as culturally male, European American, middle class, Christian, and heterosexual. This dominant cultural monolith has been toppled by other communities in U.S. society clamoring to be recognized. However, U.S. society never was so monolithic in a fundamental sense because the nation has always been culturally diverse to a great extent. Women, gay people, non-Christians, Africans, Asians, American Indians, non-English-speaking people, poor persons, and individuals with disabilities have always been a part of American life (Takaki, 1993; Zinn, 2003). However, they are no longer to be background to the dominant culture but are, more and more, foreground on the American cultural landscape in numbers and in public voice.

Culture as Discourse

Another way to describe the pervasiveness of culture and its importance is to understand culture as an expression of a "discourse." Discourse is a general term for a system of thought, a network of historically, socially, and institutionally held beliefs, categories, statements, and terms that give meaning to the world. The term *discourse* comes from linguistics, where it refers to the connection between sentences and their social context. To understand discourse, as it relates to culture, it may be helpful to keep in mind that every sentence a person utters reflects their historical, social, and institutional context, from the words themselves being part of a language to the ideas being a product of a time and place. A discourse is like the lens in a pair of glasses. People actually wear many "discourse lenses." Cultures are groups of people who share particular discourses.

A person is always influenced by many discourses. People's gender, ethnicity, and religious expression, for example, inform the way they view issues, situations, and other people; they implicitly affect how individuals think and act. The reader might think about fashion in hairstyle and clothing. What is "beautiful" to one group can be unattractive to another. Individuals are caught up in a discourse that automatically affects what they see as attractive.

Such discourses set the foundation for the argument that one might make on what is valued in life. That is a dangerous situation for counselors. For example, if a male counselor speaks from within his own gender discourses, he might see an expressive and nurturing female client as emotionally labile and dependent or a working-class client as loud and aggressive instead of being less concerned about respectability and propriety than would a middle-class client.

There is a solution to this embeddedness in one's discourses. Counselors can be aware of the discourses from which they are speaking or acting—or not. In Kegan's (1998) terms, they can "have" the discourse rather than it "having" them. Indeed, a major aim of this book is to help counselors become aware of how their discourses are influenced by the groups to which they belong, that is, to know the discourses through which they are thinking and acting. It might be some combination of their middle-class discourse, their Christian discourse, their conservative discourse, or their feminist discourse, to name a few sets of assumptions that individuals might speak through. By being alert to the discourse that is informing their thinking, counselors can see their "truths" as perspectives, not monopolies on the

one "right" way to view an issue. Counselors can then imagine alternate perspectives, ones that are informed by other gender, ethnic, social class, sexual orientation, and religious viewpoints.

History of the Term Culture

Culture is an often-used, yet elusive, term. The earliest known use of the word referred to care for the earth (e.g., "culturing the soil") so that it would produce (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). The extension of the term to human customs is credited to the Roman writer and orator Cicero, who wrote of the "culture of the soul," that is, taking care to live well in general. Thus, culture came to refer to the human creation of ways to live well through establishing social norms, roles, and customs.

Through the years, culture became associated with the notion of "civilization" itself, until in 1871 Edward Tylor, one of the great early anthropologists, offered an inclusive definition of the term: the "capabilities and habits acquired by [a person] as a member of society" (Tylor, 1871/1924, p. 1). For Tylor, "knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, and customs" were expressions of culture. The definition given earlier in this chapter is parallel to Tylor's concept of culture. Each makes reference to the human creation of ways of living well in community. Those means include rituals, languages, celebrations, and hierarchies in relationships.

Culture Broadly Applied

The notion of culture, in this book, is used broadly. It is not restricted to the traditional anthropological usage, in which culture is equivalent only to ethnicity. Culture includes the customs, norms, and values of nations, regions, generations, and organizations. For example, in academia there is often a less formal dress code than in retail businesses. And in the military, strict hierarchy and obedience are norms. By contrast, in academia, critiquing the status quo is a norm.

Culture also refers to social groups that are identified by gender, class, sexual orientation, generation, organizational affiliation, and religion. Culture in this broad sense can be translated into such notions as "youth culture," "disability culture," "school culture," "male culture," "gay culture," "working-class culture," and "agency culture." In each case, culture refers to how a group establishes behaviors, and values that help members achieve shared aims, and therefore to live well. The resulting particular expressions of culture, such as accents, dialects, rituals, expressions, and family structures, are human ways of coping, each deserving consideration and respect.

This book explores culture as it is expressed through cultural categories—race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. In addition, military culture and refugee/immigrant culture are included. Seven of these cultural groupings are described in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1 Major Categories of Culture

The six categories of culture defined here are neither exclusive nor final. For example, "age" is not explicitly included, despite its importance in counseling. Those two concepts are usually addressed in other areas of counselor education.

1. *Race.* "Race" is an especially contested and indeed controversial notion. What is uncontestable, however, is its power to affect human relations and individual lives. The most basic definition of race is *a group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by physical characteristics, such as hair type, color of eyes and skin, and stature* (adapted from *Collins English Dictionary*, 2010). Like other cultural categories, it is a social construction—the creation of people in a language, a time, and a place. As such, it takes on many meanings, depending on the era, the society, and the speaker. The notion of race is especially intertwined with power and intergroup conflict.
2. *Ethnicity.* Ethnicity, too, carries many definitions. Here it is defined as *the recognition by both the members of a group and by others of common social ties among people due to shared geographic origins, memories of an historical past, cultural heritage, religious affiliation, language and dialect forms, and/or tribal affiliation* (Pinheiro, 1990). As might be seen, it also is an elusive and loose notion.

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Ethnicity matters for two reasons. First, it is a source people's standards, beliefs, and behaviors, even when they are unaware of its impact. Second, for those people from nondominant ethnicities, it is an external marker, one that defines their opportunities or lack thereof.

3. *Class/Socioeconomic Status.* One powerful factor in a person's aspirations and experiences is socioeconomic status, sometimes also called social class. Socioeconomic status inevitably influences many life roles and choices, including religious affiliation, gender roles, career aspirations, diet habits, entertainment choices, health, housing, self-esteem, dress, and recreation.

   Class is defined here as *the position in a society's hierarchy occupied by person, based on education, income, and wealth*. As might be seen, this definition is external; here the status is given by others. Yet social class also is an internalized set of assumptions and an identity. Clients will bring internalized expectations and self-images to counseling based on their social class. Counselors also need to know their own class-based assumptions.

4. *Gender.* Gender is often conflated with the term *sex*. Anthropologists, however, now reserve *sex* for references to biological categories and reserve gender for culturally defined categories. Here the term *gender* refers to *a socially constructed set of roles ostensibly based on the sex of individuals.* Gender stems largely from the division of labor roles in a society, not the physiological differences between men and women. As cultural creations, gender roles can and do shift with social, economic, and technological change. Influences on gender are the formal legal system, which reinforces customary practices; sociocultural attitudes such as ethnic-based obligations; and religious beliefs and practices. Like all cultural constructions, gender is both externally imposed and internalized to a greater or lesser extent by individuals. The culturally alert counselor needs to be aware of both.

5. *Sexual Orientation.* The APA (n.d.) defines sexual orientation as *an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes.*

   Sexual orientation is a complex notion because it refers to a continuum of affectional attractions, ranging from exclusive homosexuality through forms of bisexuality to exclusive heterosexuality. Sexual orientation does not imply particular behaviors. Indeed, the exact origins of sexual orientations are uncertain at this time. The APA has declared that sexual orientation is shaped in most people at an early age and that biology plays a significant role in it. Being in a sexual minority can be a source of significant stress and self-doubt. Counselors have a particular role in reaching out to sexual minorities to provide advocacy and support.

6. *Religion and Spirituality*. Religion is also fraught with definitional difficulties. Religion will be defined here as *the organized set of beliefs that encode a person's or group's attitudes toward, and understanding of, the essence or nature of reality.* By this definition, religion does not require belief in a higher power or a deity. Spirituality can be distinguished from religion by its locus in the individual rather than the group. Spirituality refers to a mindfulness about the existential qualities of life, especially the relationship between self, other, and the world. Religion and spirituality are powerful sources of meaning, esteem, and social life to many, but not all, individuals. Religion is an especially powerful force in American life as compared to other industrialized nations. It is part of the culturally alert counselor's task to evoke clients' relevant religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, as well as any related communities to which they might belong. Clients can draw strength from religious and spiritual sources. Such sources can also result in maladaptive attitudes.

7. *Disability.* Most simply put, disability consists of an impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. Disability can be visible or invisible. In this book, five groupings of disability will be discussed. They are: mobility and physical disabilities, sensory disabilities, health disabilities, psychological/psychiatric disabilities, and neurodevelopmental disabilities. The reader might see from these groupings that most human beings can experience either temporary or long-term disability.

Defining Diversity

Diversity is a word that is heard regularly. Diversity is, most simply, the existence of variety in human expression, especially the multiplicity of mores and customs that are manifested in social and cultural life. When used with terms like *celebrate* and *embrace*, *diversity* represents an appreciation of multiple perspectives, a recognition of the contribution that many cultures make to a community.

In contrast to much of the United States today, there are places where diversity is minimal. Members of isolated groups are often unaware of alternative cultural expressions and frequently are surprised by and disapproving of them (Kegan, 1998). If group members associate only with their group, they might consider their ways to be "the" ways to think, judge, and act. But even within mono-ethnic societies, there is diversity. For example, all societies have diversity in gender and sexual orientation.

When members of a group encounter other groups, they become aware of differences between their way of life and those of others. That encounter might be about religious beliefs, culinary customs, communication styles, or sexual behavior, to name a few possible expressions of diversity. Americans in India become vividly aware of diversity as they walk the colorful, filled streets of Mumbai. African Americans who move to a largely Haitian neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, becomes similarly aware of aspects of their culture that are different from those of their neighbors.

Before reading further, readers are invited to check in on their experiences with cultural diversity by completing Activity 1.2, Encounters with Cultural Diversity. This activity is best done privately so that people may be completely honest in their responses.

Activity 1.2 Encounters with Cultural Diversity

By now you have read about how pervasive culture is in the sensitive work of counseling. However, perhaps you are still not sure about the power of culture in human lives.

Review your life, looking for times when you were aware of culture in a situation. This may have occurred when you were in a nondominant status. Brainstorm as many occasions as possible. Then list up to three examples of situations in which you were aware of cultural differences between you and those around you. Remember, culture includes ethnicity or race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and religion:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Answer the following questions about one or more of the examples you listed:

- What were your automatic assumptions and/or behaviors during the situation? Were your beliefs challenged in any way?
- If you were in a nondominant or minority group, did you experience any discomfort in this role?
- You might use the feelings you had in these situations to remind yourself of the possible confusion and discomfort experienced by others when they are in a culturally unfamiliar situation, such as counseling itself.

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- What did you learn about yourself from this situation?
- Perhaps it is at first unsettling to experience cultural newness; however, it might be exciting, if you open up to it.

- Perhaps you had trouble coming up with experiences when you were aware of culture. That in itself might be an invitation for you to expose yourself to additional culturally different experiences. Try to turn any confusion into curiosity. This book aims to engender that curiosity and encourage such experiences.

Attitudes Toward Diversity

Proponents of diversity argue that it makes communities stronger. In that vein, novelist Salman Rushdie (1992), in the opening quote in this chapter, refers to "the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs." Robert Kegan (1998) connects diversity with healthy organisms and societies in this way:

> Biologists tell us that the ongoing variability of the gene pool is a key to the health of any organism. . . . The more a family intermarries, for example, and succeeds at preserving the "purity" of its line, as has happened throughout history with several dynasties, the greater the likelihood of physical and mental debilities in its issue. Psychologists tell us that the single greatest source of growth and development is the experience of difference, discrepancy, anomaly. So it is for a society—an encounter with some new custom is a challenge for us to accommodate, to see the power of alternate ways of living. . . . These images . . . raise the possibility that diversity is best conceived not as a problem in need of a solution, but as *an opportunity or a necessity, to be prized and preserved as a precious resource*. (pp. 210–211, italics added)

The "precious resource" that is diversity doesn't always feel so appealing on a day-to-day level. Instead, many individuals see an encounter with difference as a "problem," in Kegan's word, that is a cause for fear and discomfort. A range of attitudes toward difference is possible. One doesn't simply like or dislike a cultural difference.

Psychological Processes for Encountering Diversity: Assimilation Versus Accommodation

Diversity challenges people's habitual, familiar ways of thinking. It can surprise individuals as they encounter a different religious view, or moral position, or child-rearing custom, to name a few examples. Individuals have, in a sense, two ways to encounter diversity: assimilation and accommodation. They can *assimilate* it to their current mode—for example, by deciding that what is different is "repulsive"—or they can *accommodate* it by rethinking their assumptions in light of the new information.

These two notions of assimilation and accommodation come from the work of Jean Piaget (e.g., Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). Of the two, assimilation is easier. Psychological assimilation can be defined as the *process of incorporating objects, knowledge or new events into existing schemes that are compatible with what one already knows* (Psychology Glossary, 2011). In assimilation, when individuals are faced with new information, they make sense of it by referring to information processed and learned previously. Thus, a child may fit all men into the category "Daddy." Children try to fit the new information into the understanding that they already have. In sum, assimilation is the viewing of experience through familiar lenses.

Assimilation is adaptive. If, in early summer, a hiker comes across a mother bear with her cubs in the woods, it is adaptive to assimilate quickly with a thought such as, "This is dangerous. I should flee." Humans are hardwired to assimilate in this way to make life predictable at times, especially when encountering situations that might be dangerous.

However, over-assimilation, that is, trying to fit all unfamiliar or uncomfortable phenomena into one's

current lenses, is maladaptive. Such over-assimilation is exemplified by the person who stereotypes as a means of easily identifying the "other." Unexamined prejudice of any kind is a form of over-assimilation. Over-assimilation may damage relationships, for example, when a father rejects his daughter because she is a lesbian. His old assimilation of what is right and wrong in human sexual expression cannot accommodate the possibility that his daughter's sexual orientation might be a positive, natural expression of her attractions. Diversity is therefore dangerous to him. He has only assimilated the data on his daughter's homosexuality to his current way of knowing. The result of such over-assimilation would likely be a rift in the family, increased emotional distancing, and isolation for both her and him.

By contrast, "appreciation of diversity" might be considered an act of mental *accommodation* to newness. Accommodation can most simply be defined as *the mental process of modifying existing cognitive understandings so that new information can be included.* To make sense of some new information, people who accommodate actually adjust the mental schema they already have to make room for new information. In relation to diversity, accommodation is needed so that individuals can recognize rich differences in human expression and characteristics, even when it is somewhat uncomfortable to do so. Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1997), in their landmark study of ways of knowing, found that those who could accommodate diversity were able to "pause" in their thinking process to weigh the value of a phenomenon before judging it. One aim of the multicultural movement, and of this book, is to encourage such pausing before making assimilations.

This section closes with a personal activity. Readers are invited to complete Activity 1.3, *Attitudes Toward Difference*, to help them appreciate a continuum in positions on difference.

Activity 1.3 Attitudes Toward Difference

What follows are eight possible responses to cultural difference. Read through each and, in the space at the bottom, name a cultural group that is not your own. Then respond to the three questions.

Repulsion	People who are different in this way are strange and aversive. Anything that will change them to being more normal or part of the mainstream is justifiable.
Pity	People who are different in this way are to be felt sorry for. One should try to make them "normal."
Tolerance	Being different in this way is unfortunate, but I can put up with their unfortunate presence.
Acceptance	I need to make accommodations for this difference because these people's identity is not of the same value as my own.
Support	I would like to act to safeguard the rights of these people, even if I am occasionally uncomfortable myself. I know about the irrational unfairness toward them.
Admiration	I realize that it takes strength to be different in this way. I am working hard on changing my bias.
Appreciation	I value this diversity for what it offers society, and I will confront insensitive attitudes.
Nurturance	This group is indispensable to our community. I have genuine affection and delight for this group, and I advocate for them.

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1. Name a cultural group that is not your own, whether that be an ethnic group, a race, a social class, a gender, a sexual orientation, a religion or nonreligious group, or a disability.

   _____

2. Name your current attitude toward that group, based on the eight attitudes defined here.

3. What does this exercise tell you? Write a comment:

Interpreting the results: This exercise indicates where you and others might have work to do to move toward more positive views of cultural others. The scale is particularly important as it demonstrates that attitudes toward others are not merely "yes–no" matters. There are gradations in attitudes. Note that tolerance is in the bottom half of the levels. Although the U.S. Constitution and civil rights laws require mere "tolerance" of some diversities, that is not sufficient for the counselor. The first four of the attitudes imply that there is something inadequate or even wrong with the cultural group. Even the notions of "tolerance" and "acceptance" do not require a counselor to fully understand the other from their point of view or to peer inside other cultures with respect, interest, and active engagement. The last three—support, appreciation, and nurturance—are positive in that they endorse the diversities as important for a well-functioning, growing society, one that is confronted by newness and made stronger for it. The last three imply that you will take active steps to be an ally or activist to oppose prejudice or oppression.

Source: Adapted from the work of Dorothy Riddle (1994)

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING A CULTURALLY ALERT COUNSELOR

The preceding sections have established some evidence for the importance of culture in counseling. The reader might ask at this point, "What is required to actually do such counseling?" The multicultural counseling competencies are presented here. They guide readings and activities that ensue in this book. Specific counseling practices are discussed in Chapter 20.

The Multicultural Counseling Competencies

The basic competencies required for culturally alert counseling (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) fall into three categories: awareness, knowledge, and skill. They are enumerated in detail in Appendix A. Although these competencies needn't be memorized by the reader, counselors should be familiar with them in an overall way and be able to assess their competency in each area.

Broadly speaking, culturally alert counselors must have the following:

- *Awareness of their own cultural values and biases*, that is, cognizance of their own cultures' impacts on their choices, values, biases, manners, and privileges; comfort with cultural differences; recognition of discrimination and stereotyping; acknowledgment of their culturally based limitations; and readiness to seek further training. The readings and exercises in this book, coupled with other life experiences, can increase counselor competency in this area.
- *Knowledge of clients' worldviews*, that is, "multicultural literacy," which consists of a reasonable knowledge of many groups' and clients' worldviews as seen through the lenses of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and religion as well as the counselor's own negative reactions to and stereotypes of other

groups. The readings in the subsequent chapters provide a foundation for understanding cultural worldviews.

- *Intervention strategies or skills* to incorporate cultural knowledge into counseling and advocacy for all members of their populations, including considerations such as clients' language proficiencies, the use of assessment instruments, ability to refer to indigenous helpers, capacity to adapt communication styles, commitment to doing advocacy, and sensitivity to trust issues with culturally different clients. Chapter 20 of this book presents skills needed for culturally alert counseling. Specific strategies are also described toward the end of each of the cultural group chapters.

The first competency, cultural self-awareness, is an ongoing task, one that has been initially addressed in the activities in this chapter. Cultural self-awareness is achieved through personal examination of how one is "cultured" in every aspect of one's life. Culturally alert counselors strive to gain an understanding of themselves and their work with culturally different clients (Torres-Rivera, Phan, Maddux, Wilbur, & Garrett, 2001). One aim of this book, especially of the activities in the first few chapters, is to have readers discover the cultural discourses that guide their thinking and acting. In that regard, relevant awareness competencies are that (1) "culturally skilled counselors are aware of how their own cultural background and experiences, attitudes, and values, and biases influence psychological processes"; and (2) "culturally skilled counselors are comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and clients in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, and beliefs" (Sue et al., 1992, p. 482).

The second competency, multicultural literacy or "knowledge," will be tackled in each of the subsequent chapters. Two of the knowledge competencies are that (1) "culturally skilled counselors possess specific knowledge and information about the particular group that they are working with"; and (2) "culturally skilled counselors understand how race, culture, ethnicity, and so forth may affect personality formation, vocational choices, manifestation of psychological disorders, help-seeking behavior, and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of counseling approaches" (Sue et al., 1992, p. 482).

In light of this broad expectation, a counselor might ask, "How many cultural characteristics and groups must I know about to be culturally alert enough?" The question is a legitimate one. Complete knowledge of every important aspect of all cultures is not possible. "Enough," to start, is a solid grasp of the ideas in this book plus some experience in applying it to the groups with whom the counselor is likely to work. In practice, counselors can extend their knowledge and test it in the fire of experience by having an inquisitive and open mind when they are confronted with cultural unknowns.

A reminder of the limits of cultural generalizations is in order at this point. One factor is *change.* Old norms and customs evolve when they encounter each other in an act of mutual acculturation (see Chapter 3.). Thus, so-called White European American culture has incorporated many Black/African American elements in the past 40 years, leading to the former group's incorporation of African American language expressions and music in its culture. The same might be said of the Jewish American influence on the dominant American culture through the arts and other public expressions of that culture. Cultures are not static, nor can they be rigidly circumscribed by oversimplified generalizations.

An additional limitation on how much one can know about cultures is the fact that all *generalizations must be qualified*, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Even if cultural knowledge was relatively complete and fixed, it would not apply to all individuals at all times. Such overgeneralization would, in fact, be dangerous. Counselors must walk a fine line between assuming that some characteristics are true for members of a cultural group in general and applying them selectively to individual clients.

Thus, instead of questing for perfect cultural know-how, counselors can aim to become relatively multiculturally fluent. They should know basic terms and concepts such as *coming out* (for people who identify/associate with the LGBTQIA+ community), *marianismo* (for some Latinx people), *the ethic of care/connected knowing* (for many women), and *filial piety* (for some Asian communities). Nevertheless, counselors will inevitably be looking through a glass darkly, in the Christian Apostle Paul's words; that is, they will always have an obscure or imperfect vision of their own and others' cultures.

The third area of multicultural competence, "skills," is still the weakest area of multiculturalism (Cates, Schaefle, Smaby, Maddux, & LeBeauf, 2007). Nevertheless, counselors must be ready to apply culturally alert practice immediately (Cates et al., 2007). Therefore, skills in applying multicultural awareness and knowledge must be generated, communicated, and enacted.

Examples of such skills are that (1) "culturally skilled counselors are able to engage in a variety of verbal and nonverbal helping responses. . . . They are not tied down to only one method or approach to helping but recognize that helping styles and approaches may be culture bound"; and (2) "culturally skilled counselors are able to exercise institutional intervention skills on behalf of their clients. They can help clients determine whether a 'problem' stems from racism or bias in others . . . so that clients do not inappropriately blame themselves" (Sue et al., 1992, p. 483). Again, these are general. They must be translated into specific practices. Those practices will be described in all of the upcoming culturally specific chapters as well as in Chapter 20.

SUMMARY

This book represents a challenging, even threatening, excursion into the frontier territory of culture and counseling. Counselors cannot bring all of their old supplies for this expedition into this "new world."

The journey into culturally alert counseling takes counselors through three major territories: cultural self-awareness, knowledge of other cultures, and skill at intervening in a culturally alert way. The book will weave these three themes throughout.

This chapter has offered some basic provisions for the journey in the form of foundational definitions, opportunities for self-examination, a description of the changing landscape in the field of counseling, and ways of knowing that can fortify counselors when they are seemingly lost. Much of this material will be new to counselors as they discard the legacy of universalistic individualism and incorporate social construction into their thinking.

But much is unknown and unknowable until the journey begins. Counselors must also pack provisions of openness and humility along with cultural knowledge. Openness allows counselors to tolerate ambiguity, to discover exceptions, and to allow surprises to occur with clients. Humility helps counselors avoid the hubris of overgeneralizing and applying pat methods to solve complex human dilemmas.

Counselors cannot look at this landscape from afar: There is no way to know deeply but through experience. Encountering culture is not just an abstract exercise. Personal contact with cultural others will be required, supplemented by reflections on the meaning of those experiences.

And one word of warning for the traveler: The map is not complete. Despite the great progress that has occurred in the field of culture and counseling, all is not settled. As counselors embark on the journey to cultural alertness, they must know that they ought not strive for perfect knowledge of cultures. They can be culturally alert without being completely multiculturally fluent. They must accept that they will always be looking through a glass darkly at their own and others' cultures. Nevertheless, counselors will be well-supplied with the basic provisions of an inquiring attitude, great empathy, a "leaning in" to difference, an appreciation of diversity in human expression, and a willingness to examine their own standpoints while inviting those of others. The reader who can begin with those qualities will be capable of beginning the work of culturally alert counseling.