CHAPTER 2

Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Competence

JOSEPH E. TRIMBLE

"Never look for a psychological explanation unless every effort to find a cultural one has been exhausted." Margaret Mead quoting William Fielding Ogburn, one of her mentors at Columbia University (1959, p. 16).

"This was my first night in Leisu alone. As I sat on the veranda of my thatched-roofed, two-room house in the early evening I felt uncertain and scared not of anything in particular, but just of being alone in a native village. I asked myself, 'What on earth am I doing here, all alone and at the edge of the world?'" Hortense Powdermaker (1966, p. 51).

The two quotations from the well-known cultural anthropologists capture a part of the experience of what it means when one chooses to study and work with people from different cultural and ethnic groups. In her quote, the esteemed anthropologist, Margaret Mead referred to the "psychological" as innate, generic characteristics of the mind while the "cultural" referred to the behavior that one learned in her or his culture. Mead's quote refers to her experiences as a student with Columbia University's cultural anthropologist William Fielding Ogburn. In the 1920s, Ogburn maintained that the study of human kind lacked any useful comprehensive psychological theory. Then, and up to recently, psychologists were not at all interested in cultural explanations or explorations of human affect, behavior, and cognition. In fact, most psychologists then firmly believed that "all humans were alike" hence the need to identify and study cultural correlates exceeded what was sufficient to understand the sum total of the conscious and unconscious events that make up an individual's life. Although many behavioral social scientists would disagree with Ogburn's contention I take the position that before anyone can begin to apply conventional psychological principles and theories to an ethnic or cultural group, they must understand their unique lifeways and thoughtways.

JOSEPH E. TRIMBLE • Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Department of Psychology, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225-9089
OVERVIEW

The two quotations serve to set the tone for this chapter on cultural sensitivity and cultural competence. By way of summary, one must exhaust cultural explanations for affect, behavior, and cognition before they attempt to apply conventional psychological theory and principles and to do so one will be intellectually, psychologically, and physically challenged. At first blush, why should any one be reminded that they must be culturally sensitive and culturally competent when conducting psychological research or providing mental health services for culturally different groups? Moreover, why should psychologists be interested in different cultural groups? “Of course they should,” is the obvious reply to both questions. Although the answer to the questions is straightforward, there is considerable anecdotal and empirical evidence to suggest that historically psychologists in the main have not been sensitive to the lifeways and thoughtways of people from different cultural and ethnic groups. Accusations of imperialism, cultural encapsulation, ethnocentrism, parochialism, and, in some circles of dissent, “scientifically racist,” run the gamut of criticisms hurled at the field of psychology in the past three decades. Robert Guthrie (1976), for example, writing in his strongly worded critique of psychology, *Even the Rate was White*, argues that culture and context were not taken seriously in the history of psychological research. Psychology’s preoccupation with tightly controlled experiments through use of laboratory animals left little room for studies with people in their natural settings. Although the field has expanded its acceptance of various research methods and procedures, the full acceptance of culture and ethnicity into the fabric of psychological inquiry has not occurred.

Achieving true cultural competence and cultural sensitivity is complex and daunting. Putting the constructs into action in a research or clinical setting compounds their complexities. However, achieving a state of competence and sensitivity can be accomplished at some level of proficiency to the point where it does not sap our courage and subdue our fears and anxieties. Therefore, the intent of this chapter is to provide a framework for achieving and maintaining cultural competence and cultural sensitivity. To achieve the goal, the chapter is organized along several points where cultural competence and sensitivity are salient and prerequisites for conducting research and providing psychological services. Definitions and guidelines are provided for the two constructs followed by a brief discussion of the terms, ethnicity, ethnic group, and culture. Suggestions are provided for achieving competence as a counselor, clinician, researcher, and at a personal level. Since the achievement of cultural competence and sensitivity requires common skills and psychological perspectives, emphasis will be placed on the research setting. Thus, the chapter’s last section focuses on cross-cultural methodological and procedural concerns including gaining entry to the field, cultural measurement equivalence, and collecting data and reporting the findings.

CULTURE, CULTURAL COMPETENCE, AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY SPECIFICATIONS

Why should any student of psychology or psychologist be interested in and concerned about achieving cultural competence and cultural sensitivity? In spite of conditions to the contrary, psychology has all but ignored the surface and deep level meanings and implications of culture and ethnicity for the past 100 years. First, the mission statement of the American Psychological Association (APA) provides a partial explanation. Simply stated, the APA maintains that the object of the American Psychological Association shall be to advance psychology
Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Competence

as a science and profession and as a means of promoting health and human welfare. Until about 30 years ago, the mission appeared to be restricted to a limited population as references to African Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders, and Puerto Ricans were almost absent from the psychological literature: in fact, the words culture and ethnic were rarely used in psychological textbooks. The long absence of culture in the web of psychological inquiry did not go unnoticed. About 30 years ago, ethnic minority and international psychologists began questioning what APA meant about human and to whom the vast body of psychological knowledge applied. America’s ethnic minority psychologists and those from other countries as well as a small handful of North American psychologists argued that American psychology was not inclusive of what constitutes the world’s population—they claimed that findings were biased, limited to studies involving college and university students and laboratory animals, and therefore not generalizable to all humans. Comprehensive literature reviews reinforced their accusations and observations. Another response to the question concerns the growth of ethnic minority groups in the United States. America never was and likely will not be a melting pot of different nationalities and ethnic groups for another century or two. Consider the population projections offered by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. By 2050 the U.S. population will reach over 400 million, about 47% larger than in the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). The primary ethnic minority groups specifically, Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians and Alaska Natives will constitute almost 50% of the population in 2050. About 57% of the population under the age of 18 and 34% over the age of 65 will be ethnic minorities. Currently, Hispanics number 35.3 million persons, about 12.5% of the U.S. population and are comprised of a diversity of races and countries of origin. Projections for the year 2010 suggest that Hispanics will be the largest ethnic group, second only to White Americans, and followed by African Americans. The 2000 U.S. census estimates that African Americans number about 35 million. There are distinct group differences in terms of socioeconomic levels, urban or rural residential distributions, and within group cultural variation. Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders number 10.6 million in the United States. There are 32 different cultural groups with unique ethnic or national identities, different religions, histories, languages, and traditions that are included within the category of Asian American and Pacific Islander. The most numerous Asian groups in the United States are Filipinos, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Asian Indians. Moreover, the 2000 Census declared that 2,475,956 citizens are American Indians and Alaska Natives—a 26.4% difference from the 1990 Census, when the figure was 1,959,234.

In the 2000 U.S. Census individuals had the option of marking more than one “race” category, and so were able to declare identification with more than one group. For example, whereas less than 3% of the total U.S. population chose to do so, more than 4,119,000 individuals who chose to mark multiple categories marked American Indian and Alaska Native along with one or more “others.” The race alone or in combination count is much higher for this ethnic group than the race alone count of 2,475,956. The discrepancy raises the question about which count is more accurate or representative of the true Indian population. 2,475,956 or 4,119,000. Similar findings occur for the other ethnic groups (see Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Trimble, 2002).

The changing demographic context calls into question the relevance of a psychology that historically has not been inclusive of ethnic and racial groups and that fostered a research agenda that is ethnocentric and bound by time and place. How well prepared will practitioners be in the delivery of quality mental health services to ethnic and language minorities—to conduct research that is culturally resonant with the lifeways and thoughtways of culturally unique
populations? The changing demographics will move the field toward the full consideration of
diversity in ways that are inclusive and truly reflect diversity of our changing demographic
context.

The third response to the question has to do with the concepts of culture and ethnic group. While there are over 150 definitions of culture, cultural and ethnic advocates in psychology
generally agree with Brown’s definition of culture that appeared in his 1991 book, Human
Universals. “Culture,” Brown argues, “consists of the conventional patterns of thought, activity,
and artifact that are passed on from generation to generation in a manner that is generally
assumed to involve learning rather than specific genetic programming. Besides being transmitted
‘vertically’ from generation to generation, culture may also be transmitted ‘horizontally’
between individuals and collectivities” (p. 40). Culture is transmitted through groups often
referred to as racial or ethnic groups. Feagin (1978) defines a racial group as one in which
“persons inside or outside the group have decided what is important to single out as inferior or
superior, typically on the basis of real or alleged physical characteristics subjectively selected”
(p. 7). An ethnic group, maintains Feagin (1978) is one “which is socially distinguished or set
apart, by others and/or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or nationality characteristics”.

Culture, ethnicity, and race are socially constructed abstractions and thus hypothetical
constructs. Segall, Dasen, Berry, and Poortinga (1990) for example argue for an ecological
approach to culture where the forces are the movers and shapers that shape behaviors hence
“it becomes possible to define it as simply the totality of whatever all persons learn from all
other persons” (p. 26).

Culture provides complex settings in which affect, behavior, and cognition occur and,
therefore, at best may be viewed as overarching moderating variables. All cultures and ethnic
groups contain identifiable values, attitudes, beliefs, languages, and corresponding behaviors
that are often considerably unique and distinctive. Cultural lifeways and thoughtways emerge
as adaptations to particular geographic and climatic conditions. Ecological conditions even
influence what ethnocultural groups agree to ascribe to them. Given these considerations,
psychologists can no longer ignore culture’s contributions to the human condition and the
extraordinary variability that spans population distributions. To understand and appreciate
a cultural group’s contribution to variability we must learn to be culturally competent and
sensitive.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY DEFINED

There are numerous definitions and explanations of the terms, cultural competence and
cultural sensitivity. At a general level, competence is a state where one is being psychologically
and physically adequate and having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, or strength.
Sensitivity is the capacity of a person to respond psychologically to changes in his/her inter-
personal or social relationships. The component parts of the terms are embedded in definitions
and uses of the terms when cultural is added. Orlandi (1992) defines cultural competence
as “a set of academic and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to increase their under-
standing and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between
groups” (p. vi). He continues by drawing attention to ones “willingness and ability to draw
on community-based values, traditions, and customs and to work with knowledgeable per-
sons of and from the community in developing focused interventions, communications, and
other supports” (p. vi). The key words in his definition are skills, understanding, appreciation,
willingness, and ability; perhaps the most salient of these is willingness for without a conscious intent and desire the achievement and realization of cultural competence is not likely to occur.

Morisugu (1999) offers a more general definition where he maintains that it is "the knowledge and understanding of a specific culture that enables an individual to effectively communicate and function within that culture. This usually entails details regarding language and metalanguage, values, and customs, symbols and worldviews" (p. 62). The emphasis here is on knowledge and understanding. Emphasizing skills and knowledge in the context of counseling, Constantine and Ladany (2001) define multicultural counseling competence as "counselors' attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills in working with individuals from a variety of cultural (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, social class, and sexual orientation) groups" (p. 482).

A few definitions expand the construct to include stages of competence development. Ballenger (1994) identified six stages that include: (1) cultural destructiveness. This is the most negative end of the continuum and is represented by attitudes, policies, and practices that are destructive to cultures, and to individuals within cultures; (2) cultural incapacity. This stage represents systems or individuals with extreme biases, who believe in racial superiority of the dominant group and assume a paternalistic posture towards the lesser groups; (3) cultural blindness. The beliefs that color or culture make no difference and that all people are the same. Values and behaviors of the dominant culture are presumed to be universally applicable and beneficial. It is also assumed that members of the nondominant culture do not meet the dominant group's cultural expectations because of some cultural deficiency or lack of desire to achieve, rather than the fact that the system works only for the most assimilated; (4) cultural pre-competence. This stage occurs when there is an awareness of one's limitations in cross-cultural communication and outreach. However, there is a desire to provide fair and equitable treatment with appropriate cultural sensitivity. There may be a level of frustration because the person does not know exactly what is possible or how to proceed; (5) cultural competence. This is the stage represented by the acceptance and respect for differences, continuing self-assessment regarding culture, careful attention to the dynamics of differences, continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and a variety of adaptations to belief systems, policies and practices; and (6) cultural proficiency. This stage occurs when one holds culture in high esteem and seeks to add to their own knowledge by reading, studying, conducting research, and developing new approaches for culturally competent practice. Thus, a sensitive person can progress from a cultural destructiveness stage to a proficient stage of competence by actively engaging in the study and expression of respect for others regardless of their cultural or ethnic background.

In recent years especially in the subfields of ethnic minority psychology and multicultural counseling the term, multiculturalism, has replaced the term competence although the terms often are used synonymously. While the core meanings of competence and sensitivity are retained, multiculturalism is a more inclusive construct as its embraces multiple aspects and facets of what it means to value cultural pluralism. Because of the additive nature of the construct, definitions of multiculturalism are lengthy. For example, ten counseling psychologists compiled a 150 page ten chapter monograph dealing with an assortment of topics for the term (Sue et al., 1998). The authors define multiculturalism in four parts that encourage the exploration, study, and internalization of cultural pluralism. In a related text, Pope-Davis and Coleman (1997) explore the complexities of multicultural counseling competencies; their definition of the construct extends for several pages and takes up the better part of one of their chapters.

Culture and all that it means and implies is explicit and implicit to multiculturalism. Instead of asking whether or not one is culturally competent perhaps it would be better to ask
if one is *multiculturally competent* as this captures the direction of the field and the interest. Interest in the field has accelerated to the point where it is now influencing psychology at all levels. Pedersen (1999) emphasizes that *multiculturalism* is "a new perspective in mainstream psychology complementing the three other major theoretical orientations in psychology: psychodynamic theory, existential-humanistic theory, and cognitive-behavioral theory addressing the needs of culturally diverse client populations" (p. 113).

**BECOMING CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND SENSITIVE**

Whether one is a student of psychology or a practicing psychologist attainment of cultural competence is not a linear path where one reaches some level of acknowledged proficiency and skill and in the process receives some sort of written verification of the attainment. Attainment of cultural competence and sensitivity is a life long journey that involves considerable self-reflection, a critical examination and study of one's cultural and ethnic heritage including those factors that influence maturation and enculturation, and a willingness to learn about the intricacies and subtleties of other ethnocultural groups with an open mind coupled with an adventuresome spirit. The journey begins with self-exploration and self-reflection. Self-reflection is a journey that is never over if one is faithful to the conviction that self-understanding never ends as long as one is open to change. Exploring all facets of multiculturalism involve change and flux. In psychology, a critical and thorough examination of the vicissitudes and essential character or constitution of multiculturalism are critical in the areas of mental health services delivery and research. The remainder of the chapter describes various suggestions and directions for achieving cultural competence and sensitivity cast in the framework of multiculturalism.

**Self-Reflection and Ethnocultural Influences**

Achievement of cultural competence begins with an intense interest and willingness to learn about one's cultural and ethnic background. All of us are a part of and linked to a culturally unique lifestyle; some of us benefit from multiple cultural orientations and influences, as our ancestral lineage may be a mix of relatives representing different nationalities, religious orientations, and ethnocultural groups. Thus, all people exist within a cultural milieu that wittingly and unwittingly influences who, what we are, and what we become. For full and active cultural competence to occur one must know the origins and nature of the factors that influence her or his uniqueness as cultural beings. The search and the eventual knowledge involves learning much more then why certain foods, languages, dress styles, ceremonial and religious celebrations, and music are preferred as it also requires we know the source and nature of our prejudices, attitudes, beliefs, values, mannerisms, gestures, affective styles, and idiosyncratic behaviors. All of these have a cultural base.

The search begins with asking questions of our relatives about our ancestral heritage and punctuating the questions with "why did we do that, or believe, or act that way?" These are daunting questions but no less daunting then the questions the cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, asks about Americans. She asks rather pointedly, "What are Americans...How does one become an American...Why are Americans as they are?" (1942, p. 80). Answers to these probes are extraordinarily difficult as most Americans rarely if ever reflect on them. Expanding
on her questions, and to achieve more specificity, we can replace the noun, American, in the questions with such nationalities as Canadian, Mexican, or Australian or with place names such as New York, Toronto, Tijuana, or Sydney, or with the names of ethnic groups such as American Indian, African American, Asian American, Mexican American, or Puerto Rican. We can further break down the ethnic group labels into tribe, linguistic group, or region of the world where a variant of the group lives (e.g., Jamaica, Brazil, Japan, Papua, or the Yukon Territory). In all instances, each is a cultural unit or cultunit ("cultural bearing unit") rich with all of those elements that constitute a cultural group and thus rich with deep cultural information for one to explore (see Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992, pp. 176–177). What, how and why therefore are practical beginnings towards achieving understanding of one's origins and sociocultural influences. A list of sources for developing and achieving cultural self-empathy is included at the end of this chapter.

Cultural self-reflection activities and explorations bring the unconscious, often subtle factors to the forefront of our conscious hopefully providing enlightenment and deep-cultural self-empathy (Ridley & Udipi, 2002). Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, and Loya (1997) remind us that "through continuous self-focus and deep introspection, counselors (and other psychologists) can become more sensitive to their cultural-self. Such deep-cultural self-empathy or sensitive understanding of one's cultural-self will, in turn facilitate accurate empathy with clients (and others) who are culturally different" (p. 12).

Achieving Multicultural Counseling Competence

Before 1976, close to 25 articles and chapters were written on the subject of culture and counseling. Now in 2002 and since 1976 close to 500 books, chapters, and journal articles have been written expressing a variety of perspectives on the topic ranging from theory to research findings. The accelerated rate of interest and concern generated on the topic in the past 25 years or so is extraordinary but not surprising. The argument and justification for the increased interest rest on the contention that conventional counseling and mental health service delivery approaches are incompatible with the lifeways and thoughtways of ethnocultural groups. Since all thoughts and behaviors are culturally based accurate assessment, meaningful understanding, and culturally appropriate interventions are required for the understanding of each context for counseling to effectively occur.

Multicultural counselors and mental health practitioners assert that one must demonstrate multicultural competence and sensitivity to work with culturally different clients. A seminal paper written for the Counseling Psychologist journal by Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pedersen, Smith and Vasquez-Nuttal (1982) stimulated interest in this area. The authors present a series of explicit multicultural counseling competencies that since have been modified in various forms. In essence, the central themes of the competency guidelines include: "knowledge about diversity; psychological client-counselor policies; client's collective culture; client's religion and beliefs; client's language; client's experience with racism; psychologist's advocacy role; psychologist's client notes address cultural factors; client's economic and political conditions; client's cultural identity; and client variables' interventions" (Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, & Loya, 1997, pp. 6–7). Detailed presentations of the guidelines can be found on the following internet web sites: http://www.counseling.org/multi_diversity/competencies.htm; and http://www.apa.org/divisions/div45/resources.html.

Interest in multicultural counseling is not uniform and consistent. Some critics see the domain as another example of "political correctness" while others comment that it is a passing
fancy and will dwindle in influence in time. Within the field, a few psychologists are challenging the meaning of multiculturalism and the extent to which it truly captures interpersonal dynamics and the influence of race and ethnicity in society. Helms and Richardson (1997) argue the position that multicultural competence requires a philosophical orientation grounded on the sociopolitical principles of race and enculturation. From their perspective, solely emphasizing development of multicultural competency skills is insufficient, as counselors must be knowledgeable and sensitive to the sociopolitical and historical backgrounds of their clients. From their perspective, multiculturalism "should refer to the integration of dimensions of client cultures into pertinent counseling theories, techniques, and practices with the specific intent of providing clients of all sociodemographic and psychodynamic variations with effective mental health services" (p. 70). Put more succinctly, the authors maintain that counselors should tailor their approaches "to react to each of the various dynamics of clients in a manner that best suits the clients' mental health needs" (p. 70).

Developing and acquiring multicultural counseling competencies is extraordinarily complicated and engaging, especially if one aspires to work with clients from a myriad of cultural backgrounds and levels of acculturation. It can be difficult, too, when one strives to work with clients from their own ethnic group and assumes they know the depth of their clients' ethnocultural backgrounds. Becoming multicultural competent can occur through reading, participating in intensive workshops, attending conference presentations. However, the acquisition of competency skills and knowledge through didactic approaches is incomplete. One must experience a culture in all of its moods and settings to fully understand the potential applicability of counseling skills and techniques within a cultural milieu.

As interest in the field of multicultural counseling has grown more and more, counselors and students are asking questions on how one should provide counseling services for culturally different clients, that is, clients who are from ethnocultural groups different from one's own. In addition and invariably, the inquisitive persons want to know where they can obtain the skills to be multicultural competent in mental health settings. Even a straightforward answer is complicated, involved, daunting, and conditional.

For the sake of illustration let us focus on the first part of the inquiry. As discussed earlier cultural differences are varied and pervasive. To understand the extent and pervasiveness of culture and the counseling relationship consider the following: (1) the cultural orientation of the counselor and the extent to which he or she is continuously involved in self-focus and deep cultural introspection of their cultural-selves; (2) the culture of the client and the extent to which they are self-aware and involved in the cultural or ethnic group with which they identify if they do at all; (3) the negative assumptions related to the counseling process which may be quite different from the cultural orientation of the counselor and the client; and (4) the culture of the environment in which the counseling occurs (Pedersen, Lonner, & Dragnus, 1976). We can roll these four together and find "ourselves working with a client from another culture, on a problem relating to a third culture, in the environment of a fourth culture where each participating culture presents its own demands" (Pedersen et al., 1976, p. vii). While extreme, nonetheless the scenario represents the extraordinary complexities associated with providing counseling to culturally unique clients.

Many students and practitioners wonder what counseling styles or theoretical orientations would be most effective and useful with cultural and ethnic clients. Unfortunately, there is no simple, straightforward recommendation here, too. On the one hand, if a counselor shows evidence of being warm and empathetic, establishes trust and rapport, shows respect for cultural values and beliefs, and expresses flexibility in meeting the client's expectations, then it would make sense that any counseling style would work. Yet a number of writers in the field suggest
that certain styles are likely to be more effective than others, even though there is at this point little empirical evidence to support their claims.

Throughout the writings on the topic of multicultural counseling, one theme surfaces repeatedly: Counselors of culturally and ethnically different clients must be adaptive and flexible in their personal orientation and use of conventional counseling techniques. Commitment to understanding the cultural context and unique cultural characteristics of clients also is essential. This often requires counselors to extend their efforts beyond what is typical in a conventional office. Thus, in general, when faced with a culturally different client one should be mindful of the following recommendations offered by Miller (1982): (1) a counselor's personal identification with the culture of a client is hardly sufficient for a thorough understanding of the impact of a cultural lifestyle on a client; (2) a client's personal history contains information that focuses on certain strengths, and this can be useful in promoting positive counseling expectations; (3) counselors should be aware of their own personal biases and stereotypes about cultural pluralism; (4) counselors should encourage clients to become active in identifying and learning the various thoughts and behaviors that promote positive growth and development; and (5) the most important yet basic counseling approaches involve empathy, caring, and a sense of the importance of the human potential.

The answer to the second part of the question requires careful study and participation in programs that emphasize multicultural counseling education. Indeed, numerous books have been written on the subject and more are becoming available. Similarly, the topic has become a major focal point of professional psychological conferences and meetings. Taken together these are rich sources of information. Unfortunately, not all counseling psychology graduate and professional schools in psychology embrace multiculturalism and thus do not fully endorse multicultural counseling guidelines. Avoid these institutions if you aspire to work in the multicultural counseling or clinical fields. Counseling and clinical psychology programs should be accredited primarily by the American Psychological Association (APA) and if they are then one can be assured that culture and ethnicity are included in the curriculum and field and internship experiences. The APA has a cultural competence standard in its accreditation protocol. Fortunately, there is a growing list of institutions where one can receive culturally appropriate and sensitive graduate education in counseling; that was not the case ten years ago. Currently, the American Psychological Association provides a list of such institutions through its Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs (see www.apa.org/pi/oema). Among these, the APA selects specific colleges and universities whose programs demonstrate excellence in the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority to receive the APA Sue Sinnett Minority Achievement Award; one of the selection criteria centers on the presence and emphasis of multicultural competence in teaching, practice, and research.

Achieving Multicultural Competence in Research

The standards and criteria for achieving multicultural counseling competence and sensitivity also apply to conducting research with ethnocultural groups although the themes and approaches vary to accommodate the methodological rigors attached to the research venture. Both fields require that one gather, interpret, and analyze information however methods and procedures will vary depending on the research question. The counselor is interested primarily in the client’s background and the diagnosis of the presenting problem while the researcher typically is interested in testing hypotheses and components of a theory where something about the sample population’s culture is of prime interest. To an extent, the similarities end there
as the research venture is filled with numerous theoretical, procedural, and methodological considerations one is not likely to encounter in the multicultural counseling field.

Given the current interest in cross-cultural and ethnic psychology, it would be safe to conclude that more and more studies will be directed to culturally different populations, not only in North America but probably for other nation states as well. Consequently, social scientists face a multitude of theoretical and methodological concerns quite often presented by ethnocultural groups whose cultures are unique in contrast to the dominant groups in North America. Predictably, the ongoing and increasingly significant work of cross-cultural psychologists will be a source for guidance and direction. For example, the official publication of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology (http://www.iaccp.org/), the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, is an excellent resource as it now contains over 30 years worth of excellent research findings and commentary on the subject.

To build one's research cultural competence requires researchers to examine the methodologies of cross-cultural psychologists, cultural and ethnic psychologists, and cultural anthropologists especially those directed to the conduct of field based research. One should be aware that cross-cultural psychology is defined more by methodology than by findings (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992). Knowledge of the empirical findings in both fields may prove useful, but not nearly as useful as the methods. Building research cultural competence requires that researchers place an emphasis on what cross-cultural psychologists refer to as *universals* not universal psychological constructs or similarities in behavior, but universally acceptable methods of generating empirical data. A discussion of universal psychological processes has itself received a good deal of attention and criticism (Jahoda, 1980).

The basic challenge for a field approach to cross-cultural psychology is to identify useful and appropriate *methodological etics*—research technologies that are both sensitive and appropriate for use in all cultural groups. It would be naive for one to assume that a *methodological etic* is sufficient to collect data from different cultural folks—other intercultural nuances may exist that could affect data collection and use of results. In an attempt to highlight issues and problems, the remaining sections of the chapter focus on major and selected methodological concerns, the influence of researchers as agents of sociopolitical change, and the ethical and social responsibilities of applied researchers.

In conducting culturally distinct research with ethnocultural groups, the would-be researcher sets a process in motion that of necessity must take into consideration the *ethos* and *eidos* of the groups in question. Not to do so could lead to an early death of the project and likely alienate the research team from future work with the community. In turn, as has happened far too often, community members receive further substantiation for their levels of distrust toward research and its progenitors. Lack of cultural sensitivity and awareness of community dynamics sets up a difficult situation and science receives a bad reputation (often much deserved), and the community problem continues to go unsolved.

What can one do to minimize cross-cultural conflicts accruing from the researcher-community interface? Fortunately, owing to the growing body of research in cross-cultural settings, a good deal can be learned from successful efforts. Before one prepares a research plan involving one or more ethnocultural groups, they should be mindful of the *comparability phenomena* as it remains as a daunting and perplexing problem for researchers. *Comparability* or *cultural equivalence* is a methodological problem for cross-cultural researchers because one must decide when and if the intended measures, techniques, procedures, representative of one ethnocultural group are equivalent to the lifeways and thoughtways of another ethnocultural group. Some cross-cultural researchers argue that achieving cultural equivalence is impossible while others argue that one can approach equivalence through use of carefully designed studies (see Berry et al., 1992).
The problem often is referred to as the Malinowskian Dilemma where the distinguished cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski "was most insistent that every culture be understood in its own terms, that every institution be seen as a product of the culture within which it developed. It follows from this that a cross-cultural comparison of institutions is essentially a false enterprise, for we are comparing incomparables" (Goldschmidt, 1966, p. 12). If we align ourselves with Malinowski's position we should stay with the study of one culture and not engage in the comparison of one ethnocultural group with another or many others as we run the risk of functional, conceptual, and metric inequivalence. Considerable debate abounds in the literature on the approaches advocated by cultural psychology and cross-cultural psychology; the former advocates study of one culture alone and the latter studies for comparison purposes.

**DEScribing the ethnocultural group.** In the design of cultural or ethnic intended research, attention must be given to the manner in which one specifies and describes ethnic and culturally distinct populations. In the cross-cultural literature, studies abound in which researchers purport to be studying such groups as the Japanese, Israeli Jews, Hong Kong Chinese, Canadians, Australian aborigines, Greek Australians, Nigerians—this list could continue, comprising a multitude of nationalistic and hyphenated ethnic and nationalistic populations. Occasionally, researchers provide greater specificity concerning their respondents in their titles and abstracts by giving reference to a geographic region or city in the United States. Others will distinguish their respondents along urban and rural lines while others, when referring to an American Indian group, will specify the tribe and the location on a reservation where the study occurred; this in itself can present problems as many tribes don't want to be identified in published reports. For a vast majority of the studies in the ethnic minority and cross-cultural literature, descriptions of ethnocultural groups tend to rely on use of broad *ethnic glosses*, superficial, almost vacuous, categories which serve only to separate one group from another (Trimble, 1991).

Use of such *glosses* provides little or no information on the richness and cultural variation within these groups, much less the existence of numerous subgroups characterized by distinct lifeways and thoughtways. Furthermore, use of broad *ethnic glosses* to describe a cultural or ethnic group in a research venture may be poor science. Apart from the fact that such sweeping references to ethnic groups are gross misrepresentations, their use can violate certain tenets concerning external validity, the ability to generalize findings across subgroups within an ethnic category, and erode any likelihood of an accurate and efficient replication of research results.

Use of *ethnic glosses* as subject and respondent descriptions has generated many concerns in recent years. Critics point to the fact that ethnic minority groups—specifically American Indians and Alaska Natives, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, Blacks, and Hispanics, the major ethnic minority groups in the United States—represent varied sociocultural and subgroup categories. American Indians (often Native American), a widely used and abused *ethnic gloss*, actually represent an extremely diverse and complicated ethnic group from well over 500 identifiable tribal units where individual members represent varying degrees of mixtures resulting from intermarriages and reflect varying acculturative orientations that effect ethnic identity. There are at least 32 distinct Asian American ethnic and cultural groups that can be meaningfully listed under this designation—the differences among and between these groups are extraordinarily complex. Given the diversity of languages, norms, mores and immigrant status, it is evident that to label these peoples as Asian American implies a homogeneity which is lacking." The Hispanic *ethnic gloss* is a term used to designate those individuals who reside in the United States and whose cultural origins are from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and other Latin American countries. Blacks in America are people who can trace the origins of their ancestors to Africa. Blacks, as a race, is an illusion if one means by it a homogeneous group.

---

Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Competence

23
with common anatomical and psychological characteristics. Moreover, Blacks in America are as culturally heterogeneous as the other three groups as reflected in social class characteristics, progeny from mixed ethnic marriages and American Blacks who are descendants or are originally from the Caribbean Basin (e.g., Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica) and Central and South America.

In North America an ethnic minority group may be defined as: "(1) subordinate segments of complex state societies; (2) (having) special physical or cultural traits which are held in low esteem by the dominant segments of the society; (3) self-conscious units bound together by the special traits which their members have and by the special disabilities they bring; (4) (one where) membership is transmitted by a rule of descent which is capable of affiliating succeeding generations even in the absence of readily apparent special cultural or physical traits; and (5) (people who) by choice or necessity tend to marry within the group" (Wayley & Harris, 1958, p. 10). These factors must be taken into consideration when defining research samples and populations.

In selecting ethnic samples for social and behavioral science studies researchers almost tacitly assume that the respondents share a common understanding of their own ethnicity and nationalistic identification. It is as though the researcher believes that American Indians, Blacks, and others share some modal characteristic that at one level sets them apart from another comparative sample such as "whites" (Trimble, 1991). The assumption may be invalid. Heath (1978) argues that "categories of people such as those compared under the rubric of "ethnic groups" are often not really meaningful units in any sociocultural sense" and "that the ways in which people define and maintain the "social boundaries" between or among self-identified categories are often far more important and revealing of sociocultural dynamics" (p. 60).

At an individual level, the researcher can use labels to describe one’s ethnic affiliation and thus one’s identity but this approach is incomplete and insufficient to adequately capture the full range of one’s identity. Use of the label, often obtained by having the respondent fill in a list of ethnic categories, is a small part of one’s ethnic identification. One must consider gathering information on natal background, acculturation status, attitudes toward their own and other groups, preferences such as language use, friendship affiliations, music, foods, and participation in cultural and religious events. The variables are closely aligned to the four-part ethnic identification measurement model advocated by Trimble (2000) and related ethnic and racial identification scales (see Trimble, Helms, & Root, 2002).

Ethnic self-identification is a unique psychological construct and "refers to the description of oneself in terms of a critical ethnic attribute; that is, an attribute that defines more than merely describes the ethnic group" (Aboud, 1987, p. 33). If a researcher intends to isolate and discover the extent to which deep-cultural variables influence outcome variables it is imperative that attention be given to the extent to which respondents identify themselves. Thus, cultural and ethnic studies involving nationalistic or ethnocultural groups must provide respondents the opportunity to define themselves in terms that far exceed what is captured by a label or an ethnic gloss.

GAINING ENTRY TO THE FIELD AND THE COMMUNITY. All researchers should know exactly what kind of relationship they want with their respondents because the nature of that relationship will determine the depth and quality of the information and data. I often refer to this as relational methodology. Approaching a community setting as though it was a laboratory where respondents were treated as subjects to be manipulated according to strict scientific principles likely would generate a certain set of results. Psychology’s over emphasis
Cultural Sensitivity and Cultural Competence

on variable control at all levels belies the fact that people live in social contexts and these contexts profoundly influence our actions, thoughts, and feelings. Thus, the laboratory-based findings might be quite different from those where the researcher approached the community as a participant observer and viewed the informants and respondents as collaborators in the research enterprise. In the first scene, respondents may tell you what they believe you want to hear and nothing more. In the second scene, respondents may tell you what they really believe and know more so because they know that they are collaborators in the venture. In this scene, the investigator focuses on the community as the context in which individual behavior occurs. The meaning of one’s actions and thoughts are contextual and situational and thus the context and situation become a source of information. The scene and perspective have been referred to as an *Ecology of Lives* approach to field based research where the emphasis is placed on how lives are lived and influenced by the context in which affect, behavior, and cognition occur (Trickett & Birman, 1989). For the approach to work effectively, the researcher must firmly establish trust and rapport; that will never occur in *one shot* approaches to research as trust and rapport require a long term commitment to the people and community.

The presence of social scientists in ethnocultural communities, especially certain ethnic minority communities in North America, is cause for considerable suspicion. Even the mere suggestion that one is an academic is enough to spark controversy. Often, this is the case for researchers who share the same ethnicity as members of the host community. Origins of the suspicions derive from two primary sources: a community’s lack of experience with the research process, and previous relationships with former researchers.

Many ethnic minority and ethnocultural communities have little or no understanding or appreciation for academic-grounded research. Scientism and all its trimmings often are foreign to the residents. Researchers, too, often are viewed by themselves and community residents as socially and culturally marginal to the society they intend to study. Consequently, “no matter how skilled he is in the native tongue, how nimble in handling strange social relationships, how artistic in performing social and religious rituals, and how attached he is to local beliefs, goals, and values, (the researcher) rarely deludes himself to thinking that many community members really regard him as one of them” (Freilich, 1970, p. 2).

Field based researchers often stand to be accused as some kind of government agent or interloper. “He is not what he pretends to be and that he is gathering information for some purpose harmful to the community (Freilich, 1970, p. 3), an outsider looking for a place to establish permanent residence, a missionary sent in to convert the residents, or another social scientist whose prime interest may be to gain prestige and promotion. Because of the recent concern about the presence of researchers, a number of indigenous and aboriginal communities in the United States, Canada, and countries in Central and South America have issued edicts prohibiting and restricting any form of research in their respective communities (see Tierney, 2001).

Most Native American Indian reservation communities in the continental United States require all outside researchers to present a prospectus to the tribal council for review and sanction. If sanctioned, researchers are granted what is equivalent to a solicitor’s license that carries with it a number of contingencies, that typically include (1) the assignment of a knowledgeable tribal member to monitor all research activities, (2) restrictions on the nature and composition of potential respondents (this restriction makes random sampling almost an impossibility), (3) the right to review all original and completed research questionnaires, interview schedules, and field notes, (4) the right to review any documents submitted for publication with the understanding that the tribe has the right to reject such documents, and (5) the right to review, comment, and pass judgment on any final reports. Add to these contingencies the procedures for receiving informed consent and protecting the rights of all respondents and one could
readily surmise that conducting field research is much more complex than randomly pooling college students in quasi-laboratory settings.

Gaining entry into the field, whether invited by the host culture or not, carries an enormous responsibility. This responsibility not only extends to the residents and respondents, but also to the maintenance of one’s scientific integrity. More important, the researcher should recognize that mistakes, errors in protocol, and violations of cultural norms, beliefs, and values are not easily forgiven by members of the host and scientific communities. Impetuously and boldly rushing into a community for the sheer sake of advancing one’s pet theory and hopefully promoting science is unconscionable, intolerable, and indeed disrespectful.

Before setting foot into a culturally different community for the purposes of conducting research, researchers would do well to heed the recommendations of those who have been there before. After spending some five years conducting research on the aging process in numerous ethnic minority communities in the United States, Bengston, Grigsby, Corry, and Hruby (1977) drew up the following considerations for researchers, as follows:

- Research should be multidisciplinary. If not possible, the solitary researcher should seek the consultation of other social scientists and persons who have some working knowledge of the community in question;
- Conventional laboratory grounded research strategies are not easily translated to field research. The scientific community will be concerned with methodological soundness and the lay community will want to be assured that they are not getting ripped off, that their collective voices will be heard, and that they will share in monetary remuneration if it is available.
- Because of the number of the community members involved, the potential for conflict is considerable. Bengston et al. (1977) argue that the conflict between the lay community and professional researchers may demand that strategies for conflict resolution be given consideration equal to that directed toward design criteria and methodological procedures.
- Above all the considerations, field researchers must be prepared to adapt to many changes that could occur in the course of the effort. They must be prepared to revise strategies and tactics to accommodate the changing concerns of community life.

CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE OF RESEARCH TOOLS. Field based researchers typically rely on use of survey and structured interview formats to collect information. In addition, some researchers make use of case study approaches, meta-analytic procedures, secondary data analytic methods, and, to a very limited extent, quasi-experimental approaches. These research approaches could be referred to as methodological etics, for it is assumed that the techniques could be used with any group, regardless of its cultural background.

Methodological etics are akin to what cross-cultural psychologists refer to as cultural equivalence phenomena that are consistent across all human beings and all human groups. Berry et al. (1992) argue that essentially three kinds of equivalences can exist: (1) Functional equivalence exists when behaviors emitted by people from different cultures occur in response to similar problems; (2) conceptual equivalence exists when people from different cultures share a common meaning about specific stimuli; and (3) metric equivalence exists when the psychometric properties of one’s data obtained from different cultures reveals a comparable pattern. The nature of functional and conceptual equivalences present real problems for cultural and ethnic researchers as exclusive reliance on methodological etics without regard for these concepts could invalidate an entire research venture.
To understand conceptual equivalence, one must recognize that every culture has developed ways of looking at the world that make sense to them. Their worldview, much of which is reflected in the language of the culture, has been shaped by environmental, historical, biological, and other factors that have marked that people’s evolution as a unique group. While there may be commonalities in all worldviews, depending to some extent on the proximity of groups, there are also usually areas of significant differences. For instance, many American Indians differ from White people in their view of what constitutes mental illness. For some tribes, mental illness is the result of having in some way transgressed the rules of right living, and until this can be rectified through ceremony, the illness will continue; thus, it is perceived as a spiritual issue whose resolution is in the hands of a medicine person or shaman. This contrasts with the White view that the person has been subjected to a pathological process that can be relieved through medication combined with the individual’s efforts to change his or her behavior.

One way to ensure equivalence involves the prudent use of local people as part of the research team. It is important that these people be deeply involved with the planning and that their views be given full consideration. Too often, local people are hired as program staff, but their ideas are not sought and they are not included in planning sessions. Therefore, researchers must be aware that many ethnic minorities interact and communicate with one another in unique ways. In meetings where ideas are being shared and plans are being made, it is common for indigenous tribal people, for example, to withhold their comments until everyone else has spoken. It often happens that meetings are ended before those in attendance have had an opportunity to present their views, and an important source of information is lost.

We now turn our attention to measurement issues and begin with the concept of metric equivalence. This concept refers to the possibility that survey and questionnaire items or scales often operate differently across cultures. Another metric equivalence problem occurs when the relationship between variables is not the same across cultures. Although it is often ignored, establishing metric equivalence should be a standard task for researchers. It is not enough to identify measures that have been used in other studies to measure a concept under consideration. It must be demonstrated that the selected instrumentation is both valid and reliable for the population on which it will be used. In addition to the usual reliability and validity studies, it is useful to analyze the factor structure of the measures and constructs being used. Besides establishing metric equivalence, use of factor structure analysis, item response theory, and Rasch modeling algorithms can help in examining problems that may also exist with functional and conceptual equivalence.

The question is often raised as to whether it is best to use off-the-shelf measures or to construct new measures when doing research in a cross-cultural milieu. There is no one answer to this question, given that problems can be encountered with each approach. Unless there is evidence that an existing measure has already worked in the population being evaluated, it is usually necessary to establish reliability and validity with that group. This is not to say, however, that all measures are inherently culturally biased and cannot be used, either in part or in whole, with other populations.

Construction of new items and scales is not a task that should be taken lightly. Many researchers underestimate the difficulty of scale construction, and this difficulty is multiplied when the new scales are applied across cultures. One of the most common errors is not to test the scale before using it for evaluation. Pilot testing is an absolute requirement and should involve a debriefing procedure in which potential subjects can talk about their interpretation of the items.

There is one final set of points to be made in this section. Over the years, researchers working with different cultures have resorted to the use of measurement tools that are based on
norms and the testing orientation of those with a Western perspective. All too often, these researchers encounter problems in administration, scoring, and, assuredly, interpretation. Critics abound, though, and a number of cross-cultural researchers have commented on the cultural inappropriateness of measurement approaches (see Irvine & Berry 1983). Many of us in the field of cross-cultural and ethnic psychology wonder why some investigators, almost blindly and with utmost diligence, continue using conventional measurement and psychometric traditions in cultural and ethnic research.

Here are seven common pitfalls in cross-cultural testing:

- Psychological constructs are viewed as synonymous with locally derivable criteria, which may or may not be consistent with the implied intent of the construct.
- The establishment of several types of equivalence is not considered essential.
- It is assumed that once tests are purged of verbal material, leaving only nonverbal stimuli, they are more culture-fair.
- Norms gathered in one culture are used to evaluate the performance of individuals in other cultures.
- People from around the world may have variable and different modes of responding to test items.
- Such testing generally tends to infer deficits based on test score differences.
- Nearly all psychological tests are culturally isomorphic to the West, which can be characterized as sophisticated and test-wise.

REPORT WRITING AND DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS. Ordinarily, emphasis on report writing and dissemination of results is not included in articles and books dealing with the conduct of cross-cultural and ethnic research. In recent years, however, many of us have become aware that numerous research studies have had a negative impact on the reputation of ethnic-cultural communities due in large part to the way in which reports and articles are written and publicized. Applied social research programs, for example, are designed to address social ills; therefore, written descriptions often focus heavily on the negative aspects of communities. When ethnic minority communities are involved, this type of reporting—over time—reinforces negative stereotypes. Consequently many ethnic minority communities especially American Indian and Alaska Native ones require that they have a right to review the results, how the data will be analyzed, and how the results will be written and disseminated. If the investigator does not agree with the conditions community and tribal sanctions will not be granted.

In the worst case, study results can be blatantly used to denigrate a community. Some years back, a local border town newspaper obtained the results of a survey of alcohol and other drug use that was given on an American Indian reservation in the U.S, and it sensationalized the results. Although there were no overt racial statements, the intent was clear and the Indian community experienced a great deal of shame. Social problems do exist in ethnic minority communities; however, it is necessary to place them in context, and any research report should reflect that context. For example, alcohol and drug use problems in most American Indian communities largely reflect socioeconomic conditions and are not related to any inherent cultural characteristics. Many American Indians are becoming increasingly impatient with the litany of social ills that are ascribed to them, and a research report that presents a balanced picture will get a much better reception and is more likely to be used. In a word, the report should be written and presented respectfully.

Community based research may have two purposes. At the local level, people need to know whether the research has value for them, that is, is it culturally congruent, well received by
the community, and consistent with local values and norms? There is also a need for technical data that support the report’s conclusions and may be used to answer more specific questions. These two purposes suggest the need for two types of reports. It often happens that technical reports are never used at the local level because they are too complex and do not respond directly to the need to make decisions. In the absence of a more comprehensible document, the community may be left with the feeling that the research was a wasted effort, and it may develop a negative attitude toward research in general. Thus, a report written in non-technical language specifically to address the local need is appropriate.

The release and dissemination of a research report often will have to be handled carefully, particularly if the report contains sensitive information. In one sense, this is a question of who owns the data; many American Indian communities will claim they do since they were the ones who provided the information. Given this, the community or its representatives would have the final decision about the dissemination of results. There must also be a recognition, however, that the information can be useful in other communities and therefore needs to be published in some form.

Several approaches can be used to reduce controversy over publication. First, negotiations should occur very early in the research process, and some general agreement should be reached. In some cases, even if prior agreement has been reached, there may be some unanticipated results that community people find sensitive and would not like to see publicized. Usually, a compromise can be reached through negotiation, whereby some information may be deleted or left in a report for internal purposes only. It is also useful to allow local people to preview the report to determine whether there are any conclusions that could be more accurately interpreted in light of local culture, values, or beliefs.

Whenever there is concern over report content, the manner in which the report is released can be extremely important. In 1980, a very sensitive report on alcoholism in a Native Alaska village was released to the general media (see Manson, 1989). In addition to a number of other serious errors in protocol, the information from the study was presented at a press conference thousands of miles away from the village where the study was conducted. This precluded any participation by local people and allowed the whole situation to be presented out of context. Once again, a Native Alaska community experienced a great deal of shame because the information released implied that nearly all of the Native adults in the community were alcoholic. Although the actual situation was quite different, there was no way to moderate what was presented.

It is wise and prudent to have local people involved in any release of research information, either in person or through a cover letter signed by an agency representative. This once again demonstrates the need for community people to be intimately involved with any research effort. It not only ensures that the most accurate information is presented, but also precludes the perception that the community is once again the subject of outside research and is not capable of resolving local issues and understanding the implications of the findings.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The chapter begins with two related quotations concerning the importance of cultural explanations and the experiences of a researcher studying another ethnocultural group. The quotes form the chapter’s theme that takes us from definitions about cultural competence and cultural sensitivity to conducting research in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways. Mixed in are discussions about self-reflection and learning about one’s cultural self and multicultural
counseling and how one can attain competency in this rapidly emerging field of inquiry. Care has been taken in the selection and use of relevant references describing important concepts, techniques, and information related to the overarching chapter theme: the references serve as a tool for the reader to use to explore the depth and richness of the chapter’s topics.

For decades psychology has been selective in the study and characterization of people. Critics argue that most of the early findings generated from psychological researchers occurred in a cultural vacuum and were limited to North America. The more harsh and cynical critics point out that the findings could only be generalized to Whites or Euro-Americans, as they were the major source of researcher’s data. Robert Guthrie’s (976) small book, Even the Rate was White, tells a good part of the reason why early psychology was scientifically racist. Similarly, beginning in the late 1960s, counseling and clinical psychologists were accused of being culturally encapsulated because their theories and approaches were limited to certain ethnocultural groups—ones who valued talking about their problems with professionals with the hope that the problems could be solved or cured. At that time and continuing to the present many international, ethnic minority, and cross-cultural psychologists argued that culture and ethnicity should be central to the psychology rather than an outlier or an object for exotic study.

Cross-cultural and ethnic psychologists have discovered that cultural differences make a difference in the way people act, perceive, think, and feel so much so that major theories have to be revised to accommodate the new and contradictory results. Counseling and clinical psychology approaches also have undergone revision and change. Mental health and how one achieves and maintains it vary from one ethnocultural group to another and counselors are discovering that an approach that works for one may not work for another. Culture and all that it means and represents is challenging psychology but the field, too, is challenging culture in reciprocal ways. Psychologists in the main keep asking us to define what we mean by culture, ethnicity, and the processes and mechanisms that mediate and influence thoughtways and lifeways. Becoming culturally competent and culturally sensitive does not imply that one discard the contributions of past and present psychologists. The challenge for the reader is to recognize that we cannot fully understand the human condition without viewing it from a cross-cultural and ethnic perspective. What was learned about the human condition in the past can be reframed and tested with a new set of approaches and procedures in contexts not considered in the past. Similarly, we may find that specific thoughtways and lifeways of certain ethnocultural groups may have some extraordinary value for psychology as a whole and thus assist in improving our understanding of humans and the settings we live in.

Acknowledgement: I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the administration and research staff at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University for providing me with the time, resources, and support that allowed me to conduct research for the preparation and writing of this chapter. Additionally, I want to extend my warm appreciation to my former Radcliffe Research Junior Partners, Harvard College seniors, Peggy Ting Lim and Maiga Miranda who conducted research and provide me with wonderful thought provoking commentary and advice for many topics covered in this chapter.

Additional Resources


REFERENCES


