

Introduction

The study of multicultural psychology has a long and multifaceted history. The field encompasses a wide range of subdisciplines within psychology and includes a multitude of populations both within and outside of the United States. Early efforts to examine issues relevant to people of color in psychology often attempted to describe differences among populations as a way to better understand the influence of culture on the human organism. Unfortunately, the results of the early research were often interpreted in terms of inferiority on the part of one group over another and were usually of little benefit to people of color or nations as a whole. Current efforts include a broad range of methodologies for research and training and a strong desire to produce useful results for understanding the role of culture in human behavior.

Debates continue over the appropriateness of modern psychological theories to capture the influences of culture. Generally, Western approaches advocate for the universality of human development and behavior and the field as a whole has yet to embrace or understand the complexities of cultural styles in modern research and practice. Evidence over the past 30 years, however, suggests that long-standing academic traditions are woefully inadequate and inflexible to accurately measure, interpret, or support a universal approach.

Culture is important, and the focus of the *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* is to provide an index to the terms, concepts, and issues in the mainstream of field. Professional organizations since the 1970s have advocated and demonstrated the need for more comprehensive ideas when it comes to human behavior that include cultural background when studying psychological constructs. And, since the 1970s, international and ethnic minority psychologists alike reflected growing concerns regarding the meaning of

psychology for all peoples. The field of multicultural and cross-cultural psychology has a relatively short history and is making its way into the foundations for training new psychologists. To this end, national accrediting organizations in psychology and licensure boards across the country continue to refine mandates for training that include a focus on multicultural psychology. As more multicultural research is compiled and the findings disseminated, the need for comprehensive texts like the *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* become stronger.

The *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* is meant to be an authoritative guide to the field of multicultural psychology. The title is intentional and supports the notion that culture, not race, is the best way to understand differences among individuals. Because the field is expansive and expanding, no one volume can cover all of the important topics germane to the area. Therefore, although this text includes entries on a broad array of issues and topics, it is not meant to be comprehensive. It is designed to be of particular interest to laypersons, students, and professionals new to the field with an interest in the role of culture in psychology.

The text includes topics that are relevant to social psychology, cognitive psychology, environmental psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and clinical psychology. Because one of the recent concerns in clinical psychology is the application of culture-based findings to multicultural populations, the text includes a focus on treatment or applied issues in multicultural psychology. The text also includes a focus on psychopathology and the manner in which it is defined and measured from different cultural perspectives. Folk illnesses or indigenous pathologies are also included so that the reader may explore how mental illness or mental health is perceived from a traditional culture viewpoint.

Every effort was made to include all large ethnic groups and subgroups in the United States in this text; however, other cultural groups may not be included due to limited research and knowledge. Even within subgroups, knowledge may be limited as research publication is only beginning to catch up to the need for information on cultural groups with smaller numbers.

One of the objectives of this text was to address culture across a broad spectrum of psychological perspectives. To this end, the text also includes topics on sociological issues as well as conceptual issues relevant to the field of multicultural psychology. Moreover, the text also addresses how some psychological constructs are measured, as the available data are only as good as the measurement tools used to gather the information. Finally, cultural concerns are also addressed, including, among others, topics on traumatic events that are especially relevant for understanding the worldviews of people of color.

With the arrival of new journals and professional organizations, the field of multicultural psychology is growing. Clearly the field has a long way to go to meet current empirical and professional standards enjoyed by many other disciplines of psychology. Part of this growth is embodied in the need for the *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* in that new and more established psychologists alike will need information and understanding of how cultural issues are relevant to their work.

Culture is not a topic with relevance limited to psychology. The need for greater understanding of

the role of culture is at the forefront of national and international relations. It is also not a topic limited in interest to people of color. Although the universal perspective in psychology may no longer be a reasonable position, there is a universal call for increased research, knowledge, and awareness of how culture affects our lives. Public debate on culture seeks to find commonality and insight both within and between people from all cultural backgrounds. It is to this end that this text may highlight the major issues and bring to bear the field's appreciation for the influence of culture. The *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Psychology* presents an introduction to the field for those interested in improving their awareness and comprehension of cultural practices prevalent among and between all people.

Completing a volume on a broad and sometimes controversial topic would not be possible without the assistance of many individuals. I would like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of the Assistant Editor, Kimberlee Roy, in making this text a reality. Also, the text would not be possible without the work and expertise of the distinguished list of authors and the members of the advisory board. Finally, I would like to thank my father, James Warren Jackson, and my mother, E. Katherine Eberhard, for their support, guidance, and instruction on how to be a living model for tolerance and cultural appreciation.

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