Preface

Appreciating diversity is crucial to providing mental health services today. The majority of American children under 7 years of age identify as belonging to more than one racial group. As US demographics rapidly change over the next decade, mental health professionals will need to learn how multiple unique cultural dimensions influence psychiatric illness. This book provides a framework for this understanding.

This textbook is divided into two parts. Part I, Specific Populations, discusses the history, prevalence, and complexities involved in the mental health assessment and treatment of Arab Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, American Indians and Alaska Natives, People of African descent, Refugees, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning (LGBTQ) populations. The chapters’ authors note each group is heterogeneic and therefore any individual must be understood within the context of his or her culture.

In Part II, Innovative Ways to Understand Diversity, the authors provide readers with their insights, research, and approaches to cultural sensitivity. From journalism to mediation to health care, various disciplines are finding creative ways to better understand the new American.

The editors hope this textbook provides a useful reference. In addition to the 12 chapters, there is an appendix which includes a glossary of important terms and an essay by a latency age child grappling to understand difference and adversity. Our book opens with a foreword by the artist and storyteller, Raghava KK, who urges us to actively participate in understanding the complex cultural changes in health care. We are confident it will inspire our readers.

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