Counseling and Therapy Cases From Around the World

A Review of

*International Counseling Case Studies Handbook*

by Roy Moodley, Marguerite Lengyell, Rosa Wu, and Uwe P. Gielen (Eds.)
ISBN 978-1-55620-335-0. $58.95, paperback

http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0040159

Reviewed by

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*International Counseling Case Studies Handbook* is an ideal book for our rapidly changing world. It offers poignant examples from many countries of the ways in which the collision of cultures impacts individuals. When two cultures perceived as incompatible are internalized in one individual, the clash between them can cause problems that lead the individual to seek therapy. Although not all the cases described in this handbook involve a clash of cultures, many do, either explicitly or implicitly. The pace of cultural change will not slow. The need for in-depth understanding of individual strivings and suffering in a changing world will not diminish. This international handbook of case studies is a pioneering work that promotes such in-depth understanding.

**Therapeutic Case Studies From Around the World**

The editors have done an admirable job of recruiting and assembling the work of authors from 33 countries in five geographic regions of the world. The heart of the handbook consists of chapters presenting therapeutic case studies of individuals from the 33 countries. Chapter authors were asked to use a consistent framework as follows: (1) description of the client, presenting issues, and challenges; (2) case history and developmental background; (3) the therapy; and (4) discussion and analysis of the case. Use of this framework lends consistency from chapter to chapter and provides valuable order for handling the great diversity of case details. The case studies were consistently of high quality. Finally, each chapter contains five questions that encourage the reader to reflect on the case. These questions challenge the reader to critically evaluate the therapeutic approach. The chapters include useful references that the reader can turn to for deeper background on the culture of the country and therapeutic challenges and modalities within the country.

Many of the case studies reveal presenting issues derived from the tension between traditional cultural practices within the country and the rapidly advancing pressures of
The Importance of Language

In my opinion, one thing is missing in this excellent handbook. The language used by the therapist and client during therapeutic sessions is never adequately discussed. To explain why I believe this is important, I will share a personal experience. In the summer of 1990, I returned to Germany to see for myself the historic changes transpiring there. The Berlin Wall had come down in November 1989. The Soviet Union was disintegrating. East Germany and other East European countries were shedding the Soviet yoke. East and West Germany were reuniting. I wanted to see these changes through the eyes of friends and acquaintances I had made when I was a university student in Germany in the late 1960s. While visiting with one German friend, I noticed that although we were both fluent in German and English and switched easily between the languages, she always reverted to German when talking about matters that were very personal or emotion laden. Although English may be the dominant language of psychological science, the practice of psychology needs to be carried out in many languages (Draguns, 2001). Because counseling and therapy often involve highly emotional and personal issues, I believe they are best
conducted in the first, or most fluent, language of the client. The most notable weakness of this handbook is that the language or languages used in the various cases are seldom mentioned.

One of the editors, Roy Moodley, has written about seven identities (gender, age, ethnicity/race, religion/spirituality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and disability) that loom large in a comprehensive understanding of any individual. However, it seems that language is also important and central to one’s identity. Nevertheless, although it was possible to surmise the language of the therapeutic interaction in many of the cases, it was not identified as an important facet of identity. Moreover, it was never explicitly addressed.

Is This Handbook for You?

This book will be of interest to many audiences. Graduate students enrolled in clinical and counseling psychology programs could be assigned this book as a text. The five questions at the end of each case study provide pedagogical aids that could be assigned to such students to help them develop a deeper understanding of the diverse clientele they will be dealing with in the future. Students in programs of educational counseling, marriage and family therapy, pastoral counseling, and social work programs will also find the book valuable. Practicing therapists and counselors who work with clients from a variety of cultures can gain insight and learn practical approaches for working with clients from diverse backgrounds. Any student or scholar in the social and behavioral sciences with a desire to gain greater international understanding of the challenges faced by individuals in today’s rapidly globalizing world can make good use of this book. Finally, although the book is scholarly in the best sense of the word, it is accessible to any general audience, and the individual dramas of the case studies make riveting reading.

For more in-depth information about many of the countries and cultures presented briefly in the cases, the reader can go to the Handbook of International Psychology (Stevens & Wedding, 2004). Another source that complements this handbook is Handbook of Counseling and Psychotherapy in an International Context (Moodley, Gielen, & Wu, 2013). This edited volume contains chapters on counseling in many countries written by the same authors as those of the cases in the current volume.

For presenting a highly informative yet very readable volume, Moodley, Lengyell, Wu, and Gielen are to be congratulated. They have provided a well-organized and detailed introduction to the rich diversity of therapeutic settings in many countries from around the world.

References
