

# Preface

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This book is about culturally adapting psychotherapy and learning how to individualize therapy for diverse populations. In covering this topic, a primary focus of this book is placed on developing a broad and comprehensive understanding of how to culturally adapt psychotherapy for diverse populations, immigrants, and ethnic minorities. Many of the models, frameworks, and principles that I will discuss will be broad enough that they can be readily applied and will have general clinical utility with many different groups. However, the central focus of this book will be on developing a deep structural understanding of how to culturally adapt psychotherapy for Asian heritage populations. The goals are to help practitioners, researchers, and scientist-practitioners alike develop an intuitive understanding of cultural adaptations both broadly and deeply.

There are many books out there that discuss culturally competent treatment for diverse populations, and that provide separate chapters covering different racial or ethnocultural groups. Although this can be advantageous because it allows for breadth of understanding, they often leave readers with a superficial or stereotyped understanding of how to work with specific populations. Practitioners who want and need cultural competency are often left wondering what to actually do and what to say when they are working with diverse populations in the therapy room. They are often unsure of how to utilize the general or stereotyped information provided in a concrete and specific manner.

This book is different because the central focus is on providing practical, concrete, and clinically useful strategies that will help practitioners improve their clinical-cultural skills. The book's emphasis is on culturally adapting psychotherapy for Asian heritage populations, a racial group consisting of many different ethnicities and national origins. It is important to note that there are many similarities across Asian groups, as well as many differences. A lesser focus is placed on understanding each and every one of these different Asian groups, while a greater focus is placed on understanding some of the similarities that cut across Asian heritage populations. A culturally competent therapist is a person who not only possesses concrete and specific knowledge about different cultural groups, but also understands how to think critically about the complex interplay of cultural and clinical issues. Specifically, they are able to take generic or stereotyped information, understand the broader context, while still being able to individualize therapy for the client. A culturally competent therapist is also able to process information and utilize a flexible mindset and framework to improve their ability to engage clients, improve therapeutic relationships, and be clinically effective. They are also cognizant to their own cultural biases, and possess a certain level of cultural self-awareness.

This book is also different from other books in that it provides the reader with an evidence-based and culturally adapted treatment manual that has been tested in a randomized controlled trial (RCT). As part of this book, the reader is provided with a culturally adapted and evidence-based 12-session treatment manual that was specifically developed for treating depressed Chinese Americans. This manual was developed using a community-participatory approach and tested in a clinical trial in San Francisco and Los Angeles. This RCT was funded by a R34 grant that I received from the National Institute of Mental Health (From Intervention Development to Services: Exploratory Research Grants) entitled "Adapting Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Chinese Americans," which tested the Culturally Adapted CBT (CA-CBT) with CBT. It is important to note that even though the manual is a cultural adaptation of CBT, many of the cultural adaptations and therapeutic interventions utilized are not restricted to CBT. Specifically, when developing the cultural adaptations, I tried to develop cultural adaptations and modifications that would be effective, and that can cut across and be readily utilized when providing treatments of different therapeutic orientations and modalities.

The treatment manual presented as a part of this book is entitled *Improving your mood: A culturally responsive and holistic approach to treating depression in Chinese Americans* (Hwang, 2008a, 2008b). The manual is available in English and has also been translated into Chinese. There was originally a client and therapist version of the manual, with the therapist version serving more as a training guideline. However, this book replaces the therapist version of the manual. Readers will be taught how to use the client version of the culturally adapted depression treatment manual. In addition, the client manual provides readers with concrete illustrations and a deeper

understanding of what cultural adaptations look like and how they can be effectively utilized. This in-depth focus on Chinese heritage populations facilitates the goal of developing a deeper understanding of one specific ethnic group, which also helps readers apply this framework of thinking to other groups and learn how to conceptually think about cultural adaptations at a deeper structural level. Ultimately, this should facilitate the reader's understanding of how to culturally adapt and modify psychotherapy for Asian heritage populations, as well as other diverse populations.

In doing so, this book goes beyond providing an in-depth focus of one racial group (ie, Asian heritage populations) and goes even further by focusing on a specific ethnocultural ancestry (ie, Chinese and Chinese Americans). There are many advantages to choosing Chinese and Chinese immigrants as a central focus of this book. Chinese culture has influenced many other Asian cultures for thousands of years, and as a result, many of the cultural values, principles, philosophies, and beliefs have been adopted by other Asian groups. Chinese culture is largely collectivistic, which the vast majority of Asian heritage populations also are. People of Chinese ancestry are the largest Asian heritage immigrant group in the United States, and many of the struggles and experiences they have are also shared by other Asian American groups. Issues of immigration and acculturation not only affect Asian heritage populations, but also affect Hispanic and Latino populations. Learning how to understand and address immigration issues that Chinese Americans face can also be beneficial for those working with Latino populations, who are also largely collectivistic and thus, share many similar characteristics regarding family and attitudes toward mental health treatment (eg, stigma, losing face, and lack of previous exposure to psychotherapy in their countries of origin). In addition, many of the issues covered in this book also have applicability to other immigrant groups.

Moreover, there are also important international implications for choosing Chinese Americans as the illustrative group. For example, although China is the most populous country in the world, its mental health treatments system is largely underdeveloped. As such, China would benefit greatly from culturally informed research and clinical practice. Moreover, Asia is the most densely populated continent in the world. Many Asian countries have historically been influenced by Chinese culture. Adaptations for Chinese and Chinese Americans have carryover implications for other Asian countries and could stimulate improvement of mental health services across Asia. Therefore, this book can help inform the development of effective mental health care in China and other Asian countries.

This book is broken up into two sections. The first section consists of four chapters and is entitled, "Understanding the science of culturally adapting psychotherapy." These chapters provide an overview of Asian heritage populations and the need for culturally effective care (Chapter 1), define and describe the cultural adaptation movement (Chapter 2), help the reader understand how culture systematically influences various mental health processes (Chapter 3), and provide a guiding framework for how to culturally adapt therapy and explain how this manual was developed (Chapter 4). This overview section serves as a necessary foundation to providing evidence-based culturally competent care. The second section is entitled, "Learning how to effectively use the culturally adapted treatment manual." Chapters 6–17 introduce and teach readers about the 12-session CA-CBT manual, and provide a step-by-step approach on how to effectively use it with clients. In addition, these chapters provide concrete illustrations on what is meant by cultural adaptations, and highlight various cultural modifications and the rationales for why these adaptations are important.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all of the people and agencies who made this project possible. The CA-CBT for depressed Chinese Americans project was supported by National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) grant 1R34MH73545-01A2 (Trial Registration [clinicaltrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) Identifier: NCT01786746). This project would not have been possible without the dedication of clinics, directors, therapists, staff, and patients at the Asian Pacific Family Center and Richmond Area Multi-Services. In addition, I want to acknowledge the numerous clinics, therapists, practitioners, and traditional healers who participated in focus groups and interviews that informed the development of the culturally adapted intervention. I also want to thank all of the clinical assessors, research assistants, and mentors who made this project possible.

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## References

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