
Preface

Overview

Our idea for this project developed out of conversations about what it means to be a child in today's world. We were curious and committed to having a better understanding of the complexities, joys, and challenges that children embrace on a daily basis. Having children of our own, we have seen the many growing pains that accompany the purview of modern day school life. We have also seen the great joy and amazement children bring to the discovery of the world around them. We recognize the many resources that schools provide within classrooms as well as for individual learners. At the foundation of these supports are unbelievably committed educators, parents, family members, and neighbors. The aim of the *Handbook* was to organize scientific knowledge to address areas of growth, advocate for needed change, and make available resources known for those interested in this work.

Throughout the *Handbook of Culturally Responsive School Mental Health* our focus, and that of our contributors, is on being culturally responsive to the diverse needs and experiences of youth in schools. We found that a better understanding of what is meant by *culturally responsive training, practice, research, and policy in school mental health* is warranted given our changing demographic landscape, with increasingly diverse student populations.

Often children are characterized as developing along similar trajectories, when in fact the influences of culture are profound. Children enter schools with a variety of languages, customs, cultures, and historic backgrounds, and researchers have documented the disproportionality in mental health problems, as well as reduced access to referral and treatment among culturally diverse youth. Hence, the need for and considerable benefit of, a book that represents a call to teachers, school administrators, school counselors, school mental health professionals, and advocates to consider the ways in which they can be more culturally responsive. Research addressing concepts like stigma and the lack of culturally competent trained professionals and those who can speak languages other than English also highlight the fact that comprehensive approaches to culturally responsive practice are not well-defined. Associated work is in its infancy.

Rationale and Organization

The purpose of the *Handbook* is to meet gaps in the literature by organizing chapters that reflect critical themes in advancing culturally responsive school mental health promotion and intervention across key realms of training, practice, research, and policy, while exploring interconnections across these realms. Through a range of contributors, this volume addresses three main areas: (1) the status of the research on culturally responsive school mental health work with children and adolescents; (2) innovative approaches in work with diverse children and adolescents in schools; and (3) the application of these two points to school mental health efforts with particular groups and/or around particular problems.

The first strand of the volume, the status of research, will identify gaps in the research literature as they relate to the current status of school mental health with children and adolescents in schools. This section begins with a chapter by the coeditors that provides a rationale for culturally responsive school mental health. This introduction is followed by chapters that focus on the need for culturally responsive school mental health services in school-based behavioral health care in overseas military base schools; in rural communities; and in the growing role of school personnel.

The second strand, innovative approaches, reviews current programs and strategies that successfully focus on child and adolescent school mental health from a diverse context. Specific issues and innovations focus on working in the school context with communities that include: African American youth and their families; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth; Asian American Pacific Islander youth; forced migrant children and their families; primary care facilities in rural communities; racially and ethnically diverse adolescents; and youth gangs.

The third strand focuses on specific problems and interventions and, as such, addresses special topics related to culturally responsive research and practice. Chapters in this section discuss training transformed school counselors; substance abuse and sex education prevention programming for middle school youth; the promotion of culturally competent assessment in schools; work/family balance; and understanding trauma through a cross-cultural lens. The concluding chapter in this section, and the *Handbook*, discusses next steps for the continued advancement of culturally responsive school-based mental health.

Handbook of Culturally Responsive School Mental
Health

Advancing Research, Training, Practice, and Policy

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