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von Wogau, Eimmermacher, Lanfranchi (Hrsg.): Therapie und Beratung von Migranten. Systemisch-interkulturell denken und handeln

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BOOK CRITIQUE

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The initiative of the editors is a success. "Therapy and Counseling for Immigrants" is a must to read for everyone who works in the social, therapeutic or medical field. Immigrants are a part of our society- whether they want to be or not and whether the professionals who work with them have intercultural competencies and can understand their cultural stories or not- Immigrants are here. They will be in our health care system and in our schools and counseling services. Who ever reads this book will be informed and about the current discussion in the area of migration in Germany (Part I) and will get a lot of practical tips on how to work more competently with their foreign clientele in a variety of settings (Part 2). The authors have a theoretical background is based on Systems theory. The systemic perspective tends to avoid seeing the individual as pathologic and widens the perspective to include the social and cultural context. This is especially important in working with immigrants where it is important to take into account both the micro and macro social influences. The story of the individual is connected with his or her family and community within the frame of a cultural-social and political context.

Part1 of the book are the basics for cross- cultural work. One author emphasizes that the integration process is a balancing act between stability, flexibility and instability. He describes migration as an active step in the managing of problems with different results and solutions. In this process various factors play a role: The family's biography, psychosocial structure, life cycle phase and their resources. There are also the emphases placed on the responsibility of the host country and their politics. Migration is complex and requires training in cross-cultural competencies. I find the chapter on networking interesting. As a consequence of migration natural networks are lost and it is important to build new ones. The chapter about language gives the professional courage to speak with errors and to risk "not-knowing", to be open, curious, and respectful and very simply taking the time to try and understand the client and his or her world view. When the language barrier is too large, it is important to have professional translators (which are not paid by the German health care system).

The second part of the book is filled with practical experiences from a variety of practice settings. It is interesting to note how many of the authors are Germans or Swiss who have understood the importance of the problems of immigrants in Germany. This should be encouraging for the reader. You don't have to be a foreigner or to have immigrated to become sensitive to the experience. Naturally we need Professionals who come from the immigrants countries of origin or are first or second generation German born because they can create, inside the institutions they work for, a kind of intercultural workshop and are a door opener for clients. This book can be very good for someone entering the area or for experienced cross-cultural social and health care professionals. It might also be interesting for immigrants who are interested in self-reflecting on this subject.

