Book review


As indicated by the author in the preface, this book is intended for use by both undergraduate and graduate students in introductory courses in counseling. Since it is designed to give an overview of the entire counseling profession, it must obviously cover a wide range of topics. The author has found a good balance between quality and quantity. Enough information is provided so that the reader has some exposure to each concept presented. Overall, the depth of the coverage is very appropriate.

At the same time, it should be pointed out that the book seems oriented primarily toward an American audience. Most of the explanations, examples, and case studies seem to be prefaced on the assumption that the counselor is, or will be, practicing in the United States. Part 4, for example, is written from a perspective that assumes the reader is somewhat familiar with the educational and mental health systems currently operating in the United States. If the book is to gain greater acceptance at the international level, this relatively narrow cultural focus will need to be significantly expanded. Aspiring counselors who plan to work outside the United States need more information and insight than is available here.

The author has organized the book into four primary sections. Chapters 1 through 3 comprise the “Foundations of Counseling” section, whereas chapters 4 through 7 make up the “Counseling Theories and Techniques” section. Chapters 8 through 15 cover “The Counseling Process” and chapters 16 through 19 comprise the “Counselling Practice” section.

Chapter 1 considers the current status of the counseling profession. The information presented seems accurate and up-to-date. Chapter 2 provides a relatively concise yet engaging history of the development of the counseling profession in the United States. It would have been more interesting to many readers if information had been included on the development of the profession in other countries. The organization of this material into 20-year increments also sometimes distracts from its evolutionary nature. Chapter 3 examines the professional, ethical and legal issues that currently shape the counseling profession. Given today’s volatile legal climate, this is one of the most critical
chapters in the book. It would have been beneficial to have included more information on the appropriate roles of different mental health professionals when they are required to work together. Moreover, a paragraph should have been added which explains what it actually means to be a graduate of an “accredited” program. The facts are presented in a clear and concise manner; the interpretation of those facts is left somewhat open.

Chapter 4 deals with human development theories and counseling. This chapter is very well written and no one can argue that theories of human development are not integral to the counseling process. This chapter, perhaps, could have been combined with chapter 5, which focuses more specifically on counseling theories. This would create a more complete view of the relationship between human development, counseling theories, and clinical applications. On the other hand, chapter 5 presents all the principal counseling theorists along with the fundamental tenets of their various approaches. The breakdown as far as “categories” of counseling theories (psychoanalytic and psychodynamic, humanistic, and behavioral and cognitive-behavioral) also makes sense. Chapter 6 investigates the assessment dimension of the counseling process. The author’s emphasis on assessment rather than testing is very refreshing. More information on statistical concepts, especially those associated with interpreting norm-referenced scores, could have been included. Since so many diagnostic decisions are based on means and standard deviations, they needed additional explanation. Chapter 7 concludes the second main section of the book by looking at outreach programs and activities. This information is critically important for beginning counselors who may not be aware of the other responsibilities associated with being a professional counselor. The material dealing with consultation is especially relevant, as is the section on psychological education.

Chapter 8 discusses the characteristics of effective counselors. Although well written, this chapter is a little short and should either have been expanded so that it went into more detail or it should have been integrated with another chapter (perhaps chapter 3). Chapter 9 covers individual counseling. The information presented here is a vast improvement over that found in earlier editions; the material is covered in much more appropriate depth. Even so, the inclusion of a couple of case studies would have augmented its usefulness from an instructional perspective. Chapter 10 captures the current scene in marriage and family counseling and therapy in an accurate and compelling manner; there seems to be more of a balance between the family systems approach and other perspectives than was evident in previous editions. Chapter 11 discusses the group counseling process in a comprehensive and thorough manner, particularly for an introductory class. It hits all the relevant issues and concerns. Chapter 12 provides an overview of career