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## Preface and Acknowledgments

It is true that what is personal is political, and what is political is also personal (Davis and Hagen 1995). Therefore, to attempt to address substance abuse prevention and rehabilitation only at the personal and interpersonal level is to perpetuate a trend toward victim blaming. Solomon (1987) reminds us that “practice models that rely heavily on intrapsychic explanations for clients’ problems in functioning” have not been effective (79). Therefore, rather than using a traditional clinical focus, this text attempts to connect direct service, community, administration, and policy practice in the substance abuse field. This broad, integrated approach is consistent with social work values and the ecological perspective as well as empowerment practice. An underlying assumption of empowerment practice is that clients’ and communities’ problems in living, their substance abuse and addiction problems, and therefore, the resolution of those problems are justifiably linked to personal, interpersonal, *and* environmental factors. Conflicting explanations for rehab failures (clients’ recidivism and drop-out rates) and the ineffectiveness of community prevention efforts have recently led practitioners and researchers to begin to apply power concepts to substance abuse problems.

Consequently, this book clarifies how important aspects of the larger sociopolitical environment, the community, and service programs themselves influence clients’ opportunities for empowerment and the quality of intervention, prevention, and rehabilitation services. The sociopolitical environment includes norms, values, policies, and practices that affect both the

supply and the demand sides of this field in terms of funding priorities and mandates. Pathology-focused definitions of substance abuse problems tend to transform people into their problems (Chapin 1994), whereas strengths-focused policies and regulations support empowerment practice to the benefit of clients, programs, communities, and society as a whole. The book addresses how clients' and communities' strengths and needs influence the implementation of empowerment practice as well.

A critical contribution of this book is its discussions about the definition, operationalization, study, and evaluation of empowerment practice from the perspectives of consumers, family members and other significant individuals, staff, administrators, evaluators, and policy makers. Additional contributions include the integration of theory with practical analyses of case, organizational, and community examples. Clear analyses of the research literature on empowerment and substance abuse and the author's recent empowerment research are integrated throughout the book. The research literature is summarized in the epilogue chapter, along with the implications of that research for the future of empowerment practice. Assessment and evaluation tools focused on clients' situations and on organizations encourage the type of collaboration with clients that is consistent with empowerment practice. Tables and figures are used to demonstrate the process and outcomes of empowerment practice and specific strategies for staff *and* clients to use in achieving those outcomes. In this manner, the book demonstrates how helping clients to develop their knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy exemplifies the proverb that "Knowledge is power."

This book is designed for graduate students in social work, psychology, addictions counseling, nursing, human resources, and psychiatry based on the prevalence of substance abuse problems. It may be appropriate for interdisciplinary courses related to community development, policy, health care, and substance abuse practice. Practitioners, administrators, consultants, policy analysts, program evaluators, and researchers, as well as program designers in those fields, should also find it useful.

When I began writing this book, I thought my voice would predominate, following a typical approach to writing about practice perspectives. Instead, as I analyzed my research data, the voices of the individuals I had studied in various programs demanded to be heard, in their own words. Those people included staff members and administrators who were struggling to implement empowerment approaches and to set aside personal biases. The voices of consumers also emerged as they shared their addiction and recovery

stories, sometimes during their first days in rehab and recovery or as they completed a program. Most of these clients were extremely honest about the struggles and questions they were experiencing: “Why am I here? What happens if I relapse? How can anyone else accept and care about me—I don’t accept myself?” Staff too had doubts, related to their abilities to use empowerment strategies, often commenting that “this is hard work.” I hope I have recorded their questions, concerns, and experiences accurately, as they voiced them, and most of all their strengths and incredible courage. I thank them for trusting me and sharing their personal struggles.

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Substance Abuse Intervention,  
Prevention, Rehabilitation,  
and Systems Change Strategies

