

# III STRATEGIES FOR APPLYING RECOMMENDED PRACTICES TO SELECTED CONTENT AREAS

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Part III has been designed as a “hands-on” section. The content covered in this part reflects topics important in early intervention. Program directors want employees who are competent in these areas, practitioners request help and support in developing competencies in these areas, and university and community college instructors are being asked to provide instruction in these areas. Each chapter provides a brief overview of broad areas of knowledge and competency within the particular content area being addressed, including implications for preservice and inservice content and instructional processes. The primary focus of each chapter is to offer concrete ideas, activities, and resources for personnel development in the content area. A goal for this section is that each reader should discover instructional ideas and activities to try.



# 9

## FROM MONOLOGUES TO SKILLED DIALOGUES

### Teaching the Process of Crafting Culturally Competent Early Childhood Environments

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We must learn of the simplest craftsman a parable. We all know the difference between the carpenter who is really an artist and the man who can knock a bookcase together if he needs one. There is no doubt which of the two is master and maker; you watch with admiration the almost miraculous obedience of tool and material to the craftsman's will, but you notice that it is not he who asserts with every gesture his will to dominate; it is the hedge carpenter who wrenches and forces and blusters and drives the wood to obey him against the grain. There is no great art without reverence. The real [craftsman] has great technical knowledge of materials and tools; but the bungler might still have that and still be a bungler. The real [craftsman] has something much more; he has the feel of the wood; the knowledge of its demands in his fingers; and so the work is smooth and satisfying and lovely because he worked with the reverence that comes of love. (Vann, 1960, p. 19)

Though it is, perhaps, not fashionable to speak of reverence and love in relation to education, Vann's quote captures two aspects of craft that underlie the authors' concept of cultural competence as presented in this chapter: 1) craft as something that lies somewhere between art and prescribed methodology, and 2) craft as a dialogic process. This dual perspective is particularly critical in this type of chapter, which runs the risk of misrepresenting the very topic on which it seeks to enlighten.

Cultural competence is a complex topic, referred to in a variety of ways (e.g., cultural responsiveness). The term *cultural competence*, with which some may take issue, has been chosen by the authors. Whatever the term, it is essential to be clear about its referent. The authors do not use the term to refer to a discrete set of skills needed only for certain populations deemed to be "diverse" or to a knowledge of customs and values of these "others," as compared with "us." They use the term in a broader sense to refer to the ability of service providers to respond optimally to all children and families, understanding both the richness and the limitations of the sociocultural contexts in which children and families, as well as the practitioners themselves, may be operating.

The scope of this chapter permits only summary descriptions and discussions of the need for and challenges of cultural competence. The first section highlights issues that research and experience indicate are critical to an adequate understanding of both need

and challenges. To compensate for the limited scope of the discussion, certain words are in bold type, cuing the reader to topics on which additional references are provided (see Table 9.1). Activities to promote development of necessary attitudes, understandings, and skills in preservice and inservice settings are provided, as are resources to supplement these activities.

## PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The term **cultural competence**, as it is typically used, presumes an understanding of **cultural diversity**, which, in turn, presumes an understanding of **culture**. Without a solid understanding of culture, cultural diversity can be, and all too often has been, reduced to simply mean *certain characteristics of certain people associated with certain ethnic groups*. From this perspective, cultural competency can too easily become understood as the body of knowledge deemed, a priori, to be necessary for communicating with these “diverse” people.

Two problems ensue from this understanding. One is that cultural competency is restricted to *knowing about*, rather than *knowing*. As a consequence, “they” (those identified as diverse) become objects to know about, rather than individuals with whom to enter into a relationship. A second, related problem is that the *knowing about* becomes largely restricted to *knowing about them* (the populations identified as diverse). Important aspects of “us” (the populations not identified as diverse) are overlooked, and an insidious remedial perspective is communicated, intentionally or otherwise.

The understanding of cultural competence described in this chapter takes a different perspective, one that focuses on understanding self in a cultural context so as to successfully enter into reciprocal relationships with others from dissimilar cultural contexts. Key information on the concepts of culture and cultural diversity is summarized here. The reader is referred to Table 9.1 for references containing more detailed discussions.

### Culture

“Culture is not a nominal variable to be attached to every child in the same way that age, height, or sex might be” (Weisner, Gallimore, & Jordan, 1993, p. 61). With this statement, Weisner et al. made reference to one of the most difficult challenges posed by the concept of culture when used in psychological and educational environments. Although cultural competence requires the recognition of culture, it also requires that people not be stereotyped (i.e., defined by the culture[s] within which they participate).

At its deepest level, culture is a shared social process that both connects and distinguishes groups. At the same time, individual, psychological processes coexist that cannot be overlooked. Understanding culture requires “the capacity to move between data on individuals and particulars to summaries of shared patterns for behavior” (Weisner et al., 1993, p. 61). Culture shapes contexts and environments within which individuals develop; it is equally shaped by individuals’ actions within and on these environments.

At another more superficial level, culture is embedded in clusters of behaviors, customs, values, and other such characteristics that first catch our attention when we meet someone different from ourselves. To look only at this level, however, is literally to take culture out of context. All research points to behaviors, customs, and values as seamless expressions of the deeper meanings and processes held by particular communities. Berger and Thompson (1995), for example, stated,

Understanding the cultural context of human development requires much more than marveling at cultural differences in children and their care. It involves understanding how specific practices arise from deeper values and traditions, which, in turn, are part of the overall social context. (p. 10)

**TABLE 9.1.** References correlated to key terms

Term	Articles/readings	Media
<b>Culture</b>	<p>Hall, E.T. (1977). <i>Beyond culture</i>. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books/Doubleday.</p> <p>Haviland, W.A. (1993). <i>Cultural anthropology</i>. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.</p> <p>Weisner, T.S., Gallimore, R., &amp; Jordan, C. (1993). Unpackaging cultural effects on classroom learning: Hawaiian peer assistance and child-generated activity. In R.N. Roberts (Ed.), <i>Coming home to preschool: The sociocultural context of early education</i> (pp. 59–90). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.</p>	<p>CD-ROM  <i>Material world: A global family portrait</i>            Source: StarPress Media            San Francisco, CA</p>
<b>Cultural diversity</b>	<p>Hall, E.T., &amp; White, W.F. (1979). Intercultural communication: Human organization. In C.D. Mortenson (Ed.), <i>Basic readings in communication theory</i> (pp. 355–370). New York: Harper &amp; Row.</p> <p>McLeod, D. (1995). Self-identity, pan-ethnicity and the boundaries of group identity. <i>Multicultural Education</i>, 3(2), 8–11.</p> <p>Spradley, J.P. (1972). Foundations of cultural knowledge. In J.P. Spradley (Ed.), <i>Culture and cognition: Rules, maps, and plans</i> (pp. 3–38). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.</p>	<p>Video  <i>Valuing diversity: Multicultural communication</i>            Source: Learning Seed            Lake Zurich, IL</p>
<b>Cultural competency</b>	<p>Barrera, I. (1993). Effective and appropriate instruction for all children: The challenge of cultural/linguistic diversity and young children with special needs. <i>Topics in Early Childhood Special Education</i>, 13(2), 461–488.</p> <p>Bowers, C.A., &amp; Flinders, D.J. (1990). <i>Responsive teaching: An ecological approach to classroom patterns of language, culture, and thought</i>. New York: Teachers College Press.</p> <p>Gonzalez-Mena, S. (1993). <i>Multicultural issues in childcare</i>. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.</p> <p>Lynch, E.W., &amp; Hanson, M.J. (1992b). Steps in the right direction: Implications for interventionists. In E.W. Lynch &amp; M.J. Hanson (Eds.), <i>Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families</i> (pp. 355–370). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.</p>	<p>Videos  <i>Cross cultural communication in diverse settings</i> (GSU-103)            Source: Insight Media            New York</p> <p><i>Social interaction in diverse settings</i> (GSU-102)            Source: Insight Media            New York</p> <p><i>Ten keys to culturally sensitive childcare</i>            Source: Far West Laboratory            Sacramento, CA</p>

(continued)

TABLE 9.1. (continued)

Term	Articles/readings	Media
<b>Principles of sound pedagogy</b>	Bowers, C.A., & Flinders, D.J. (1990). <i>Responsive teaching: An ecological approach to classroom patterns of language, culture, and thought</i> . New York: Teachers College Press.	Videos <i>E.C. Curriculum and developmental approaches</i> Source: ASCD Alexandria, VA
	Bullivant, B.M. (1989). Culture: Its nature and meaning for educators. In J.A. Banks & C.A. Banks (Eds.), <i>Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives</i> (pp. 27–46). Needham, MA: Allyn & Bacon.	<i>Cooperative learning/learning to work together</i> Source: ASCD Alexandria, VA
	Tharp, R.G., & Gallimore, R. (1988). <i>Rousing minds to life: Teaching, learning and schooling in social context</i> . Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.	
<b>Culture's influence on development</b>	Bowman, B.T. (1992). Who is at risk for what and why. <i>Journal of Early Intervention</i> , 16(2), 101–108.	Videos <i>Development &amp; diversity—Worlds of children series</i> Source: GPN Lincoln, NE
	Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). <i>The ecology of human development</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.	
	Greenfield, M.E., & Cocking, R.R. (Eds.). (1994). <i>Cross-cultural roots of minority child development</i> . Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.	<i>Family Influences</i> Source: Insight Media New York
	Harkness, S. (1992). Cross-cultural research in child development: A sample of the state of the art. <i>Developmental Psychology</i> , 28, 622–625.	
<b>Self-reflection</b>	Ayers, W. (1989). <i>The good preschool teacher</i> . New York: Teachers College Press.	
	Lynch, E.W., & Hanson, M.J. (Eds.). (1992a). <i>Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families</i> . Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.	
	Schön, D.A. (1987). <i>Educating the reflective practitioner</i> . San Francisco: Jossey-Bass	

**Critical inquiry and decision-making skills**

Bowers, C.A., & Flinders, D.J. (1990). *Responsive teaching: An ecological approach to classroom patterns of language, culture, and thought*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Brookfield, S.D. (1987). *Developing critical thinkers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

de Bono, E. (1995). *Mind power*. New York: Dorling Kindersley.

Videos  
*Tactics for thinking*  
Source: ASCD  
Alexandria, VA

*Introduction to creative problem solving*  
Source: GCT, Inc.  
Mobile, AL

**Trauma or chronic poverty**

Desking, G., & Steckler, G. (1996). *When nothing makes sense: Disaster, crisis, and other effects on children*. Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press.

Donovan, D.M., & McIntyre, D. (1990). *Healing the hurt child: A developmental-contextual approach*. New York: Norton.

Koplow, L. (Ed.). (1996). *Unsmiling faces: How preschools can heal*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Miller, A. (1994). *Drama of the gifted child*. New York: Basic Books.

Videos  
*Psychological maltreatment of children: Assault on the psyche*  
Source: Penn State  
University Park, PA

*Child abuse: It shouldn't hurt to be a child*  
AIMS Media  
Van Nuys, CA

**Demographics**

*Challenge of change: What the 1990 census tells us about children*. (1992). Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Figueroa, R.A., & Garcia, E. (1994). Issues in testing students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Multicultural Education*, 2(1), 10–19.

National Center for Health Statistics. (1990). *Vital Statistics of the United States, 1990*, Vol. 1. U.S. Report of Health & Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hyattsville, MD: Author.

CD-ROM  
*Discovering multicultural America*  
Source: Gale Research  
Detroit, MI

**Social positioning and power differences**

Darder, A. (1991). *Culture & power in the classroom: A critical foundation for bicultural education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Crown Publishers.

McIntosh, P. (1989, July–August). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace & Freedom*, 10–12.

Videos  
*White identity: Theory, origins, & prospect*  
Source: Microtraining, Inc.  
North Amherst, MA

*The color of fear*  
Source: StirFry Productions  
Oakland, CA

Key understandings of culture include the following:

- Culture is composed of the socially generated and socially sanctioned ways of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving shared by members of particular communities and transmitted across generations.
- The aspects of culture most easily perceived (e.g., food, behavior) are only the surface level of culture and are inextricably tied to and generated from deeper values, beliefs, and worldviews, which form culture's primary level.
- Culture functions both to set parameters that both connect and separate people and communities and to transmit from one generation to another ways of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving deemed to be critical to personal and group survival.
- Everyone's ways of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving come from somewhere. That is, everyone participates in one or more cultures, some of which may be identified by ethnic labels, some by other labels, and others that may have no easy labels.
- Culture influences ways of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving in three developmental or curricular domains: 1) personal-social, 2) communicative-linguistic, and 3) sensory-cognitive. Specific parameters within each of these domains that are particularly sensitive to culture are listed in Table 9.2. These parameters are further discussed in the following section on cultural diversity.
- Experiences of **trauma or chronic poverty** can inhibit the degree to which children and families freely express ways of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving common to their cultural heritage and traditions.

### Cultural Diversity

How culture is defined and perceived has a significant effect on how cultural diversity is defined and perceived. Many disagreements around cultural competence ensue as a result of equating culture with ethnicity and focusing only on its more superficial level. Cultural diversity then becomes something that is inherently characteristic of only some groups. However, cultural diversity is not an inherent characteristic; it is a relative term that requires a normative referent. To make the dominant Euro-American culture that referent is to perpetuate, implicitly or explicitly, the very challenges and inequities that cultural competence is designed to address.

Cultural diversity as addressed in this chapter, therefore, is not defined by membership in a particular group. Rather, the authors of this chapter define cultural diversity according to the degree of probability that, "in interaction with a particular child or family, [the provider] will attribute different meanings or values to behaviors or events than would the family or someone from that family's environment" (Barrera, 1996, p. 71). A Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican practitioner working with an Amish family would meet this criterion, as would a practitioner with an English, French, and Scottish background working with the same family. A young early intervention practitioner from a middle-class background working with a homeless family would also meet this criterion, even if ethnic backgrounds were similar.

Thus, the issue of cultural diversity is broader than simply acknowledging ethnicity. It is, at its core, an issue of effective connections and communications between people with varying degrees of individual expressions of sociocultural similarities and differences. Cultural diversity, as an educationally relevant variable, requires a thorough understanding of the sociocultural parameters associated with each of the three domains within which



**TABLE 9.2.** Sociocultural parameters associated with developmental/curricular domains

Developmental/ curricular domains	Parameters
Communicative-linguistic	Language(s) of child's caregiving environments Child's relative language proficiency (degree of proficiency in English and other languages used in caregiving environments) Patterns of language usage in child's caregiving environments (e.g., what is language used for, who initiates communication with whom in what circumstances) Patterns of nonverbal interaction and communication Relative value placed on verbal and nonverbal communication Relative status associated with non-English language and bilingualism
Personal-social	Degree of enculturation/acculturation Sense of self (e.g., relative weight given to independence, dependence, and interdependence) Identity and competence Roles and rules associated with parenting and child rearing Knowledge and experience related to power and social positioning Values and beliefs associated with instrumental and emotional support
Sensory-cognitive	Funds of knowledge (e.g., relative value placed on different types of knowledge) Learning strategies (e.g., preference for modeling versus direct questioning) Problem-solving and decision-making strategies Worldview (e.g., how events are interpreted and explained)

Adapted from Barrera (1996).

culture operates: communicative-linguistic, personal-social, and sensory-cognitive. These parameters affect all aspects of self and behavior (see the following discussion and also Table 9.2; see also Barrera, Macpherson, & Kramer, in press, for a list of specific questions to direct information gathering within each of these parameters).

**Communicative-Linguistic Parameters** Communicative-linguistic parameters such as the language used in the home, the communication patterns, and the values underlying those patterns affect every aspect of how we learn about ourselves and the world around us. These parameters form a critical medium for early intervention, and when

practitioners have a different understanding of them than do families, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to establish rapport and convey needed information (Harry, 1992).

**Personal-Social Parameters** Closely aligned to communicative-linguistic parameters are those that define the personal-social domain, which addresses how we come to know who we are and how we are expected to operate in social environments. Roles and rules associated with parenting and child rearing, for example, are critical parameters for defining our understanding of both families and children (Gonzalez-Mena, 1993). Knowledge and experiences related to power and social positioning are another such parameter. Families with a history of experiences that have generated feelings of disempowerment will define themselves, and others, differently from the ways that families with experiences that have generated feelings of empowerment (see also the section, Children's Needs for Mirroring and Validation).

**Sensory-Cognitive Parameters** No less powerful are parameters associated with how we perceive and process information (i.e., sensory-cognitive domain). A clear example of these parameters was given by Bowers and Flinders (1990) in their text *Responsive Teaching: An Ecological Approach to Classroom Patterns of Language, Culture, and Thought*. Questions triggered by an understanding of this domain and its parameters include the following: What areas of knowledge are valued and supported by the family? What are the child's/family's preferred strategies for acquiring or prompting new learning? How does the family tend to events such as their child's developmental difficulties? A family's worldview and preferred strategies for problem solving are often embedded in their cultural values and experiences.

In the authors' experience, it is practitioners' lack of knowledge of the range and diversity of these parameters that often underlies the difficulties faced by children and families in early intervention environments. Issues of power and social positioning (e.g., majority–minority issues) come into play in understanding providers' lack of knowledge. As stated by McLeod (1995), “Members of majority groups usually encounter a relatively good fit between their experience of the world and the definitions they encounter in the mass media or in cultural symbols and representations,” and “Where our experience of the world is consistent with the norm of society at large the frame of identity tends to blend with the background and disappear” (p. 9). The felt need to learn about the range of diversity in interaction rules or learning strategies, for example, tends as a consequence to be lower for members of majority groups than for members of groups who do not encounter a similarly “good fit between their experience of the world” and the definitions and symbols that surround them. Issues of power and social positioning cannot be separated from understandings of culture and cultural diversity. When both deep and surface levels of culture are understood, and when cultural diversity is perceived as more than ethnically derived differences, power and social positioning become key dynamics both within and across cultural environments.

Key concepts related to cultural diversity include the following:

- Cultural diversity is a relative term; it depends on who is involved.
- Ethnic differences are only one indicator, and seldom a reliable one, of cultural diversity.
- Cultural diversity, when not acknowledged and addressed, can significantly disrupt both learning and communication.
- An individual's culture, no matter how different from others, is never in and of itself the cause of such disruption. It is the response to that culture by others that gives a

culture its negative or positive consequences. Within a social environment where an individual's culture is shared by those around him or her or is accepted and validated, even when different, learning and communication need not be disrupted.

- The scope of interpersonal diversity is defined by much more than culture and its related parameters. Personality, trauma, gender, experiential histories, and many other factors also contribute to the degree of diversity among individuals.

## NEED FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE

An adequate understanding of and response to cultural parameters, as they affect teaching, learning, and interactions with children and families form the bedrock for **cultural competency** in early intervention. But why is this understanding and its corollary response essential in early childhood settings? Although the scope of this chapter prohibits an in-depth answer, significant insight can be gained from examining three areas: 1) shifting population demographics, 2) children's need for mirroring and validation, and 3) pedagogical principles.

### Demographics

Great emphasis has been placed on **demographics** as a primary determinant of need for cultural competency. The majority of articles on cultural competence, in early childhood and in other areas, describe shifts in U.S. demographics since the mid-1980s. Figueroa and Garcia (1994), for example, stated that "from 1981 through 1990 some 7,388,062 people have immigrated to the United States, marking a 63 percent increase in the immigrant population over the previous decade" (p. 10) (see also Table 9.1).

An emphasis on demographic change as a primary driver of the need for cultural competence tends to overshadow two significant facts: 1) the need to understand and support cultural and linguistic parameters goes beyond simply assisting the transition of immigrant children and their families into U.S. culture; it also, and perhaps primarily, includes the need to acknowledge the contributions and dignity of U.S.-born Native American, African American, Hispanic, and other populations; and 2) development, learning, and teaching are socially structured realities reflective of the particular cultures within which they occur.

In overlooking these two facts, the emphasis on demographic change sends two implicit, but nonetheless negative, messages. The first message might read something like this: "We need to attend to cultural parameters different from our own only when there is a critical mass." Does that mean that there is no need to attend to cultural and linguistic parameters when no such critical mass exists? Does it mean that when the likelihood is that the service provider will encounter only one or perhaps two children and families with diverse cultural parameters the need is less? A second message sent by the corollary lack of emphasis on other sources of need is, "Addressing cultural parameters diverse from our own is unrelated to sound pedagogy and children's needs." After all, if it were related, wouldn't these also be emphasized? "In general," this message might read, "the role of culture in structuring development, learning, and teaching is negligible and need not be considered."

Although the role of changing demographics in creating a need for cultural competence cannot be overlooked, it should be addressed as only one of several factors. Responding to children's needs for mirroring and validation and upholding sound pedagogical principles are other factors that generate an equally strong, if not stronger,

need for cultural competency. These factors should be addressed with similar, or greater, emphasis than demographics. Perhaps they are less dramatic, but they yield rich data to inform early interventionists' perceptions and applications of cultural competence.

### **Children's Needs for Mirroring and Validation**

Although demographic change has brought a greater range and degree of diversity to the attention of early intervention personnel, cultural diversity has always been present in the United States (Takaki, 1993). Generations of learners acquired skills and strategies to participate successfully in home communities only to find, upon entering educational environments, that these skills and strategies were ineffective or devalued and criticized. The stories of these generations, and the price they paid for the dissonance between their skills and strategies and those valued in educational settings, are still emerging (e.g., Riley, 1993; Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988).

The role of adult behavior and feedback in child development has been well documented. Gonzalez-Mena and Eyer (1993), for example, discussed the need for adult caregivers to learn each child's unique ways of communicating, respect infants and toddlers as worthy people, and build security by teaching trust. An ability to understand and respectfully respond to the behaviors and skills that a child brings to the early intervention setting underlies these three needs. For example, it is difficult to teach trust to a child who finds little or no resonance between the way he or she has learned to operate and the way he or she is required or expected to operate in an early intervention setting. It is equally difficult to develop and maintain a sense of worth in that child. Children need to be respectfully mirrored and validated if their abilities are to unfold as fully as possible. Although lack of cultural competency is only one impediment to mirroring and validation, it is no less detrimental than other impediments, such as parental limitations and developmental delays.

Two developments have contributed significantly to the emerging recognition of children's needs for mirroring and validation and to the consequences of not responding to those needs: 1) an increased awareness and application of a social constructivist paradigm, which highlights the social nature of identity and the dynamics of social positioning and power differences; and 2) the increasing presence of violence and other signs of social stress or breakdown of social skill development and community. Although the effect of each of these developments has been different, the results have similarly substantiated the need for cultural competence in responding optimally to children. Each of these developments is discussed briefly here.

**Social Constructivist Paradigm** Since the 1980s, educational and psychological literature has increasingly reflected a conceptual shift from the mechanistic or behavioral paradigm common to psychology to a paradigm that acknowledges the role of environment and social context (i.e., social constructivism) in all aspects of living and development. One of the primary assumptions of social constructivism is that "the terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people" (Gergen, 1985, p. 5). The social constructivist paradigm is shaped by ecological, ethnographic, and critical feminist perspectives. An early reference to it was made by Super and Harkness (1981), who stated, "The bias of this [behavioral, individualistic] approach lies not in the imposition of arbitrary cultural values (though this is . . . a problem), but rather in the exclusive use of a paradigm that does not recognize the central role that culture plays in human functioning" (p. 75). Bronfenbrenner (1979) also generated an ecological perspectives model to describe the multiple and interactive contexts that affect human functioning. The concept of knowledge and life patterns as socially

constructed is referred to by Kessler and Swadener (1992) and Mallory and New (1994). These researchers validated the critical need that children have to find optimum degrees of consonance between themselves and their environments. Koplow (1996) put it succinctly in relation to her area of research:

At-risk children need to experience their affective expressions as understood and valued before they will be able to take in affective information from others. Without mastering this fundamental form of communication, children may have difficulty moving toward more sophisticated forms of communication and learning. (p. 17)

In addition to highlighting children's needs for mirroring and validation, the recognition of knowledge and life patterns as socially constructed artifacts has also opened the door to conversations about **social positioning and power differences** and their role in either enhancing or diminishing the mirroring and validation available to children. Social privilege and power differences are not easy topics to examine or to teach. Some research (e.g., Skutnabb-Kangas & Cummins, 1988; Soto & Smrekar, 1992) is beginning to uncover the differential role that these two variables play across cultures, a role that disproportionately diminishes the richness and appropriateness of some children's environments and development.

Ogbu (1995) made an important point regarding this inequity by stating that "minority status [which is accorded to many groups identified as culturally diverse] involves complex realities that affect the relationship between the culture and language of the minority and those of the dominant groups" (p. 585). One of these complex realities is the difference between what he termed *primary cultural differences* and *secondary cultural differences*. Primary cultural differences are differences in language, behavior, and other variables that exist independent of negative contact with other cultures (e.g., lack of proficiency in English). These differences typically are grounded in positive self-concepts; that is, there is no shame or anger associated with them. Secondary cultural differences tend to have shame and anger associated with them. These latter differences, though inclusive of many of the same aspects of language, behavior, and other variables characteristic of primary differences, have one critical distinction: Secondary differences are colored by the experiences and effect generated by negative contacts with other cultures that fail to mirror or validate primary differences. For example, a Native American family might have both types of differences, with the first rooted in the different language and values of its community and the second rooted in a pool of experiences in which that language and those values have been rendered invisible or "not as good" as those reflected and promoted in educational settings. Family stories of being forcefully removed from home and enrolled in boarding schools, for example, might highlight this family's secondary cultural differences.

**Increased Violence and Social Stress** Feelings of shame and anger arising from membership in particular groups are not limited to particular cultural backgrounds. Increasing social stresses such as violence and unemployment are, however, inhibiting the access of growing numbers of families to full participation in both their own culture and the broader social culture of power. Without such access, the children of these families are at risk for a variety of developmental disruptions. One source, for example, cited statistics that "3.3 million children witness parental abuse every year" (PACER, 1995). The impact on development of the consequent trauma and family disruption is being documented with greater frequency (Donovan & McIntyre, 1990; Weissbourd, 1996). Although there is increasing recognition of the truth of the African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child," there are fewer and fewer "villages" to provide children with the human

and environmental supports they need, supports that are generated and maintained through cultural dynamics.

The dilemmas posed by this social reality challenge all caregivers to understand culture as the primary *container* of community. It is culture in its myriad forms that generates patterns of community. It is culture that shapes and contains the channels through which all children, not just those identified as culturally diverse, learn the linguistic, social, cognitive, and other knowledge and skills they need to become healthy, productive participants in adult communities. **Culture's influence on development** is critical. Super and Harkness (1981) developed the concept of a "developmental niche" to describe this influence: "At each [developmental] period the niche reflects the physical and social settings, the relevant cultural customs, the ethnopsychology of other people about one's presumed motivations, one's reasonable needs and responsibilities, and the value and significance of particular behaviors" (pp. 82–83). Bowman (1992) made two statements that are relevant here: "A culture functions to limit and expand, constrict and free, value and disdain the intrinsic potential of a child" (p. 102), and, more specifically, "The second dimension [of developmental structures] is culturally defined. . . . This dimension responds to what a particular culture makes available to support and enlarge development, such as the qualities of the physical and interpersonal development" (p. 101). Price-Williams and Gallimore (1980) stated, "Such studies [referring to cross-cultural research] show clearly the implausibility of explanations of child behavior that ignore social, cultural, economic, environmental and other macro systems factors" (p. 178).

Understanding the consequences of social stress and violence brings an enriched understanding of cultural competence as needed for more than simply responding to a few children and families designated as culturally diverse. Rather, cultural competency is understood as necessary to respectfully and fully support *all* children's growth and learning, both within their home cultural context and within the other cultural contexts common to environments outside their home. If culture's richness and diversity are not protected, every community experiences the loss in diminished learning opportunities and supports for its children.

### **Pedagogical Principles**

There is a third, equally critical, source of need for cultural competence: **principles of sound pedagogy**. Pedagogical principles espouse attention to variations in teaching and learning formats and strategies. If principles such as "all children need positive reinforcement" and "all learning starts with motivated engagement" are to be followed, then the diverse modes and meanings of reinforcement and motivated engagement must be carefully assessed. The meanings attached to children's behaviors and interactions, the contexts for supporting these behaviors and interactions, and the modes for stimulating their development are significantly shaped by culture. Harwood (1992), for example, studied perceptions of desirable and undesirable attachment behavior in middle- and lower-class Anglo mothers and lower-class Puerto Rican mothers. She first used open-ended probes to elicit indigenous concepts and then constructed culturally sensitive vignettes to which the mothers were asked to respond. She found, among other things, that "the Anglo mothers demonstrated greater concern with qualities that enable a child to cope autonomously in an unfamiliar setting, whereas Puerto Rican mothers showed a greater concern with qualities that allow a child to maintain dignity and proper demeanor in a public context" (p. 831). Motivating each group of these mothers to support their child's "autonomy" would, as a consequence, necessitate quite different strategies.

In addressing the need to assist children's performance, Tharp and Gallimore (1988) made the point that "patient, contingent, responsive and accurately tuned adult assistance" (p. 41) requires that "the assistor . . . be in close touch with the *learner's* relationship with the task" (p. 42, emphasis added). It is a point echoed by other researchers: "The interaction of the teacher's self-understanding with the student's self-understanding, given the formative and vulnerable stage of development that the latter is undergoing, is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the power/knowledge relationship under the teacher's control" (Bowers & Flinders, 1990, p. 163).

Thus, the need to address cultural competence as an essential skill for service providers is based on more than just demographics. It is also based children's developmental and learning needs. Ultimately, cultural competency is essential to serving any child or family optimally, as there are culturally generated factors in everyone's behaviors and beliefs. Learning to be mindfully responsive to these factors, whether similar to or diverse from our own, is not an easy task. The stimulation and development of cultural competency cannot be embodied in a clear sequence of prescriptive steps. Rather, as discussed in the next section, cultural competency evolves from a more circular and complex process.

## TEACHING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

"The metaphors through which we organize our work have a powerful influence on both what we perceive and what we do" (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 1). Similarly, Bowers and Flinders (1990) stated that "as people make new associations words take on new meanings and thus help to constitute new interpretative schemata" (p. 11). The metaphor of "craft" for cultural competency is chosen for several specific reasons: 1) it counteracts the relatively mechanistic, linear paradigm that tends to prevail in some areas of psychology and education (e.g., to do X, follow these steps in sequence); 2) it highlights the creative, intuitive dimensions of cultural competency; and 3) it emphasizes the personal involvement and activities characteristic of the constructivist paradigm, which underlies much of the cultural data and perspectives at the cutting edge of cultural applications to education, for example, Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" material (Hedegaard, 1990) and Feuerstein's "mediated learning experience" concepts (Jensen & Feuerstein, 1987; Lidz & Thomas, 1987).

### Cultural Competency as Craft

Cultural competence, as understood by the authors of this chapter, involves the crafting of reciprocal and, thus, *dialogic*, interactions between practitioners and children and their families to ameliorate or eliminate the cultural and linguistic "bumps" that can result from diverse worldviews, languages, behaviors, skills, and funds of knowledge. The term *bump* is used because it is descriptive of what happens: people literally "bump up against" worldviews, languages, behaviors, skills, or knowledge that are unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or even distasteful to them. The cognitive and affective dissonance generated by these bumps then inhibits or disrupts desired communication and learning. *Cultural competence is the skillful, creative, and sometimes intuitive application of knowledge and skills to determine the source of cultural and linguistic dissonance and reestablish the desired communication and learning.*

### Requisite Competencies

Promoting the development of the competencies needed to become culturally competent is not an easy task. Acquisition of these competencies often challenges all that lies at the

core of how we define ourselves (e.g., worldviews, values). It also challenges the objective, mechanistic paradigm that generates our certainty that knowledge is something to be transmitted from teacher to learner rather than coconstructed between expert and novice (or, as is often the case with cultural competence, between novice and novice). Augsberger's (1986) description of cross-cultural competency, though focused on counseling, captured a key aspect of cultural competency that he termed "interpathy":

Interpathy enables one to enter a second culture cognitively and affectively, to perceive and conceptualize the internal coherence that links the elements of the culture into a dynamic interrelatedness, to respect the culture (with its strengths and weaknesses) as equally valid to one's own. (p. 14)

The distinction between interpathy and either sympathy or empathy is an important one, which Augsberger described in a table that has been reprinted in this chapter (see Table 9.3).

From the context of the sources referenced throughout this chapter, as well as from their own experience and research, the authors have identified 12 competencies they believe to be essential to the crafting of culturally competent environments (see Table 9.4). Seven of the competencies address the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and five address the development of particular skills. A corollary list of reflective questions is also presented to assist providers in assessing themselves in relation to each set of competencies. The activities mentioned in the next section and offered at the end of the chapter and the additional resources are designed to assist readers in developing the identified competencies themselves and promoting their development in others.

## ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

The activities, as well as the overall perspective presented in this chapter, are drawn from Barrera's experiences in journeying from a transmission model to a reciprocal one, sometimes prompted gently by the results of multiple dialogues, both unskilled and skilled, with teachers and other practitioners across the United States. The journeying generated data indicating that 1) certain critical elements need to underlie the specific strategies and activities used to promote cultural competency in preservice and inservice settings, and 2) three levels of learning need to be addressed. These elements and levels are now reviewed. An annotated listing of additional resources and sample activities is provided at the end of this chapter.

### Critical Elements

The primary element necessary for learning to craft culturally responsive environments is the **experience of such an environment** in preservice or inservice settings. That is, it is essential to model, not just talk about, cultural competency. Respectful dialogue is an essential component of this modeling. Freedman and Combs (1996) characterized this type of dialogue: "When we meet people for the first time, we want to understand the meaning of their stories *for them*. This sort of understanding requires that we listen with focused attention, patience, and curiosity while building a relationship of mutual respect and trust" (p. 44). It is precisely this type of understanding that children and families require and that caregivers must experience if they are to successfully craft culturally competent environments.

**Self-reflection** is another element that needs to be supported. Self-reflection is a necessary tool for understanding the contexts, behaviors, and values that define who we



**TABLE 9.3.** Boundaries among sympathy, empathy, and interpathy

Sympathy	Empathy	Interpathy
Sympathy is a spontaneous affective reaction to another's feelings experienced on the basis of perceived similarity between observer and observed.	Empathy is an intentional affective response to another's feelings experienced on the basis of perceived differences between observer and observed.	Interpathy is an intentional cognitive and affective envisioning of another's thoughts and feelings from another culture, worldview, [and] epistemology.
In sympathy, the process of "feeling with" the other is focused on one's own awareness of having experienced a similar event.	In empathy, the process of "feeling with" the other is focused on imagination, by which one is transposed into another, in self-conscious awareness of another's consciousness.	In interpathy, the process of knowing and "feeling with" requires that one temporarily believe what the other believes, see as the other sees, value what the other values.
In sympathy, I know you are in pain and I sympathize with you. I use my own feelings as the barometer; hence I feel my sympathy and my pain, not yours. You are judged by my perception of my own feelings. You are understood by extension of my self-understanding. My experience is both frame and picture.	In empathy, I empathically make an effort to understand your perceptions, thoughts, feelings, muscular tensions, even temporary states. In choosing to feel your pain with you, I do not own it; I share it. My experience is the frame, your pain is the picture.	In interpathy, I seek to learn a foreign belief, take a foreign perspective, base my thought on a foreign assumption, and feel the resultant feelings and their consequences in a foreign context. Your experience becomes both frame and picture.
Sympathy is a kind of projection of one's own inner feelings upon another, as inner feelings are judged to be similar to experiences in the other.	Empathy is the perception of a separate other based on common cultural assumptions, values, and patterns of thinking that provide a base for encoding and decoding percepts.	Interpathy is the experience of a separate other without common cultural assumptions, values, and views. It is the embracing of what is truly other.

From Augsberger, D.W. (1986). *Pastoral counseling across cultures*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, p. 31. Copyright 1986 by David W. Augsberger. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press.

are and how we interact with the environment around us. "Self-awareness is the first step on the journey toward cross-cultural competence" (Lynch & Hanson, 1992, p. 37). Self-awareness must not, however, be restricted to just those aspects associated with cultural diversity (e.g., ethnic background, beliefs).<sup>1</sup> To effectively promote and support cultural competence, self-reflection must encompass multiple aspects of how we identify and maintain the boundaries that both connect us to and separate us from the people with whom

<sup>1</sup>Several caregivers have expressed concern to the authors about self-awareness activities at multicultural workshops that they believed validated stereotypes and reenacted, for them, past experiences with such stereotypes.

**TABLE 9.4.** Essential competencies for crafting culturally competent early childhood environments

Competency	Reflective assessment questions <sup>a</sup>
I. <i>Knowledge and understanding</i>	
a. of culture and cultural dynamics on general level and as apply to self and others	Am I able to perceive my cultural dynamics in interactions with others?
b. of cross-cultural research on diverse patterns of child rearing, developmental support, and teaching/learning in various cultural contexts	Can I describe diverse child-rearing and developmental support patterns valued in a variety of cultural contexts and situations? Can I describe a variety of teaching/learning strategies as used in differing cultural contexts and situations?
c. of knowledge construction, paradigms, and diverse worldviews (e.g., "objective scientific," "social constructivist")	Can I describe reality from more than one perspective?
d. of cultural diversity (i.e., definitions, components, impact on children's learning and development)	Am I aware of historical events that have affected the experiences and perceptions of various cultural groups? Am I knowledgeable of the elements of effective teaching and can I relate them to working with culturally/linguistically diverse children and families?
e. of power and social positioning dynamics that affect behavior and performance across cultural boundaries	Can I identify how adults in children's environments are mediating experiences for children?
f. of elements of effective teaching for children who are culturally and linguistically diverse	
g. of mediation as a tool for culturally responsive intervention	
II. <i>Abilities /skills</i>	
a. reconsider one's role and understandings in light of different paradigms and cultural parameters	"Am I situating my opinions in my [culture and] personal experience?"
b. locate early intervention within professional culture and community	"Am I being transparent about my context, my values, and my intentions so that this person can evaluate the effects of my biases?"
c. understand and respect children and family's understandings, especially when they differ significantly from my own	"Am I listening so as to understand how the [family's] experiential reality has been socially constructed?"; how it "makes sense" within their context?
d. creatively and collaboratively problem-solve with colleagues, families, and children to find best ways for bridging or mediating between understandings	"Whose language [and worldview] is being privileged?" "Am I evaluating this person, or am I inviting her/him to evaluate a wide range of [possibilities]?"
e. use these ways to mediate interactions and learning situations for children and communications and interactions with families	Am I focused on curiously examining "puzzlements" or on determining needs and gaps? Am I being responsive to cultural/linguistic parameters as I structure children's experiences? Am I being mindful: listening with focused attention, patience, and curiosity? Am I building relationships of mutual respect and trust?

<sup>a</sup>Questions in quotes are taken from Freedman, J., & Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities* (pp. 40–41). New York: Norton.

we interact (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Self-reflection on our actions is “central to the ‘art’ by which practitioners sometimes deal well with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict” (Schön, 1983, p. 50). Without self-reflection, decision making in complex situations becomes merely reactive rather than responsive.

A third element is an explicit focus on **critical inquiry and decision-making skills**. The adage “If you give people fish, they will eat for a day; if you teach them how to fish, they will eat forever” captures the essence of this third element. There are no *fish*, no easy preset cookbook of steps to achieving cultural competence. The combinations of variables present in any particular interaction are too complex to be predetermined (e.g., two Native American children, even if from the same community, may reflect significantly different funds of knowledge and levels of acculturation). Assessing needs and developing appropriate interventions in specific situations require critical inquiry and decision-making skills to assess appropriateness of generic information, obtain additional information, and evaluate options.

### Levels of Learning

The activities described in this chapter are organized around three levels of learning that the authors have found essential in teaching the craft of cultural competence: 1) a theoretical knowledge or “learning about” level; 2) a situated learning experiences or “learning with” level; and 3) a mediated applications or “learning through” level, in which learners are asked to apply their knowledge and skills to specific cases and situations. These levels are not sequential but are interwoven according to learner needs, preferences, cultural influences, and other circumstances. A short description of each level is given in the next section, followed by examples of activities designed to promote professional development at each level.<sup>2</sup>

**Theoretical Knowledge Level** Activities at the theoretical knowledge level focus on developing and assessing mastery of literature and research related to culture, cultural diversity, and cultural competence. Of special importance is cross-cultural research and literature, with its rich descriptions of child rearing and child development in diverse contexts. This level of knowledge serves several purposes: 1) it affirms and validates the range and value of diversity; 2) it challenges “the validity of our current assumptions about human behavior and . . . [frees] . . . us from our own unconscious ethnocentrism” (Nugent, 1994, p. 3); and 3) it provides practitioners with the rationale to support culturally competent practices in the face of questions or criticisms (see Activities 1.1–1.3).

**Situated Learning Experiences Level** The term *situated learning* is borrowed from Lave and Wenger (1991). In describing their understanding of the term, they stated, “In contrast to learning as internalization, learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (p. 49). Learning at the theoretical level is essentially internalized learning. It is only when that learning, along with other existing knowledge, is situated in “communities of practice” that it becomes real. Barrera’s experience has demonstrated that theoretical knowledge comes alive only as it is personalized through joint discussions and explorations with others in contexts that reflect a range of cultural diversity. However, situated learning experiences are not

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<sup>2</sup>These activities are intended only as brief illustrations of each level. Many sources of additional activities are available (see Resources section), though Levels 1 and 3 are less represented in these sources than is Level 2. Many activities can, however, be adapted to meet the goals of Levels 1 and 3. It is recommended that this be done when possible, as the authors’ experiences have demonstrated that addressing only Level 2 is insufficient for optimal development of cultural competency.

artificially contrived situations. Learners are not asked to simply role-play; rather, they are asked to participate in activities and contexts that reflect diverse paradigms, with people who reflect diverse cultures. Structured, “safe” opportunities to interact with people different from ourselves on topics that are emotionally and politically volatile are not all that common. Yet structured opportunities to ask questions such as “What is your experience of being African American?” or to simply share information on worldviews and experiences provide one of the strongest sources for developing understanding and interpathy. Cultural competency needs to be developed in a relational context if it is to involve true knowing and not merely knowing about (see Activities 2.1–2.3).

**Mediated Applications Level** The mediation of learning experiences has been addressed almost exclusively in relation to young children:

Mediated learning experience is that which takes place when an initiated human being, a mother, father, or other care giving adult, interposes himself or herself between the organism and the stimuli impinging on it and mediates, transforms, reorders, organizes, groups, and frames the stimuli in the direction of some specifically intended goals and purpose. (Feuerstein & Jensen, 1980, p. 409, as cited in Mearig, 1983)

Tharp and Gallimore (1988) elaborated on this concept, terming it “assisted performance”: “*Teachers themselves must have their performance assisted* if they are to acquire the ability to assist the performance of their participants” (p. 43, emphasis added). The mediated applications level focuses on structuring opportunities for mediated, or assisted, practice as providers begin to apply new information and skills. *Note:* The sample activities chosen provide some alternatives to case studies, the primary type of activity for this level. Case studies should be drawn from situations with which participants are familiar and may be written or videotaped. Many of the discussion questions used at this level and at earlier levels can then be used to discuss various aspects of the cases (see Activities 3.1–3.3).

## CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of key issues and concepts related to cultural diversity and cultural competency and provided examples of activities and resources that may be used to enhance the understanding and skills of early childhood providers interested in becoming more responsive to the challenges posed by cultural diversity. Delpit (1995) provided a strong image of these challenges:

We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different. We . . . set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don’t even know they exist? Indeed, many of us don’t even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. *It is as if we are in the middle of a virtual reality game, but the ‘realities’ displayed in various participants’ minds are entirely different terrains.* When one player moves right up a hill, the other player perceives him as moving left and into a river. (p. xiv, emphasis added)

The material in this chapter does not answer all the questions associated with reaching the worlds of others who are diverse from ourselves. The authors’ intent was to initiate the dialogues that are essential to providing answers suitable for specific contexts. As Delpit (1995) concluded, “The answers, I believe, lie not in a proliferation of new reform programs but in some basic understandings of who we are and how we are connected to or disconnected from one another” (p. xv).

## RESOURCES

Alta Mira Specialized Family Service, Inc. (1995). *Project Ta-kos: Understanding family uniqueness through cultural diversity*. Albuquerque, NM: Author. Cost: \$85 plus shipping. (505) 842-9948.

Project Ta-kos instruction in cultural sensitivity is formatted in four workshop sessions. The first workshop examines self-awareness, cultural exclusiveness, and consciousness raising; the second, heightened awareness; the third, overemphasis; and the fourth, integration and balance. Each workshop builds on the previous workshop. This instructional program for service providers reflects a strong emphasis on the participants' identifying and examining their own unique cultural backgrounds.

BUENO Center for Multicultural Education. (1994). *BUENO modules for bilingual special education*. Boulder: University of Colorado School of Education. Cost: \$150 each module. (303) 492-5416.

The BUENO modules provide a flexible resource that can be used in whole or in part for preservice or inservice courses, as well as for shorter institutes and workshops, addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically different students with learning and behavior problems in the classroom. Presentation notes, handouts, and overheads are included.

Carter, M., & Curtis, D. (1994). *Training teachers: A harvest of theory and practice*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press. Cost: \$32.95. (800) 423-8309.

This instructional monograph invites teachers of young children to become autonomous learners, responsive planners, and problem solvers in their classrooms through a narrative format. The text is presented in the theoretical framework that the authors actually use in their instructional sessions. The instruction is presented in sequential chapters: 1) overview of adult learning; 2) sample strategies for instructional topics; 3) and 4) effective teaching and instructional roles in addressing culturally sensitive and antibias practices; 5) an inclusive approach to workshop planning and staff development; 6) an outline of a project approach for teacher instruction on child-centered curriculum practice in an ongoing setting; and 7) tips on instructor resources, organization, and effective practices.

Center for Peace Education. (1995). *Dealing with differences: A training manual for young people and adults on intergroup relations, diversity, and multicultural education*. Carrboro, NC: Author. Cost: \$60. (919) 929-9821.

This extensive manual is designed for individuals who are interested in facilitating workshops and classes on understanding diversity, promoting multicultural education, and improving intergroup relations. The manual provides a conceptual framework and detailed instructions for activities and allows the learners to see explicit connections to their own lives.

Quality Educational Development, Inc. (1994). *The diversity game*. New York: Author. Cost: \$195. (202) 724-3335.

This board game is designed to raise awareness of diversity and encourage communication and interaction with individuals of differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the workplace. Three key concepts frame the game: 1) a diverse culture means a diverse workplace, 2) valuing diversity, and 3) valuing individuals leads to an effective work force. Questions on the category cards explore demographics, jobs, legislation, and society.

Seelye, H.N. (Ed.). (1966). *Experiential activities for intercultural learning*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press. Cost: \$29.95. (207) 846-5168.

This monograph provides instructional materials in cross-cultural instruction and intercultural education. The emphasis is on the development of intercultural awareness and cross-cultural sensitivity, the dimensions of intercultural communication, cross-cultural human relations, and cultural

diversity. Included are simulations, case studies, role plays, critical incidents, and individual and group exercises. Activities are organized by objectives, materials, setting, time, background/rationale, procedures, and resources for further reading.

Taylor, T. (1992). *Moving toward cultural competency: A self-assessment checklist*. Washington, DC: Georgetown Child Development Center. \$2. (202) 687-8635.

A self-administered checklist for personnel who provide services to young children. The checklist provides a profile of the cultural competence of their programmatic setting.

York, S. (1991). *Roots and wings: Affirming culture in early childhood programs*. St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press. Cost: \$22.95. (800) 423-8309.

This book is written for early childhood teachers, program directors, teachers, instructors, and parents. Three objectives frame this practical text: 1) an understanding of multicultural education, with an emphasis on culture, ethnicity, and race; 2) practical ideas for implementing multicultural education in early childhood settings; and 3) providing useful information about multicultural education outside textbooks and professional journals.

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## ACTIVITY 1.1

### THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE LEVEL: CONCEPT MAPPING

#### Objectives:

- To stimulate thinking around particular concepts
- To compare and contrast participants' formulations of these concepts

#### Materials

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers
- Sample concept maps (see Figure 9.1), and the following readings [if doing follow-up]: Hall & Hall, 1990; Stewart & Bennett, 1991; Storti, 1994)

#### Instructions:

NOTE: The sequence of this activity is designed to first elicit participants' concepts as they exist before reading specific information on them.

1. Identify a concept(s) (e.g., family, culture) for participants to map. This activity works best when all participants map the same concept and when there are diverse backgrounds represented in the audience.
2. Explain to the participants that a concept map is a visual word depiction of how a person structures a concept, similar to webbing (if they are familiar with that technique). The map is composed of circles within which words are written. The circles are connected by lines on which linking words are written. A concept map is hierarchical from top to bottom; that is, the primary concept is on top and subconcepts or components are below the primary concept (see examples in Figure 9.1).
3. Give participants paper, markers, and the following directions:
  - a. Think about what you think this concept (e.g., family) means as you understand it. If you had to explain or define it for someone from another planet, how would you do so? What components, functions, or other aspects would you include?
  - b. Now, I would like you to map this concept, following these rules: your map must be hierarchical from top to bottom; you must include linking words on all lines; when you are done, someone reading your map should be able to understand your understanding of the concept.
4. Allow 15–20 minutes for participants to map the chosen concept. Ask participants to tape their map on the wall when they are done; they may or may not sign it.
5. When all participants are done, allow participants 5–10 minutes to walk around and review the maps. Ask them to notice both content (what was included or not included) and structure (visual and hierarchical organization).
6. Discuss similarities and differences in how each person has depicted the same concept.
7. As a follow-up activity, assign readings from Hall and Hall (1990), Stewart and Bennett (1991), and Storti (1994). When these are completed, discuss how culture influences how we each structure our concepts. Bring the maps back out and ask each student to discuss what experiences or learning influenced him or her to structure the concept in a particular way. Can any cultural influences be identified? What other influences are identified?

**Comments:**

One of the challenges of becoming culturally competent is learning to think in a pluralistic, both/and fashion, rather than in a polarized, either/or fashion. This activity helps participants learn that concepts can be validly structured in multiple ways. Initial responses sometimes center on which map is right or most correct. (Discussion on whether maps need to be judged in this fashion can be an important part of this activity.) Other times there is surprise at the variety of ways a concept can be structured even in a group considered nondiverse.

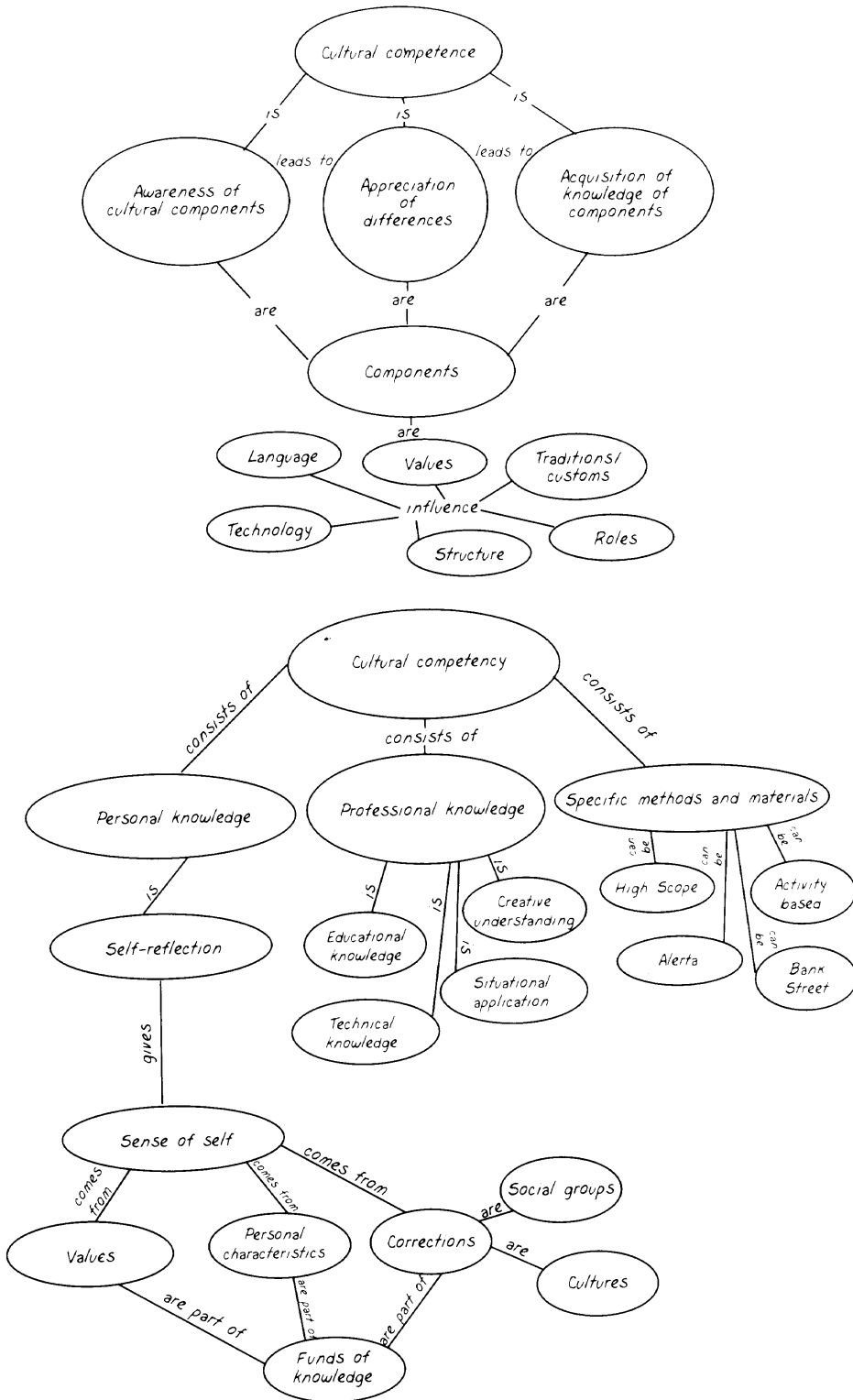


Figure 9.1. Examples of maps of the concept "cultural competency."

## ACTIVITY 1.2

### THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE LEVEL: FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

**Objective:**

- To assist participants to identify how cultural values and beliefs influence perceptions of children and children's roles

**Materials:**

- A selection of children's books reflective of various cultures and countries (include some in languages other than English if there are participants who can read and translate them)
- Funds of Knowledge worksheet (prepared by activity leader)
- Readings: Chapter 1 from Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, and Mosier (1993), and Chapter 2 from Bowers and Flinders (1990)

**Instructions:**

1. Before initiating the activity, prepare Funds of Knowledge worksheets: Take a sheet of paper and divide it into eight spaces. Label each space with one of the following categories: concepts, experiences, story grammar (e.g., event sequence, plot), social environments, family/community composition and organization, approaches to problem solving, language, other (e.g., values). Type the following instructions on the top: "Select and read a children's story. After reading it, identify the fund(s) of knowledge it reflects (i.e., the types of knowledge it assumes as normative). Use the categories below as a guide to the different aspects of the story's fund of knowledge."
2. Assign readings; include others you may be familiar with that may also seem appropriate. (This activity follows concept mapping well.)
3. After readings are completed, bring children's books to class. Ask participants to form small groups of two to three and select two books they would like to review.
4. Give each group of participants a Funds of Knowledge worksheet and ask them to complete it (20–30 minutes).
5. When completed, ask groups to present their findings to the class and discuss how they completed each part of the worksheet.
6. After all groups have reported, ask participants to relate their findings to their readings.

**Comments:**

This activity has proved helpful in sensitizing participants to how cultural beliefs and values are transmitted; it also helps them identify and prevent possible cultural bumps. Rogoff et al. (1993) discussed how different communities emphasize different behaviors in keeping with their developmental expectations and social goals. Can participants find evidence of this in the stories they read? Bowers and Flinders (1990) stated that the "language is not a neutral tool for the expression of ideas preformed in the mind of the individual" (p. 33). Can participants find support for this statement as a result of their activity?

## ACTIVITY 1.3

### THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE LEVEL: AGREE/DISAGREE

#### Objective:

- To assist participants to identify how cultural values and beliefs influence perceptions of children and children's roles

#### Materials:

- Agree/disagree signs (strongly agree, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, strongly disagree) (should be big enough to read comfortably from across the room)
- Three belief statements (you may use those listed below or develop others)
- Readings: Gonzalez-Mena (1993) and Rogoff et al. (1993)
- Belief statements: 1) Culture is the most significant influence in shaping your behavior, beliefs, and values; 2) intervention should always use the child's home language; and 3) culture is the most significant influence in determining the content of the curriculum used in early intervention settings.

#### Instructions:

1. Before session, place agree/disagree signs in room, one at each corner.
2. Before session, prepare transparencies, one statement per transparency.
3. Once session starts, place statements one at a time on overhead. Ask participants to stand under the sign that best represents their position on that statement.
4. Tally participants under each sign by number and/or name. Allow time for participants to observe ratio of positions on each statement.
5. Choose the statement that elicited the most diverse responses. Repeat this statement and ask participants to return to the position they took on that statement. Form small groups in the following proportions: one person from each "strongly" group and two people from each "somewhat" group.  
(NOTE: If no statement elicited a significant degree of diversity of responses, participants may be "assigned" to positions and asked to role-play them.)
6. Groups are instructed to reach consensus according to the following procedure: Within each group, the "agree" people are asked to be "persuaders" while the "disagree" people listen. This is done for 5 minutes. Then "persuaders" and "listeners" change roles: The disagree people are given 5 minutes to persuade. At the end of the 10 minutes, both sides are given 3 minutes to reach consensus.
7. Ask small groups to share and discuss their process and decisions with the total group. Were they able to reach consensus? How did they feel as they reversed roles from "persuader" to "listener"? If positions were changed, what most influenced the change?
8. As a follow-up, assign readings. When completed, ask participants to discuss their positions once again in light of the information they have read. Did the information support their position? Did it promote a shift in position?

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Activity 1.3 is adapted from one presented in *Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Handicapping Conditions*, a training manual developed by the New York State Education Department, Office of Education of Children with Handicapping Conditions, Albany.

**Comments:**

This activity can lead to insights related to the range of positions people can hold and the correlation of these positions to literature and research. A significant portion of a person's beliefs regarding culture and cultural diversity is based on personal experiences and emotionally laden values rather than on carefully thought-out arguments based on research. For this reason, discussion of these beliefs is important, as is learning that consensus need not always be reached. Another application of this exercise is to use it as a simulation of traditional Native American problem-solving practices within which consensus, not majority, decides actions to be undertaken.

## ACTIVITY 2.1

SITUATED LEARNING LEVEL: IDENTITY CIRCLES OR "NAMES WE CALL HOME"

### Objective:

- To assist participants to become familiar with their own and others' identities and the role culture has played in structuring these (i.e., to bring culture home)

### Materials:

- Paper
- Markers
- Readings: Part I of Koslow and Salett (1989); Landrine (1992); Markus and Kitayama (1991)

### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to find a partner. Once in pairs, ask one student to ask the other, "Who are you?" five times. The other student has 30 seconds to reply each time. Replies should be written down by the student doing the questioning. Once one student has given five answers, ask them to switch roles and repeat, with the other student answering. Discuss results briefly (this part is optional, depending on available time).
2. Tell participants they are now to get their five responses from the questioner and add any others of which they may have thought. Then tell them to draw a circle and divide it into as many parts as they have identifiers, writing one identifier in each part. Make the size of each part representative of the relative weight of that identifier (e.g., the part in which "student" is written might be smaller than the part in which "Vietnamese" is written).
3. Once this activity is completed, ask participants to discuss their circles, either in small groups or as a whole class (e.g., Were identifiers directly cultural such as "Indian"? Were they role related such as "student"?). Ask them to discuss the possible role of culture in defining each of the identifiers. Compare and contrast identifiers across participants. Can they be categorized? Into which categories?
4. As a follow-up, assign readings, then ask participants to reexamine their circles and discuss how the "names" they chose to "call home" relate to the information in their readings.

### Comments:

Culture is not only about what we believe and do, it is also about who we are and how we define ourselves. Respecting distinctions in how identities are constructed and understanding that they are constructed is an important aspect of cultural competency. This activity stimulates rich discussions, especially when done with a diverse group.

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"Names We Call Home" is a title borrowed from a book of the same name (Thompson & Tyagi, 1996).

## ACTIVITY 2.2

### SITUATED LEARNING LEVEL: DRAWING CONVERSATIONS

#### Objectives:

- To stimulate conversations about boundaries and the role of culture in shaping them
- To increase participants' awareness about their interactional patterns and habits

#### Materials:

- Large sheets of drawing paper
- Markers of assorted colors
- Reading: Units 1–2 of Devito (1995)

#### Instructions:

1. Tell students they are to have a nonverbal conversation in which they are to draw, instead of talk, back and forth. Who starts and how turns are determined are to be decided nonverbally; no talking is allowed. Each should respond to what the other does according to how he or she feels and how he or she interprets the drawing, as would happen in a verbal conversation.
2. Ask participants to pair off and find a place to sit facing each other. Each pair receives a sheet of drawing paper, and each student in the pair chooses two markers of different colors.
3. You may time the activity, or allow it to follow its own time, typically anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes.
4. Once "conversations" are concluded, ask dyads to tape them to the wall. Typically, some pairs end up with one full-page picture, others end up with multiple images or small pictures. Once drawings are on the wall, ask participants to discuss the following points:
  - What the process felt like
  - How they made decisions about start, content, and turn taking
  - Any instances in which one partner's behavior felt intrusive to or out-of-sync with the other
  - How each tried to control, adapt, or, in some other fashion, respond to the other
  - The degree to which various messages from familial, cultural, or educational contexts influenced their behaviors and responses
5. As a follow-up, assign reading and ask participants to discuss how it did or did not apply to their "conversation."

#### Comments:

This activity is one strategy for eliciting aspects of interactional patterns that may not be conscious. It is important to have established some trust with participants for them to share freely.



## ACTIVITY 2.3

### SITUATED LEARNING LEVEL: THERE'S ALWAYS A THIRD CHOICE

#### Objective:

- To stimulate cognitive flexibility in cultural contexts

#### Materials:

- Third Choice Worksheets (use scenarios given below or generate others based on your own and others' experiences)
- Readings: Stewart and Bennett (1991) (especially pp. 52–55)

#### Instructions:

1. Assign readings to participants. Prepare Third Choice Worksheets by taking the following scenarios and placing them on transparencies or separate sheets of paper:

*Scenario 1.* Practitioner A likes to establish rapport with parents by spending time chatting with them before initiating work with their child. Parent B believes that this is a waste of time and that the practitioner needs to “get to the point.”

Choice 1: Practitioner can explain her behavior to parent and continue to chat as before.

Choice 2: Practitioner can stop chatting in deference to parent's wishes.

Choice 3: ?????? [Generate one or more alternative choices.]

*Scenario 2.* Parent A believes that infancy is a time to play with few demands from adults. Provider B believes that although play is important, structured intervention is necessary to prevent developmental delays from worsening.

Choice 1: “Educate” parent as to rationale for early intervention.

Choice 2: Limit structured intervention to times when working with infant without the parent present.

Choice 3: ?????? [Generate one or more alternative choices.]

*Scenario 3.* Practitioner A believes that all intervention should adhere to family's culture and non-English language as much as possible. Practitioner B believes that both child and family need to learn skills necessary to succeed “in the mainstream”; after all, they can continue with their culture and language at home.

Choice 1: Match intervention to family's culture and non-English language in all instances.

Choice 2: Explain to family that early childhood providers will use English and will follow set curriculum and strategies, as for all other children.

Choice 3: ?????? [Generate one or more alternative choices.]

2. Discuss the tendency of American culture and language to perceive and emphasize dichotomies (e.g., good/bad, near/far) compared with other cultures.
3. Ask participants to form groups of two to three. Give each group a Third Choice Worksheet and ask them to brainstorm words to generate additional options (or use overhead and work as a total group).

4. After activity is completed, or at end of assigned time (typically 15–30 minutes is sufficient), ask groups to share the results of their brainstorming. A master worksheet may be drawn on an overhead or on a large piece of paper for posting on the wall; results can be entered on this worksheet.
5. Ask groups with greatest difficulty and with least difficulty in completing activity what factors they believe contributed to their ability to find appropriate third choices.

**Comments:**

This activity works well in conjunction with Activity 3.1 (Cultural Bumps). Although it is important to respect children's and families' values and preferences, it is not always possible to model them in an early childhood setting (e.g., close physical contact and caring for 5- and 6-year-olds). The ability to develop third choices can help prevent these situations from becoming unequal "win-lose" power situations. The ability to playfully explore paradigms other than those that are most familiar to us is a key aspect of connecting across cultural boundaries.

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Activity 2.3 is based on a workshop presented by Gonzalez-Mena (1996), which was attended by one of the authors of this chapter.

## ACTIVITY 3.1

### MEDIATED APPLICATIONS LEVEL: CULTURAL BUMPS

**Objective:**

- To stimulate cognitive flexibility in cultural contexts

**Materials:**

- Scenarios from the Third Choice Worksheet (as in Activity 2.3)
- Readings: Chapter 9 of Valdés (1996), especially pages 200–205; Paradise (1994)

**Instructions:**

1. The focus of this activity is on the scenarios themselves rather than on the resulting choices. These may be copied from the Third Choice Worksheet and placed on transparencies or on separate sheets to give to participants.
2. Discuss the concept of cultural bumps (p. 229, this chapter). Ask participants to think about times when they experienced negative emotions or a communication breakdown with someone.
3. Tell participants to form small groups of three. Give each group a sheet with scenarios (from Activity 2.3) or copy each scenario on a transparency to discuss as a total group. Ask participants to read scenarios and discuss differences in positions between family or child and service provider(s), then ask participants to role-play one or more of the situations.
4. Debrief activity, asking groups to discuss how they felt and what insights were triggered by the activity. Can behaviors be easily changed? Can different behaviors reflect similar values and beliefs?
5. Have each group present its solutions to the large group. If large group includes members who are currently in early childhood settings, they can then discuss strengths and weaknesses of the solutions for settings and situations with which they are familiar.

**Comments:**

This activity works well as a follow-up to the Third Choice activity, bringing it to a more concrete level. Though the readings are specific to particular communities, their conclusions are the same: Behaviors are deeply rooted in underlying values and beliefs. Simply changing a behavior without addressing these values and beliefs can often worsen rather than improve a situation.

## ACTIVITY 3.2

### MEDIATED APPLICATIONS LEVEL: MEDIATION PRACTICE

#### Objectives:

- To develop abilities to identify aspects of intervention strategies that research indicates are culturally influenced
- To modulate the same strategies according to cultural variations of these aspects

#### Materials:

- Various materials for selected intervention activities as chosen by the participants
- Reading: Rogoff et al. (1993)

#### Instructions:

1. Ask participants to read Chapter 1 of Rogoff et al. (1993), paying particular attention to the section, "Cultural Variation in Guided Participation" (pp. 9–16).
2. Tell participants to form small groups of three to four and select an intervention goal and a related activity that they would like to use (they may draw from their experiences, or you may give them curriculum guides to review).
3. They are then to identify mediation strategies appropriate for that goal and activity (e.g., if activity is puzzle completion, will they model or let child use trial and error? What cues or feedback might they use?). If participants have not had a lot of intervention experiences, videotape of early intervention settings and activities may be used. Questions would then be answered in relation to activities viewed.
4. Once strategies are identified, ask participants to brainstorm, using the following questions as guides:
  - "To what degree are strategies verbal/direct or nonverbal/proximal?"
  - "To what degree are they child–peer focused or child–adult focused?"
  - "To what degree are strategies embedded in child's social context; to what degree do they have an individual or dyadic focus?"
5. Following the brainstorming of these questions, ask participants to generate suggestions to modify strategies (e.g., if primarily verbal/direct, how could they be modified to be more nonverbal/proximal?).
6. To conclude, ask small groups to demonstrate the various strategies and modifications they generated. They may simulate with each other or could videotape lessons with children. Debrief on their experiences and, if used with children, on the range of responses to strategies.

#### Comments:

This activity is not a simple one and may need several sessions to be completed. Sensitizing participants to the culturally driven aspects of interactions is a key skill for working across cultural boundaries.

## ACTIVITY 3.3

### MEDIATED APPLICATIONS LEVEL: PROCESS STUDIES

**Objective:**

- To increase awareness of perceptions and expressions of cultural competence

**Materials:**

- Magazines for obtaining pictures
- Scissors
- Glue
- Videotaped interactions with children and families (generated by participants, taken of master teachers, or commercially available tapes of various early intervention environments)
- Videotapes of movies involving cross-cultural interactions

**Instructions:**

1. Ask participants to compose a collage of images and words that express or describe culturally competent intervention as they understand it. This part of activity is best done ahead of time, though it can also be done in small groups during class time.
2. Using videotapes of providers interacting with children and families, ask participants to view tapes and record specific instances in which behavior or language reflects an image or a word in their collage (e.g., if "skilled relationship" was such an image or word, what behavior or language in the tape would reflect that?).
3. After tapes are viewed and instances recorded, debrief using the following questions as guides:
  - What words or images seemed to be reflected most often?
  - Were any words or images not reflected at all?
  - Did they think of any words or images they'd like to add to the collage after viewing the video?

**Comments:**

Relating what we believe cultural competence to be to concrete behaviors is the focus of this activity. Using a collage has proved to be effective in that it elicits more global, intuitive images rather than more verbal strategies.

