Contemporary Perspectives on Language Policy and Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education

edited by
Olivia N. Saracho - Bernard Spodek
Contemporary Perspectives on Language Policy and Literacy Instruction in Early Childhood Education

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CHAPTER 11

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

Culture-Centered Teaching for School-Aged Children

Esther Elena López
Universidad de Monterrey

Michael Mulnix
University of the Incarnate Word

A WORLD WITHOUT BOUNDARIES

The idea of living in a world without boundaries is becoming increasingly real. Technology affords us the opportunity of "real-time" communication despite geographical distance or political barriers. We frequently interact with individuals who are culturally different from us; yet, it is often true that we are socialized to prefer a similarity of values. This is not exclusive to the United States; in an effort to survive, every society strives to achieve a certain continuity of core values. One danger of maintaining cultural continuity, however, is that a society risks becoming exclusionary and reduc-
tonistic, focusing on a limited (and limiting) set of values which can exclude individuals with dissimilar value systems. As the world grows ever closer, a diversity of cultures is manifest. We are interacting with individuals across continents and can directly observe significant value differentials. Learning about other people and discovering different ways of seeing the world helps us realize the partiality of the perspectives we hold.

For purposes of this chapter, we will refer to culture as "an ongoing pattern of life, characterizing a society at a particular stage in its development or at a given point in history" (Coon, 2001, p. 55). Individuals who become educators in this country generally receive their formal education in a college or university setting and usually undergo a socialization process throughout their training. This socialization process fosters the belief that human beings: (1) are basically good and can change for the better; (2) can master nature with their hard work; (3) focus on a future goal; (4) maintain a doing or action oriented outlook; (5) relate socially in an individualistic, egalitarian, competitive and informal way and; (6) think linearly and communicate with a direct style (Hofstede, 1984; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Sue & Sue, 1990; Sue, 1998). These values are anchored in the very core of U.S. mainstream culture and are mostly represented with a value system that originates from individuals who have an able body and mind, have a European heritage, are males, purport a Judeo-Christian religion, are heterosexual, belong in a middle to upper socioeconomic class, and are White (López-Bernstein, 1997). Thus, it is our ethnographic, demographic, and affiliation characteristics that help us to both develop and understand our experience and develop this understanding (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner, & Triandis, 1996). All of these attributes contribute in a significant way to the formation of our personal identity.

Multicultural scholars have defined culture in different ways. For example, Carter and Quaresmi's (in Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995) classification outlines differing theoretical perspectives and thus defines philosophical and political assumptions about the study of culture. These authors group theorists into five major categories and this defines values philosophically and politically as follows: (1) the Universal or Etic approach which suggests that all human beings are the same because intra-group differences are greater than inter-group differences (Fukuyama, 1990; Ivey, 1987; Lloyd, 1987; Parker, 1987); (2) the Ubiquitous approach, a "liberal" position which suggests that people belong to multiple cultures that are determined by cultural attributes (such as ethnicity, gender, mental and physical abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class). The saliency or importance of a cultural attribute is contextually determined (Pedersen, 1977; Ponterotto, 1988; Sue, 1982); (3) the Traditional or Anthropological approach which defines culture as influenced by the country of an individual's birth and geographical area of upbringing (Arredondo, 1985; Christensen, 1992; Copeland, 1982; Leong & Kim, 1991; Nwachuku & Ivey, 1991; Ponterotto & Casas, 1987); (4) the Race-Based approach which holds race to be the superordinate locus of culture, i.e., belonging to a racial group transcends all other experiences in regard to culture (Carney & Kahn, 1984; Carter, 1991; Corwin & Wiggins, 1989; Helms, 1981; McRae & Johnson, 1991; Ponterotto, 1988; Sue, Akutsu, & Higashi, 1985); and (5) the Pan-National approach which considers global racial oppression as the primary construct for cultural difference (Bulhan, 1985; Myers, 1988).

Based on the increasingly heterogeneous nature of U.S. society, the study of culture, cultural categories and classifications, and cultural variance is growing more important. For example, the 2000 U.S. Census reported that 25% of the total population was recorded as people of color (African American or Black, Asian American, Latino/o or Hispanic, and Native American). Projections about the population in the year 2020 reflect that children of color will hold the numerical majority (Sue & Sue, 1991). This estimate is based on several factors including: (1) the rates of immigration have shifted dramatically from the massive White migrations in the early 1900's to a steady migrant flow of individuals of color (mostly Asian and Latino/o individuals); (2) most White couples tend to have families with two children while most Latino/o families have three or more children and; (3) most White individuals begin a family late in their third decade while most Latino/o individuals begin a family in their second decade.

For the purpose of this chapter we have concentrated on one cognitive developmental phase: preoperational. According to Piaget (1952), children between the ages two and seven show evidence of using symbols through language and mental imagery even though thinking remains intuitive (little use of reasoning and logic) and egocentric (unable to take the viewpoint of other people). Thus, when working with young children (pre-kindergarten through third grade), effective educators bond with them by choosing the most appropriate means of communication, carefully analyzing their level of cognitive sophistication and determining their independent or interdependent relationship style. For example, when teaching early elementary school children educators often use toys, choose concrete words, playact topics related to their own unique situation, and/or use stories and metaphors. With this in mind, the authors argue in this chapter that educators need to go further and embrace a diverse classroom culture in order to educate more effectively. It is herein reasoned that teachers may engage a particular student's culture in different areas such as communication (circular or linear), or relationship style (independent or interdependent) while maintaining content at a particular level of cognitive development (preoperational in early elementary education). Thus, it is the manner in which content is presented and accepted that will create an effective culture-centered educational experience.
CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY

Simply put, multicultural societies require multicultural education, one that teaches students a multiplicity of values and the appreciation of value differentials. Exposing participants in the learning process to differing value systems is beneficial because the exposure broadens narrow perspectives. In order to meet the challenges that a pluralistic education presents, many educators are changing curriculum and programming while simultaneously expanding their knowledge to become more culturally aware and sensitive to differences. Increasingly, educators are becoming aware of who they are (identity) and what they value. In turn, they are learning to be sensitive about who others are and, in the process, are becoming increasingly cognizant of divergent values.

Human beings face similar challenges while growing up and seem to be affected by universal principles (Coon, 2001). Following Erikson’s (1963) theory of psychosocial dilemmas, this chapter focuses on stages 2 (autonomy vs. shame and doubt), 3 (initiative vs. guilt), and 4 (industry vs. inferiority) because they encompass ages 2 to 7, a time when children begin their formal education at school. According to Erikson, during this time children need to become independent, need to take initiative, and need to become industrious with the help of other adults in their lives. Educators are of paramount importance during these early years. For example, during stage 2 (3 years of age) if teachers ridicule or overprotect children they may cause them to doubt their abilities and feel shameful about their actions. During stage 3 (3 to 5 years of age) if teachers criticize severely, prevent play, or discourage children’s questions they may cause children to feel guilty about initiating activities. During stage 4 (5 to 7 years of age) if teachers regard children’s efforts as messy, childish, or inadequate, then feelings of inferiority may result. All of these stages are precursors to stage 5 (adolescence) when children will wrestle with their identity (who they will become).

Thus, teachers’ actions in the classroom are paramount in relation to children’s successful development. Educators can replicate their own socialization experience and constrain children’s actions—particularly if such experiences differ from their own—or they can rectify the socialization experience and model appreciation for difference as they construct spaces in their classrooms for children to express, explore, and develop diverse perspectives.

EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SENSITIVITY

In 1997, a qualitative research study (López-Bernstein) about counselors in training illuminated the path counselor educators must take to prepare effective multicultural counselors. The path used by counselors can benefit the training of counselors in general. This preparation includes the delineation of a complex web of how counselor-trainees view the world as well as their own cultural identity development. López-Bernstein outlined three major themes that emerged from her research, including: construction of self, working method, and integration of personal experiences.

1. Counselors’ “construction of the self” reflects their socialization process and how they perceive both themselves and their students. López-Bernstein discussed three ways (categories) in which counselors constructed the self. One group viewed their self as separate from their culture; in other words, it was difficult for them to see any connection between who they perceived themselves to be and their culture. A second group (women) negotiated self and culture; they struggled and eventually compromised their individualistic view of self because it did not explain their experience as women—one that fosters responsibility for, and care of, other people (Miller & Silver, 1993). A third group experienced an enculturated self; they came to terms with who they were by exploring their heritage, considering the perception that others held of them, and by valuing differences.

2. Counselors’ “working method” reflects their cultural identity process. López-Bernstein reported three ways (categories) in which counselors worked with their students. The first category represented counselors who reported awareness of cultural differences between themselves and their students but chose to avoid discussing cultural issues. The second category represented counselors who engaged in labeling or sorting cultural attributes; these counselors had a direct or blunt style and pointed out cultural differences to their clients. Counselors in the third category purposely accommodated their clients’ culture in their working relationships; they used cultural similarities and differences to build trust and guide their interventions, to pursue cultural self-awareness, to promote cultural self-disclosure, and to place value in culture-centered supervision.

3. Counselors’ “integration of their personal experiences” with episodes of discrimination and/or marginalization affects their counseling strategies as well. López-Bernstein outlined three ways (categories) in which counselors spoke of these experiences. The
first category represented counselors in ethical closure; these counselors spoke of their marginalization in a cognitive yet reactive fashion. Counselors in the second category explained their marginalization in a cognitive manner but were intensely immersed in, and consumed by, their affect; they were exploring and struggling to discover who they were and felt responsibility towards oppression. There were two primary positions taken: one held by counselors who had experiences as oppressors and the other by counselors who had been oppressed. In the first position (oppressor) counselors were fearful of retaliation. In the second position (oppressed) counselors struggled with internalized feelings of anger and anxiety. Counselors in the third category represented a group of therapists who were in the process of choosing where to stand. While aware of marginalized positions they had held on a wide variety of cultural issues, they knew they could choose how to deal with their experiences of oppression such as using their experiences with marginalization to be more sensitive toward other people’s culture and to grow increasingly confident with multicultural interventions.

All three of these themes show an evolutionary process that educators in training undergo when considering multicultural issues. Participants represented in the third category had, in nearly all instances, already progressed through the first two categories.

The López-Bernstein study suggested the need to teach counseling theories that fully incorporate and integrate a counselor’s individual worldview (Weltanschauung.) Counselor-educators need to present pluralistic information to educators in training. For example, with regard to the first category, educational theories often present an independent view of self. If one examines curriculum content, it is discovered that even in training programs that explore systems—as in the cases of group counseling and family systems—a majority of the theories reflect an independent view of self. Terms like “dependent” and “ennmeshed” are used to describe systems (families and groups) that are thought to be “dysfunctional” without regard to the possibility of a cultural tradition that values an interdependent self. On the other hand, systems that value an interdependent self often reinforce and foster individuals who work toward the benefit of their “in-group” and thus view themselves in relation to “specific” others in particular contexts. “Interdependent selves do not attend to the needs, desires, and goals of all others. Attention to others is not indiscriminate; it is highly selective and will be most characteristic of relationships with in-group members” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 229).

Particularly as related to early childhood education, counselor-educators need to present education-trainees with these two perspectives (self separate from culture and enculturated self) in the construction of the self. In doing so, they will open their perception of normality to include everyone’s realities and, as a direct result, their assessments and interventions will become more accurate and thus more effective. After all, “most people are still much less self-reliant, self-contained, or self-sufficient than the prevailing cultural ideology suggests that they should be” (Markus et al., 1991). Further, women’s socialization may foster an interdependent construal of the self. Even in the West, feminist theory suggests the importance of relationships for women and how women’s socialization processes present connections with others as necessary, even in the face of lack of mutuality (Miller & Silver, 1993). For example, teacher-educators may facilitate teachers’ process of cultural self-awareness by facilitating in-class cultural self-exploration with the use of cultural genograms and selected films (Hardy & Laszloffy, 1992). Also, teacher-educators may help students organize cultural information by reviewing the five existential categories and range of variations in different cultures such as human nature (good/bad), relationships (independent/interdependent), nature (master/ reverence), time orientation (past/present/future), and activity orientation (doing/being) (Sue et al., 1990). In particular, we need to help educators-trainees become aware of their own cultural values.

Teacher-educators need to present educators-in-training with the idea that individuals undergo their cultural identity process in different ways. For example, we know that some counselors avoid discussing cultural issues altogether while others are more actively engaged in addressing culture. A primary role of educators is to facilitate exploration of underlying sociopolitical issues in order to promote discussion of culture and cultural identity. This exploration might be accomplished through intense and experiential class/group work, perhaps based on assigned readings and selected film excerpts. This can also be accomplished with lectures that provide students with a “how-to” model in order to respectfully challenge differences and by encouraging them to become more accepting of each other’s way of processing complex information.

Educators’ own modeling may further facilitate exploration of cultural identity issues for students of early childhood education. This type of exploration is not easy to accomplish. A young student’s desire to learn is often accompanied by a wish to “feel good” in the context of the class so he is taking. However, when change is needed, growth and learning often occur without comfort or good feelings. It is often a delicate task to both validate and challenge the presence of substantially different thought processes in the development of cultural identity. Furthermore, we need to validate trainees’ fears and internalized oppression in the context of their training. Some therapists of color fear being perceived by the culturally different client as “incompetent” or “illegitimate” while some White counse-
iors fear being perceived by the culturally different client as "insensitive" and "racist" (López-Bernstein, 1997). Educators need to validate these experiences and help explore in-class options to address the issue. For example, trainees could be asked to view the film "Skin Deep" and later hold a discussion following suggestions provided on the Internet site http://www.pbs.org/skindeep/skindeep.htm.

The consequence of not addressing the cultural fear of educators-in-training is to risk the replication of their same fears in the school classroom. Such socialization could well reinforce the values of the majority whereby the culturally unaware and/or insensitive teacher unintentionally oppresses young students with differing values. Educators thus need to know how to address cultural issues—both directly and indirectly—and thereby both support and reinforce the students' preferred mode of communication. Educators also need to learn to acknowledge—and to value—both cultural similarities and differences between themselves and their students (Draguns, in Pedersen et al., 1996).

Educators have a unique opportunity to maximize the training of early childhood teachers by making cultural issues central to the training process. The following suggestions may help shift discussions of culture to a central place in the training of teachers:

- Present pluralistic theories that illuminate different constructions of the self, from collectivist to individualistic perspectives.
- Foster cultural identity development through experiential didactic methods that present affective experiences (films, theater).
- Facilitate understanding of the sociopolitical context in which teachers and students live in order to support educational interventions that are forged in the strength of an integrated understanding of the invisible forces of power and privilege.

In sum, the process of making culture central in the training of early childhood educators can be accomplished by going beyond the areas of cognition and affect. Educators need to help trainees-in-training develop their cultural identity by illuminating their cultural journey so they can better understand, and support the culture of young students. Culture is embedded in a sociopolitical context that can't be ignored if the ultimate goal is to train competent multicultural educators. The exploration of the socialization process helps recognize the assumptions and characteristics that influence behavior. Lack of understanding of this process can lead educators to place blame or even to ostracize students who think and behave unlike majority students. Group relations theory supports the realization that, as a group, humans tend to project negative qualities onto "others." Those others are usually persons who are perceived to belong in group(s) dissimilar from those of the majority. These negative projections are often unintentional. McIntosh (1995, in Andersen & Hill Collins) explained her difficulties in exploring the interlocking oppressions of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and so forth. She noted: "I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring racial dominance on my group from birth" (p. 86). Young children's thought processes are not sophisticated enough to understand discrimination—whether the discrimination is based on disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic stratum. Nevertheless, early elementary school children, like all children, learn from what they experience. Teachers who strive to teach in a multicultural environment will be aware of this and will not dismiss dissenting perspectives. For example, students from a low socioeconomic background will not be singled out because their parents lack certain financial resources. Some educators lack a true practical understanding of multiple realities and think there is only one way to behave or to think—their way. Once again, elementary school teachers are naturally positioned to rectify such monolithic perspectives.

Understanding the sociopolitical context in which we live may help educators design curriculum forged in the strength of an integrated understanding of the invisible forces of power and privilege. Such educators need to find ways to become advocates for all students and to assist in changing the attitude others have toward culturally different children. Disregarding a child's minority culture reiterates that child's socialization experience, one that diminishes the importance of the child as a valued—and contributing—member of society.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SYSTEMS

Schools are microcosms of society. They tend to replicate socialization experiences. Thus, the invisible forces of power and privilege that maintain existent hierarchies also exist in every school. Individuals are socialized in environments (i.e., schools and universities) that reproduce their social context. However, culture-centered teacher training can be used to rectify, and thus enhance, socialization experiences. For example, we can become aware of, and sensitive to, the unequal distribution of power in our society and therefore empower students to expand the locus of power to include all society members (Andersen et al., 1999). Furthermore, effective multicultural education can change future socialization patterns, particularly if begun at an early age. If not done, educators run the risk of replicating oppressive socialization experiences and potentially harming young students.
School counselors struggle to provide effective services to children. Practicing school counselors (J. Tasse, personal communication, August 13, 1999; S. Montrose, personal communication, October 14, 1999; and D. Fountain, personal communication, April 4, 2000) report that they:

- Rarely get to know all of the children assigned to them.
- Miss time to be proactive.
- Lack time to design and implement new counseling strategies.
- Feel constrained in one-on-one school counseling sessions (10- to 15-minute counseling sessions).

In the United States, the student-to-counselor ratio ranges from 298:1 in Vermont to 581:1 in New York to 1,171:1 in California (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). The current U.S. average is 561:1 while the recommended ratio is 250:1.

Delivery of school counseling services to young student-clients seems challenging given the human resources and time allocated to providing such services. There is, therefore, a strong need to create coalitions that help gather together a wide variety of resources to enable a few to reach out to many. Coalitions need to be formed that respond to school counselors’ needs and both support and supplement multicultural training in a university setting. Only then may it be possible to rectify children’s socialization experiences in the educator-trainee educational process.

**Professional Development Schools**

During the summer of 1998 the lead author (López) was invited to join a group of faculty from the State University of New York at Oswego who were studying the formation of Professional Development Schools (PDS). Levine (Levine & Trachtman, 1997) noted there are currently 250 PDS in the United States. Such schools are partnerships that "bring together university and school-based faculty to share responsibility for the clinical preparation of new teachers, the professional development of experienced faculty, the support of research directed at improving practice, and enhanced student learning..." (p. 1). These partnerships are based on the idea of developing "reflective practitioners" (Schön, 1993).

Following that initial summer of study, López began to develop informal coalitions or partnerships with school counselors and teachers in the field. Some of these collaborations were temporary and guided purely by serendipity. Other collaborations were systematically planned and entailed semester-long endeavors. During a time period lasting four semesters in New York State and including one winter in Israel, López began reaching out to K-12 schools in an attempt to explore the possibility of forming PDS-type collaborative partnerships to deal with cultural challenges. She soon discovered some major stumbling blocks that, if left unchecked, could deter the formation of professional development partnerships between practicing school counselors, teachers in a K-12 environment, and educators teaching at colleges and universities. The problems encountered included:

- Lack of contact between university and school system personnel, which can block access and affect credibility.
- Lack of familiarity with egalitarian collaboration, which can elicit competitiveness and an unwillingness to share ideas and resources.
- Lack of financial funds to support the time needed for the development of appropriate culture-centered programs.
- Lack of time to develop and apply measurement and other assessment tools that can provide information to modify and improve the collaboration.
- Lack of technical support to maintain on-going communication with every individual in the partnership.

Despite these stumbling blocks, the partnerships that were developed seem to have worked remarkably well. Some solutions used to address the problems include:

- Networking to maintain access and establish credibility. Making small group presentations that include a demonstration (video) of a prior collaboration helps in encouraging networking skills.
- Nurturing and trusting relationships between partners helps to tap into all collaborators’ potential (experienced field school counselors, and school teachers as well as educator-trainer and trainees). The School of Education at Syracuse University provided members in the partnership with access to an on-line, open virtual community—The Living School Book (http://lso.syr.edu)—to maintain working relationships, allow participants to learn from each other and allow them early-on to address difficulties. Such a model can easily be adopted at other universities when establishing collaborative relationships with school districts perhaps with the use of Black Board.

**Schools And Communities Working Together With Multiple Realities**

The constituencies involved when attempting to form Professional Development Schools—university, school, and family—all have their own hierarchies, beliefs systems, and modes of communication. Initial difficul-
ties in establishing a collaborative working relationship were widespread. Each institution has its own way of perceiving experiences and its own method for dealing with the task at hand. López worked to establish open communication and to candidly share cultural experiences. Often, self-disclosure and modeling helped to develop a trusting relationship. Nevertheless, at times the university’s rules made procedural differences difficult to negotiate. For example, the Institutional Review Board for research with human subjects had a set of rules, such as the need to get signed letters of consent from the children’s parents prior to collecting any data from students in the school. On the other hand, K-12 schools usually send out tacit letters of consent and do not expect parents to return signed letters. López found that some families are quite guarded and thus experience the collection of data as an intrusion that may harm their children; also the language used to explain the program at times raised questions for the parents and, as a result, some refused to allow their children to participate. Negotiating these important differences can prove to be challenging, at least. At times López collected data (surveys) only from those children whose parents had given explicit consent. Other times she did not collect any data from the participating children, but instead observed student-educator interactions.

**INTERVENTIONS FOR DEVELOPING CULTURE-CENTERED TEACHING SKILLS**

**The Sensitive Practitioner**

Participating in PDS fosters a healthy attitude for revising one’s theoretical assumptions. It also sharpens cultural sensitivity due to the constant interaction and communication among colleagues from differing cultures working at the school. “How to” demonstrations on multicultural issues strengthens skills. There are several useful models in multicultural counseling literature used for such training. For example, the Triad Model developed by Pedersen (1976, 1977, 1978) matches a counselor in training from one culture with a coached team of three other persons from a contrasting culture. This team of three role-play different elements from the client’s own culture. One person articulates the client’s internal fears and resistance (anti-counselor), the second person articulates the client’s internal motivation and trust (pro-counselor), and the third person plays the client and uses customary dialogue of a counseling session. This simulation of a multicultural counseling session is videotaped and used for later discussion. Pedersen (1988) noted several multicultural counseling training advantages associated with the Triad Model:

- Critical incidents are played under conditions that maximize safety.
- Cultural values and problems are less abstract and diffuse.
- There is direct and specific feedback.
- Client’s unspoken thoughts and feelings are explicit.
- Later analysis of videotaped role-play provides concrete examples.

The Triad Model has been researched (Bailey, 1981; Ivey & Authier, 1978; Neimeyer, Fukuyama, Bingham, Hall, & Mussenden, 1986; Pedersen, Holwill, & Shapiro, 1978; Sue, 1980) and found useful for counselors in training because they receive immediate feedback about mistakes (anti-counselor) and relationship enhancing interventions (pro-counselor).

**The Case for Interactive Theater**

The primary author of this chapter has successfully used interactive theater in helping educators become more culturally aware. Using theater to help individuals is not new; psychodrama was first used by Moreno in 1911 to help emotionally disturbed clients work through some of their problems. He noted that all psychotherapy uses psychodrama. The theoretical basis of Moreno’s method as explained by Zimmermann (1969) is to develop the client’s ego through a dramatic corrective emotional experience facilitated by the therapist or director’s auxiliary ego. According to Moreno, the medium of expression can vary (a moving or fixed light, a repetitive sound, a doll, music, a movie, a dance, and more). There are, however, five mandatory instruments in psychodrama: the scene, the client, the director, the auxiliary egos, and the audience. The scene can blend fantasy and reality to allow the expression of tension and facilitate the achievement of equilibrium. The client role-plays the scene spontaneously. The director transforms the client’s offering into drama, moving the client through an array of emotions. The auxiliary egos are extensions of both the therapist and the client. The audience must resonate and provide spontaneous feedback in order for the client to internalize it (Zimmermann, 1969).

Interactive theater is a performance-based medium that utilizes drama to "provide a forum for the discussion of socially sensitive issues which impact youth and adults" (Dowling, 1994, p. 1). According to Dowling, in 1979 interactive theater began in the school settings with teenagers performing as actors in skits for their peers. The skits topics presented the audience information about social and mental health issues.

However, to our knowledge, interactive theater has not been used as a proactive teaching intervention in general or as a means of facilitating communication around early childhood educational needs in particular.
Interactive theater requires that the cast members and group leaders be very knowledgeable about the central topic of the skit and conversant with group dynamics. In addition, cast members need training in basic theater skills. Over the last four years López involved some of her university students (teachers and counselors-in-training) in the formation of informal Professional Development Schools. They joined the staff and faculty of different schools with a program of interactive theater with the specific goal of building cultural awareness and sensitivity.

What the authors propose here is the development of interactive theater programs that follow ten essential steps, including:

1. Assessing the educational needs of kindergarten to third (K–3) grade students through participant-observations and requesting opinions of school staff and practicum or intern students placed at the participating PDS.
2. Collaboration of faculty and educators-in-training to write a five-minute skit depicting a conflict scene that incorporates the result of the needs assessment (step 1).
3. Recording educators-in-training’s misconceptions and reductionistic attitudes toward a culturally different audience (first measurement schema for educators in training).
4. Developing and administering a formal measurement scheme to record the K–3 grade students’ responses to a conflict similar to the one being presented in the scene.
5. Presenting and videotaping the five-minute ‘conflict scene’ at the school.
6. Actors/educators-in-training remain in character and the facilitators (counselor educator, school counselors) encourage dialogue between the actors and the audience by telling the audience (K–3 grade students) to ask questions of the cast.
7. Applying the measurement scheme to assess if the K–3 grade students’ responses are different to the earlier responses (comparing with step 4).
8. Designing activities for school counselors and teachers to use in order to maintain and generalize the alternative behaviors suggested by the K–3 students, or audience targeted with the interactive theater program.
9. Giving the students the electronic address of an interactive web page designed to provide participants with another reinforcing tool.
10. Presenting the educators-in-training with second measurement schema to determine the culture sensitivity and culture centered skills acquired through the interactive theater experience (comparing with step 3).

López has taken interactive theater to elementary, middle, and high schools; to rural, urban and suburban schools; and in the United States, México, and Israel. While she and others constantly modify presentations—predominantly language and props—to better engage the audience, the results have been strikingly similar. For example, with elementary school students large Muppets are used to perform the skits and facilitators speak English, Spanish, or Hebrew to match the language used by the audience. However, as stated above, audience responses are very similar. During the interactive part of the program, young students begin to problemsolve and articulate for the cast alternative ways of behaving. Thus, the audience (K–3 graders) becomes the educational tool. It is possible that the presentation of a conflict without a resolution motivates the audience to complete the scene (gestalt), even though the audience is only directed to ask questions from the cast members. The cast members (educators-in-training) remain in character and, therefore, try to explain the character’s unique value system anchored in the character’s cultural point of view.

Central to the objective of this chapter, educators-in-training that utilized interactive theater consistently reported having a better sense of how culture translates into classroom behavior. For example, in a classroom scene one of the characters does not voice his opinion and gives the impression of ignorance; another character seems redundant because she expresses herself in a circular manner. These depicted cultural perspectives presented the educator-in-training, as well as the audience, with concrete instances of classroom behaviors and helped prepare them to envision multicultural classrooms. Educator-trainees further honed their teaching skills throughout the duration of the program as they learned to explain a specific cultural perspective to the audience. All members of the PDS participated in the program by assisting with the following components:

- Writing and editing the skit.
- Writing and editing the letter for parental consent and the Institutional Review Board for research with human subjects’ application.
- Designing the web page and other follow-up activities.
- Observing counselor educator’s culture centered group facilitation skills.
- Discussing their impressions about the audience’s behavior.
- Interpreting data collected from the two sources (students at the target school and counselors-in-training in the university’s class).

Interactive theater promotes educators’ perception of self-efficacy. ‘Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and
execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2) in this case that of being effective culture-centered educators. Bandura noted that self-efficacy could be developed through mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and enhancement of physical and emotional states. The above collaborations (PDS) that bring about an interactive theater program to a school are designed to tap the four factors Bandura suggested develop self-efficacy. Educators experience mastery by participating in all parts of the program actively. The cast’s interactions with the K–3 grade students provide educators with an opportunity to illuminate their character’s perspective and understand the position of the audience. Those educators who facilitate the process for K–3 grade students suggest alternative solutions to the conflict scene, receive positive feedback and experience mastery. Those educators who listen to their peers’ facilitation have a vicarious experience. Later, all educators-in-training at the university’s class participate in a series of debriefing activities over several sessions spread out during the semester and are socially persuaded to continue using culture centered programs in the schools. It seems evident that educators’ “working method” reflects their own cultural identity process. They progress from awareness and avoidance of cultural differences; through the labeling or sorting of cultural attributes; and through purposely accommodating students’ culture in their working relationships. They begin to use cultural similarities and differences to build trust and guide their interventions, to pursue cultural self-awareness, to promote cultural self-disclosure, and to place value in multicultural classrooms.

Educators-in-training have an opportunity to contemplate in class the cultural differences between the target audience (K–3 grade students) and themselves. They usually struggle with the following spectrums: (1) their cultural characteristics and their interlocking systems, such as ethnicity, gender, mental and physical abilities, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic strata; (2) their value orientations, such as believing that human nature is good or bad; (3) their relationships or construction of the self, such as establishing independent or interdependent connections; (4) their attitude toward nature, such as believing that human beings should master or revere nature; (5) their time orientation to past, present, and/or future; and (6) their orientation toward human activity from “doing” to “being” (Sue & Sue, 1990).

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Counseling

Graduate programs for school counselors vary widely even through the curriculum is generally based on guidelines endorsed by four professional organizations, including: the American Counseling Association (ACA), the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

During the second half of the last decade, ethical standards were modified and now require training in multicultural counseling. In 1997, the Executive Council of the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) endorsed the school counseling standards set out by CACREP that require training programs to "provide opportunities for students to counsel clients representative of the ethnic, lifestyle and demographic diversity of their community" (p. 47). ACA ethical standards (1995) mandated that counselors respect cultural differences; not discriminate; and recruit and retain administrators, faculty, and students with diverse backgrounds and special needs. To accomplish this goal, some programs elected to present students with one class in multicultural counseling while others attempt to weave multicultural components into each class, and still others strive to do both.

All school counseling is, by nature, multicultural counseling in that it would be nearly impossible to find another person whose cultural attributes precisely match those of the counselors. It is highly unlikely that both parties (school counselor and student-counselee) would have the same birth country, be of the same gender, have similar mental and physical abilities, be of the same race, practice the same religion, be of the same sexual orientation, and be situated in similar socio-economic statas. Similarly, there will be few students that match perfectly their teacher’s cultural attributes. With this in mind, educators need to prepare themselves to teach an increasingly diverse student body.

Teaching

University programs for teachers vary throughout the nation even through the curriculum is generally based on guidelines endorsed by professional organizations including: the American Educational Researchers Association (AERA), the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). All three organizations support a code of conduct
that endorses respect for cultural diversity. However, like most ethical standards they are merely guidelines and as such they require interpretation. Respect for cultural diversity has resulted in curriculum changes, with the inclusion of topics or information about diverse groups of people. Nevertheless, the presentation of this information does not necessarily translate into cultural awareness and sensitivity. Teachers are left to their own devices to implement the new, more inclusive curriculum. For example, teachers are making great advances as they present students with historical facts that pertain to contributions made by people of color. Yet, the presentation of such facts may lack the necessary context for students to be able to clearly value these contributions.

CONCLUSION

The saliency of particular cultural attributes will be different for different individuals, as well as for the same individual over time. For example, some students and educators-in-training will share the authors' enthusiasm for the Ubiquitous approach to culture, others might not. Yet, it is important that the reader takes a position within the cultural approaches stated above. Once that is done, the process of cultural awareness (identifying and thoroughly understanding one's own culture) can begin. For example, when the authors consider their contrasting ethnicity (Loéz was born and raised in México from parents who had Aztec, French, and Spanish heritage; Mulnix was born and raised in the United States, from parents who have Irish and French heritage) they begin to understand, appreciate, and benefit from some of the differences in their way of thinking, talking, listening, and more. One way to better realize some of these differences is by examining thought processing based on cultural heritage. For example, Loéz employs a more circular or "story telling" of communication style vis-à-vis Mulnix's more linear or cause-and-effect style. Of course, this can be a characteristic not only of ethnicity and race but of gender as well.

The continuous discussion of these types of characteristics and perspectives—combined with the class requirement to develop the interactive theater program—gives educators-in-training the opportunity to develop their cultural awareness, sensitivity, and skill. The process of wrestling with language to articulate a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate program presents them with concrete situations throughout the whole process. Each one of the steps followed to accomplish the interactive theater in the school provides the educators-in-training with the opportunity to clarify their understanding of culture as well as to make the necessary adjustments to practice the theory. The information accumulated while doing interactive theater in the schools over the last four years has been used to develop a formal measure. This measure assesses the level of comfort of educators in training about interacting with a group of students whom they perceive to be different from them. This assessment is administered before and after educators in training participate in the interactive theater program. The level of comfort of educators in training consistently and significantly improves and thereby facilitates the development of culture-centered skills of educators in training.

Preparing educators for challenges inherent in a multicultural, pluralistic society means that academe must put forward its best effort in providing learning opportunities for people who think—as well as act—in diverse ways. These efforts would be best utilized if issues related to diversity are addressed early. For example, a multiculturally-based, an inclusive curriculum that begins in kindergarten can set the stage for children to enter a society that values each and every one of its members. Educating children to be multicultural (giving equal status to different cultural groups) from an early age, before prejudices are learned (Devise, Montetil, Zuerink, & Elliot, 1991) can rectify and enrich our socialization process. Similarly, educators can learn to appreciate multicultural variables in the classroom. For example, if a child is quiet and tends to speak in a circular way, the teacher will not merely assume that the child lacks knowledge or understanding but instead will appreciate the different behavioral style and view it as a strength, not a weakness, even though the teacher himself or herself may use a more linear style of thinking and communicating. Ultimately, students will learn to think and communicate in diverse ways if all styles of communication are appreciated and encouraged. Thus, students will be better prepared to communicate effectively in a culturally complex world.

REFERENCES


