

Profile: On Teaching

Culture, Ethnicity, Race, and Development: Implications for Teaching Theory and Research

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I asked some students from varying backgrounds how they feel about the way psychology is taught. One student was an undergraduate who had been born and raised in China and the Philippines. His first reaction was that psychology is *intrinsically* Western because Chinese and Philippino cultures are not concerned with the individual psyche at all. In those cultures, the individual is supposed to forgo the self in favor of the family. The emphasis is on the development of the family as a whole rather than on each individual.

As the field of social psychology has begun to recognize (e.g., Kagitcibasi, 1988; Triandis, 1988; Markus & Kitayama, 1991), this student has identified two very different psychological orientations, individualism and collectivism, the first stressing independent behavior, the latter stressing interdependent behavior. Yet these psychological orientations are virtually never mentioned in teaching developmental psychology. Instead, we assume that our subject is the development of the individual.

We are not aware that this basic conception is in itself an ethnotheory specific to our culture. Moreover, it is an ethnotheoretic assumption that makes our science at odds with the experience of many of our diverse students, especially those from Asian or Latino immigrant backgrounds. In these cultures, the goal of development is interdependence, not the independent self valued in Euro-American society.

How do we make our subject matter include all of these groups? It is important for us to realize that the answer to this question is intertwined with the resolution of basic problems in developmental theory and research: How to remove ethnocentrism from our science and depict cultural diversity? How to describe true universals of development, yet avoid assuming that a familiar goal of development is a universal one? These are the issues, but what, specifically, should be done?

Making Value Orientations and Parental Ethnotheories Part of Developmental Psychology

One part of the answer is that the concept of values and the cultural variability of values need to be incorporated into both teaching and research. Goodnow and colleagues' (e.g., Goodnow, 1984) line of research on parental values concerning childrearing is an important step in this direction. Cultural values are social standards of good and bad that guide behavior, and these standards vary from culture to culture. For developmental psychology, an important manifestation of cultural values is ethnotheories of development: each cultural group has its own theory of how to raise children and, most important, its own distinctive goal for the outcome - a picture of what the ideal child and the ideal adult are like. One culture's nemesis is another culture's ideal.

Minority Ethnotheories: Introducing the Concept of Cross-Cultural Roots into the Teaching of Developmental Psychology

When a minority group's ethnotheory is at odds with that of the dominant society, it is usually because it was developed in the group's ancestral culture and can be better understood by studying development in that ancestral culture. For example, Mexican immigrants bring with them to the United States the value of respect, which is an important goal in the socialization of their children, as Delgado-Gaitan (1994) illustrates. However, this value of respect puts the Mexican/Mexican-American ethnotheory of ideal child development in conflict with critical thinking, an important goal in the Euro-American ethnotheory of development. Mexican and Mexican-American children are supposed to respect their elders, not learn how to question, negotiate, and argue with them, as middle-class Euro-American children are expected to do (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). This is an illustration of how one sub-

culture's goals for social development come into conflict with the dominant culture's goals for cognitive development. This example also challenges notions of universal paths of development. Finally, it shows how minority child development can only be understood in terms of its cross-cultural roots.

To enhance this approach, I have, in collaboration with Rodney Cocking at NIMH, edited a book entitled *Cross-cultural Roots of Minority Child Development* (Erlbaum, 1994). This collection deals with the African, Native American, Mexican, and Asian roots of minority child development and include contributions from African, African American, Native American, Mexican, Mexican American, Asian, Asian American, European, and Euro-American colleagues. These materials have figured prominently in a new multidisciplinary undergraduate seminar I have developed on culture and development. The exploration of cross-cultural roots of child development is a major focus for the seminar.

One way in which such roots are explored in this seminar is through family projects, of which I shall now give an example. These empirical projects tie together family history, ethnography, and psychological research.

Turning Parental Ethnotheories into Developmental Research and Student Projects

We become aware of our own ethnotheories of development when they are violated, and this fact can be turned into a pedagogical method for making students aware of contrasting ethnotheories of development as well. The contrast between the Mayan ethnotheory of development and the Euro-American one became the basis for a student project assignment in my seminar on culture and development and in my developmental psychology class.

Zinacanteco Maya mothers, unlike most mothers in the United States, are in almost constant bodily contact with their young babies and do not feel comfortable being physically separated from

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them. Zinacanteco babies are believed to require body contact with caregivers to feel happy and free of fear (Haviland, 1978, p. 240). Zinacanteco mothers were therefore horrified when they saw an anthropologist living in their community put her baby down. Indeed, they blamed the baby's frequent crying (in comparison with a Zinacanteco baby) on the physical separation created by what they considered to be a most inadequate child-care practice! It seemed quite likely that the contrast in norms for bodily contact derives from the contrast between two different developmental goals: independence (anthropologist mother) and interdependence (Zinacanteco mothers).

Morelli, Rogoff, Oppenheim, and Goldsmith (1992) transformed ethnographic observations like these into a cross-cultural study on infant sleeping arrangements published in *Developmental Psychology*. The authors found that Mayan mothers favored cosleeping with their infants, whereas Utah mothers favored more separate sleeping arrangements. Based on their study, I developed a project for undergraduate students in which they first read Morelli et al. (1992) and then interviewed their own mothers (or another mother if necessary or desired) concerning sleeping arrangements in infancy. Students also asked their mothers to give reasons for the particular sleeping arrangements they had employed. In class, they compared their own "data" from their own mothers with those of other students from a multiplicity of ethnic groups. They found that, indeed, sleeping arrangements varied depending on value orientations; that is, depending on whether a mother wanted her baby to become independent or to develop closeness with other people.

For many students, this was an opportunity to explore in a positive way the cultural values informing their own upbringing. For all students it was an opportunity to learn that what may appear to be pragmatic details of little psychological significance in child care can turn out to reflect driving forces in a culture's ethnotheory of human development. From the perspective of the class as a whole, the students are treated as cultural insiders whose varied ethnic perspectives provide data for the class to consider. In the words of one student, the result was "a more comfortable



learning environment where I (and I believe other students, as well) did not feel pressure to go against the cultural values we had grown up with."

Learning about issues from the experience of ethnically diverse students in the class.

A student's cultural perspective changed the very premise of my undergraduate seminar on culture and development. I originally entitled the seminar "Culture, Ethnicity, and Development" and thought that it was unnecessary to include race as an explanatory concept. When I played the class a recording of the letters, essays, poetry, and stories written by Japanese-American high school students interned at Manzanar during World War I, a Japanese-American student spoke movingly of her own family's experience in the camps. She also noted that German Americans, who are white, had not been rounded up and interned during World War II, whereas Japanese Americans, as people of color, had been unjustly deprived of their human rights and property. At that moment, I knew I had to add race to the course as a major concept; the next year I changed the seminar's title to "Culture, Ethnicity, Race, and Development."

Another student's cross-cultural experience enriched the course in connection with the topic of biracial children and interracial parenting. Last year an Asian-American student involved in an interracial relationship asked me to develop an empirical project that would allow her to explore issues of culture and childrearing with her Euro-American boyfriend. I came up with the following:

Ask both members of an interracial couple (you may be a member of the couple) to write concerning their perceptions of cultural differences and similarities between them. Ask them to discuss whether there are (1) aspects of their own culture they want to preserve in raising children (past, present, or future), (2) aspects of their own culture they would prefer to not pass on to the next generation, (3) aspects of their partner's culture they would like to pass on to their children, and (4) aspects of their partner's culture they would prefer not to pass on. Drawing on the readings in the seminar so far, discuss the sources of any culture conflicts and sources of intercultural harmony that you see in your subjects' writings. What do you think solutions to any conflicts would be, were, or could have been?

By considering value differences and value choices in an explicit way through a real-world situation, the stage is laid for positive intercultural exchange among students of different groups. At the end of the course, one student wrote: "This course helps its students to foster an appreciation for other groups that can be taken away and utilized throughout life."

Conclusions

In short, I offer for your consideration a framework for teaching developmental psychology that (1) includes the cultural and cross-cultural roots of child development, (2) includes intergroup relations as important cultural influences on developmental processes, and (3) makes an exploration of these issues part of the empirical research experience of undergraduate students. The

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global change initiative.

Democratization

This funding opportunity supports research that contributes to understanding the formation, stabilization, and maintenance of democratic systems, including research concerning the development of psychological characteristics necessary for effective functioning in a democracy.

Cognitive Science/Intelligent Systems

This initiative funds research that investigates the capacities and processes of the mind, bringing to bear methods and perspectives from cognitive psychology, linguistics, computer science, cognitive neuroscience, and related fields. Interdisciplinary research is strongly encouraged.

Center for the Study of Violence

With the encouragement of Congress, NSF will establish a Center for the Study of Violence. A detailed program announcement should be available in January, with proposals

due in May or June. Since applications to the center competition will require an interdisciplinary effort, those who are interested may want to begin now to make contacts with investigators in other fields who might participate in a joint effort.

Instrumentation Competitions

The division of Social Behavioral and Economic Research (SBER) administers two annual competitions to support the purchase of research instrumentation. The Academic Research Infrastructure (ARI) program requires a minimum request of \$60,000 and a minimum match in funds of 30% from the applicant institution. Although the ARI flier states that one institution may only submit two proposals to NSF, three proposals may be submitted if one is in the social and behavioral sciences. The SBER competition provides smaller grants, with a maximum award of \$60,000 and a minimum 20% institutional match. Only items that would not be appropriate for a standard research proposal, either

because of their cost, nature, or proposed use, are eligible for the SBER competition. Proposals in each competition will be reviewed by knowledgeable specialists by a panel of social and behavioral scientists. The deadline for both competitions is March 1. For further information about Human Capital, Global Change, or Democratization funding opportunities, contact Dr. Leslie Zebrowitz, Program Director for Social Psychology (Phone: 703-306-1728; e-mail: lzebrowi@nsf.gov). For information about Cognitive Science, contact Dr. Joseph Young, Program Director for Human Cognition and Perception (Phone: 703-306-1732; e-mail: jyoung@nsf.gov). For further information about the Violence Center, contact Dr. Pat White, Coordinator for the Violence Center (Phone 703-3061762; e-mail: pwhite@nsf.gov). For further information about the instrumentation competitions, contact Dr. John Yellen (703-306-1759; e-mail: jyellen@nsf.gov) ◆



Circa 1916. Physician Arthur H. Parmelee, Sr., wife and child care advocate Ruth F. Parmelee, and daughter Nancy.

Members in the News

Dr. Jim Garbarino has recently been named Professor of Human Development and Studies, and Director of the Family Life Development Center, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University. The family Life Development Center is a research, training, outreach program development center located within the College of Human Ecology. Its primary mission is to deal with children, families and communities at-risk for child maltreatment.

Culture, Ethnicity, Race (cont.)

more we include the acquisition of culture in our theory, research, and teaching of developmental psychology, the closer we come to achieving our ideal of a universal science of human development, one that encompasses the developmental experience of all our varied students.

Copies of course syllabi, project assignments, references, and bibliographic information for the courses described in this article can be obtained by contacting Prof. Patricia Greensfield, Department of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

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