

Response to diversity in early care and education essay

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I really enjoyed reading Janet's book, and am glad to see diversity discussed by a "white" person. It has really help me come to terms with my position in society and realize that there are many aspects of my life that I take for granted.

I am also able to recognize my own beliefs and how they were shaped by my "invisible" culture. I read this book right after I read *Privileged, Power, and Difference*, and I felt they went very well together. At first, I did not want to accept the idea that I had benefits simply because of my skin color. I am learning to accept this and also to question it.

Coming from the dominant culture, I neglect and ignore the fact that other people live their lives differently than I was socialized to do. Even though we should expand our awareness of other cultures, we should never make generalizations. Each person differs based on their language, "their individuality, their family, their gender, age, race, ethnicity, abilities, religion, economic level, social status, where they live and where they came from, sexual orientation, educational level, and even appearance, size, and shape!" (p.

) There are so many different factor's that influence a person's culture and behavior, and these differences can be a choice or something that was forced on them. We can't fall into the trap of labeling people by one aspect of their identity. To do this denies all other aspects of their identity. As someone who works with children and their families, I have a lot of influence over culture. I will inevitably pass on elements of my culture, much of the time without realizing. It is my responsibility to communicate with parents

and find out what they feel is best for their child. I must question my own reactions and think about why I act the way I do with children, from moment to moment. I may understand myself and my thinking, judging it superior to any other.

However, I must work with families instead of for them or against them. We also have to be accepting of all families. Janet says that “ all children need to feel that their families are acceptable to their teachers. ” (p.

11) Some parents may have different structures from traditional society. This can be a homo-sexual headed family as Janet mentions, or it could be a family that is headed by grandparents, with parents missing, or a single mother, or a single father, or a child that is primarily raised by a nanny. They could be rich or poor, young or old, colored or uncolored. We may have our own stereo-types about the family, but we need to put them aside to ensure that they child feels that it's family, and therefore the child itself, is accepted. I like how Janet reminds us about ethical codes, and even if we have our own judgements, we need to be ethical in our care.

I am struggling, being the only “ white” nanny in the community that I work in. There are other nannies, but they are all Hispanic, primarily recently immigrated from Mexico. I definitely have trouble fitting in with them and understanding their culture, but I want the boy I work with to interact with other children.

These are the children that live in his community and he will grow with them. I see harsh differences in the way they handle the children, expecting them

to fit into the adult world and handle themselves. They gather at the park for Bar-B-Ques, which I think is a great experience for the children to socialize, but the event seems more focused on the adult wants and schedules. The children seem to be more of an after-thought. The amount of observation of the children is much different from what I am used to, particularly with children around the age of two playing on structures designed for five to twelve-year-olds. I don't know the parents of the children, but they are white and wealthy. I would think that if they are paying someone to take care of their children at home rather than in group care, they want more direct interaction and personal care. I wonder if the nannies are considering the parents culture and desires for their children, or if they are even aware of the cultural differences in regard to this.

I wonder if the parents even realize that these differences exist or if they just take it for granted and expect everyone to raise their children just as they were raised. I don't want to tell on the nannies or offend them by questioning their ways, but I worry that they may not be considering the family culture and how the children will grow to fit into their community as they grow. Janet says, " Huge identity issues arise when children grow older and become disconnected from their families. " (p.

17) I do not want the children to grow away from their families, as this can only create more animosity towards the Hispanics in the community. Janet says, " You must see where the child and teacher behavior fail to mesh so that you can make adjustments. " (p.

15) It is the adult that has to make the changes because the child is not mature enough to understand. The children are also cared for by the group of nannies, and I have concerns (coming from my white culture) of children not trusting “strangers.” The children respond to and obey any adult, and I absolutely understand how this could worry parents, particularly parents that spend a lot of time at work and feel less involved. But I also see benefits to this type of group authority. One family just got a new nanny. The child has not fully accepted the new nanny, missing her mother and previous nanny, but still trusts the group of adults, and almost seems to trust the nanny simply because the other nannies trust her.

I think that her sense of trust was not lost when the nanny had to leave. However, I am also jealous of the new nanny. She has just recently come from Mexico to a new strange place, and was immediately accepted by the other nannies. They had a party to welcome her and told her about all the community activities for the children and how to fit into the new environment. They speak in Spanish and I can only pick up little bits and pieces.

She has been accepted in less than a week, while I am still struggling and it has been five months. I have previously thought that most theories may not apply to everyone, but was shocked to hear about the The Five Percent Phenomenon. It states that only five percent of the world's children are represented in textbooks. (p. 13) This is what I was relating to in the discussion about theory. I also really enjoyed the section on discipline.

I have heard “ the look” referred to as a Hispanic or African-American practice, but I definitely experienced it as a white child. My mother shot me the look and I immediately stopped whatever I was doing and obeyed her non-verbal communication. She said that sometimes I would even cry, just from her stare. While reading this book, I realized that I also use this technique with the boy that I nanny. He responds immediately as well, and shakes his head back and forth saying, “ No. ” He seems to just know. He recently has also begun “ telling on himself” when he does something wrong. He enjoys flushing the toilet. I usually tell him “ Just once” while holding up one finger smiling. If he proceeds to flush, I give him “ the look” and he stops. The other day, he went into the bathroom and repeatedly flushed the toilet while I was occupied with laundry. After his flushing, he returned to me, gave me the look, said “ No” and held up one finger.

Without me saying a word, he knew what he had done “ wrong” and almost seemed to provide his own guidance. Janet says, “ Guidance has behind it the goal of self-discipline” (p. 134).

I feel that this was Max’s way of disciplining himself after he had been guided by me. The section on time-out was also very helpful to me. This seemed to generate a lot of talk in our discussions. I personally do not use time-out as I feel it is counter-productive. I think that when we typically put a child on time-out, it is because they are having a problem in the social world, and we can’t handle it.

By removing them from the social sphere and putting them by themselves, you are not teaching them to deal with their social problems in a proper way. I have also used the term “ time-in. ” I am actually sad to discover that I did not invent the term! I like how Laura Harvey used the term “ time-with” because it emphasizes that the adult is right there with the child during their time of chaos. Depending on the child, it may be best to stay with them while they deal with the problem, instead of “ deserting” them when they are losing control of themselves. I am beginning to understand that this has a lot to do with the emphasis on independence and interdependence.

A child from a culture that stresses interdependence would see this type of treatment as cruel punishment, shunning them from the group. This may be very difficult to understand if you come from a culture that values independence, privacy and time for self-reflection. I really liked how she connected the concept to an Individualist society versus a Collectivist one. I had never thought about how a child from a Collectivist culture could perceive this type of punishment as separation from the group.

From Janet’s book, I realized that there is an endless list of issues that can arise from cultural disagreements. As part of the dominant culture, I need to question how I understand concepts like personal space, smiling, language, eye contact, touch, silence, expression of feelings, time, toileting, eating, schedules, play, toys, guidance, discipline and more. Does the family value a child or adult-centered world? Is there an orientation to objects or people? Do children get to choose? Is my way the right way? Should I learn a

different method? I really enjoyed the section on Teacher Education, Parent Education and Mutual Education. I feel the answer is in Mutual Education.

Janet describes one teacher's experience with cultural conflict, " She didn't have to give up what she believed in; she was able to expand her view to encompass something new" and " other views don't diminish hers. (p. 56) I can only expand my knowledge base by listening and trying the ideas of others. Margarita Calderon said in discussion, " I am learning and get to know them better, opening a door and letting them know that I respect their traditions so they can express their feelings and acceptance, and not only for me but for the other classmates to recognize a new cultures. " It's not only the individual teacher or the individual student that will benefit from us learning the ways of others, but the entire community.