

ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND THE CORE CURRICULUM

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It is vital that the core curriculum in professional psychology contain more than current facts and psychological knowledge about ethnic minority individuals and groups. A thorough understanding of the paradigms that traditionally have guided the production of supposedly relevant psychological knowledge is essential. Indeed the adoption of a new paradigm for work in this area is a further critical step. An understanding of current paradigms and the adoption of a new one are two additions to the Davis-Russell (1990) list of knowledge, skill, and attitude competencies that must be integrated in a core curriculum that trains psychologists to participate effectively in the process of evaluating and generating new knowledge pertaining to ethnic diversity.

These epistemological competencies become particularly crucial for two reasons. First, if as is often said the life expectancy for psychological knowledge is about 10 years, the process by which old knowledge becomes obsolete and new knowledge comes to guide our scientific and clinical enterprises is central. Second, "critical contemporary scholarship maintains that the subject matter for study is no longer the external and distant content of the formal curriculum" (Hatfield & Jacobs, 1989, p. 4). The formal core curriculum necessarily must include current material from a rapidly changing knowledge base.

Traditional Paradigms and Ethnic Diversity

More than a dozen years ago, Rappaport (1977), in his attempt to define community

psychology, provided an interesting and thought-provoking analysis of the role of paradigms in science and a brief examination of the traditional paradigms used by American psychology in its scientific inquiry. As we attempt to delineate the core curriculum for professional psychology, Rappaport's work suggests an outline for the type of knowledge competency we should provide.

Borrowing from Kuhn (1970), Rappaport (1977, p. 17) defined a paradigm simply as "a set of shared ways of viewing a world of concern." The paradigm or view of the world dictates all theorizing, conceptualizing, and methodology used in scientific inquiry. Thus, when scientists or a scientific discipline adopts a paradigm, that discipline has also adopted a set of rules for problem solving and a set of "permissible" problems (Rappaport, 1977, p. 17). Paradigms not only delineate which events should be attended to, but the use of different paradigms will necessarily lead scientists to see the same data in quite different ways. We can illustrate this by paraphrasing an example from Rappaport (1977): When medical scientists began to view psychopathology as an illness rather than as a result of demonic possession, they stopped seeing devils and began to see symptoms of illness. Rappaport (1977) described the paradigm that he believed professional psychology typically used to guide its inquiry. He characterized this worldview as one that "sees everything in terms of individuals and their adjustment to a single standard" (Rappaport, 1977, p. 19). Rappaport (1977) explained that this paradigm has led psychology to develop an "idealized standard" for human beings and, as a result, to rank order people as more or less meeting that standard of competence rather than to attempt to maximize each person's unique potential.

Psychology's overemphasis on the search for universals has led us to believe that "current research strategies and approaches, as well as mental health practices, are adequate and appropriate in application to various minority groups" (Sue et al., 1982, p. 46). Many scientists, several of whom are of ethnic minorities, have provided convincing documentation that refute this myth. Gordon (1985) argued that despite the social sciences' long history of searching for the relationship among human behavior, experience, and system, it has neglected to study the unique impact that culture, ethnicity, and gender have on human behavior and on social systems that are expressive of behavior. Others, such as Bryde (1971), Padilla and Ruiz (1974), Samuda (1975), Smith (1973), Sue and Sue (1972), Thomas and Sillen (1972), and Williams (1970), also lent credence to the argument that challenges that myth.

This tendency of the social sciences to exclude culture and ethnicity systematically in their theoretical conceptualizations has resulted in a narrowing of the knowledge base of the social sciences. This in turn has resulted in a failure to create a realistic understanding of ethnic minorities in America (Sue et al., 1982). Nowhere is this more evident than in the study of Black Americans. When one attempts a serious examination of the literature, it becomes unmistakably clear that the approach has been "to understand the life experiences of socially diverse groups through a narrow cultro/ethnocentric perspective and against an equally narrow cultro/ethnocentric standard. Thus, the issue of cultural and ethnic diversity has been incompletely or inadequately assessed and has insufficiently influenced knowledge production" (Gordon, 1985, p. 118).

This restriction of knowledge production has had its impact both on the curricula and practice of professional psychology. The core curriculum contains courses whose assumptions often border on White supremacy, thereby forcing non-White students to accept and to comply with theories and practices that are not only exclusive of their worldview but see them and their cultural groups as inferior.

Assessment instruments and procedures reflect these aforementioned assump-

tions. A case in point is intelligence tests. Although Wechsler (1974) revised his instruments with a view toward their improvement, his assumptions are reflective of a Eurocentric worldview.

In reviewing the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R), it is evident that his intentions have remained unchanged and that he has designed an instrument intended to measure general intelligence of all populations. He believed that general intelligence does exist, that it is possible to measure it objectively, and that by so doing one can obtain a meaningful and useful index of a subject's mental capacity. Wechsler (1974) also believed that the "*much challenged and berated IQ in spite of its liability to misinterpretation and misuse* [italics added] is a scientifically sound and useful measure" (p. iii). For this reason, he has "retained the IQ as an essential aspect of the revised Scale. But the new WISC, like its predecessor, has broader applications than just providing a reliable Intelligence Quotient, important as this index may be" (p. iii).

The new tests were tried out with 2,200 subjects who constituted the standardization population. Wechsler selected a stratified sample of boys and girls 6½ to 16½ years old, including Black and other minority groups in proportions equal to those reported in the 1970 U.S. Census. He felt that, different than the sample used in the standardization of the original WISC introduced in 1949, this was more representative of the country as a whole. Wechsler spoke of the revision being a cooperative enterprise of the publisher and himself and of the assistance of many persons. He failed to acknowledge and to caution the user that both the assumptions underlying his tests and their typical use are racially biased. The tests must be used contextually.

The traditional research curriculum is a worse culprit in its perpetuation of the status quo reflected in Euro-American paradigms. Methods that were and are currently being devised reflect a domineering manifest-destiny mind-set. Students are required to learn research methods that are foreign and offensive to ethnically diverse groups. The fact that many ethnic groups do not conceptualize the world in a Socratic linear fashion, if known, is completely ignored as researchers embark on their applications of Euro-American principles to populations that are often resentful of insensitive probing.

The individual differences paradigm that has guided our discipline has of necessity forced psychology to disdain differences and to identify them as deviance rather than to appreciate and to value diversity. All of the data that have been gathered from predominantly White, middle-class college sophomores at major research universities no doubt have less generalizability than was once thought. More important, these data never should have been used to develop a supposed universal standard for behavior.

It is apparent that the existing paradigm has gravely influenced the preparation and training of clinical psychologists in particular and has perpetuated poor preparation to provide services to ethnically diverse clients.

New Paradigm for the Understanding of Ethnic Diversity

Just as one paradigm can limit the range of events to which we may attend, the adoption of a new paradigm can allow us to be open to things that could not be seen before. According to Kuhn (1970), this is, in fact, how science progresses.

Tyler, Sussewell, and Williams-McCoy (1985) identified the need for a paradigmatic shift that incorporates at least three elements. First, psychological paradigms must incorporate the importance of culture, race, and ethnicity in defining their constructs, concepts, and parameters. Second, psychological paradigms must fully acknowledge

their clients as "knowing individuals who shape their worlds and destinies through conceptual frameworks (which they develop about the world), and their lives" (Tyler et al., 1985, p. 311). Third, psychological paradigms must acknowledge the role of the system and of individual interactions in their formulations about how people function and organize their lives.

In addition, we could be guided by Rappaport's (1977) recommendations made with regard to community psychology. He proposed that the appropriate paradigm for community psychology should be based on the values of "respect for human diversity, the right to be different, and the belief that human problems are those of person-environment fit, rather than of incompetent (inferior) people or inferior psychological and cultural environments" (Rappaport, 1977, p. 22).

Faculty and Pedagogy

How do we provide the skills to learn about different individuals and groups using a paradigm that respects and values diversity? The great American philosopher Yogi Berra is popularly purported to have said that "you can observe a lot by watching." It is *what* and *how* we watch, however, that may determine what we will observe. We have already discussed at some length how our theory, worldview, or paradigm determines what we will watch and thus what we will observe. Therefore, we need to make students aware of the fact that each of us looks through our own individual and unique set of lenses and that this set of lenses is a product of our own personal history, including our own culture. The classroom then becomes the site for

citizens of a multicultural community to initiate a continuing discourse . . . no one cultural or ethnic orientation is given the power or authority to define and complete this pluralistic discourse. . . . The new curriculum becomes the multiple life history of all classroom inhabitants, with the student's cultural orientation and identity the source of the new and emerging text that will provide the source for the dialogical exchange. (Hatfield & Jacobs, 1989, p. 3)

As we attempt to define what and how we watch, our faculty and students of color can be instructive. According to Hatfield and Jacobs (1989), students and faculty of color have "a unique narrative voice, a voice suppressed and unrepresented previously in the official materials of formal institutions of learning. Their historical odyssey not only enlightens their present condition and situation but explains the present attitudes and mentality of students (and faculty) who do not share that experience" (p. 8). Such a focus requires a shift from the Euro-American concept of faculty.

They are no longer the official curators of the sacred icons of the dominant Euro-American culture but mediators of the various cultural communities that merge into the single community of the classroom. Faculty have an intellectual and ethical responsibility to nurture and sponsor the knowledge and wisdom of students of color as they begin to speak from the context of their origins and world view. (Hatfield & Jacobs, 1989, p. 9)

As the community of the classroom expands, it must include the voices of the ethnic minority communities: those nonstudents who can be instructive of their cultural values and who are the "official curators of the sacred icons" of their cultures. Through consultation, colloquia, and representation on advisory boards, they add their truths to the curriculum: truths that are replete with cultural, psychological, and other significance.

The development of a pedagogy to impart the necessary knowledge, skills, and

attitudes may not be simple, yet it is a critical task. Perhaps we could borrow from cultural anthropology, which sees participant observation as the foundation of its research methodology (Bernard, 1988). Perhaps we should examine the influences of constructivist thinking within our own discipline. One possibility would be the Milan approach to family therapy (Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978). Their perspective on therapy as a process in which the observer is included and participates in a system to construct reality may be a useful model. However, regardless of which approach we adopt, an integral part of this pedagogy must be an understanding of one's own cultural identity and sensitivity to how one's cultural heritage has helped create the set of lenses through which we perceive the world. If we are able to accomplish this, then the learning community, now expanded to include the ethnic minority communities, becomes the validator of knowledge. Such a process becomes a dynamic one. As the discourse attempts to incorporate multiple possibilities from a wide range of cultural and ethnic orientations, we will see new versions considered, modified, and reshaped. As we engage in this process, the effort is "not to collect, in the conventional institutional habit, low level data or information about another culture from one of its speakers, but to integrate ways of knowing and seeing into possibilities of understanding the world" (Hatfield & Jacobs, 1989, p. 11).

Conclusion

The success of implementing such a curriculum is contingent on the creation of a multicultural learning community and faculty who are not wedded to their role as the "official curators of the sacred icons of the dominant culture." Therefore, faculty who understand and can teach clinical and research psychology from such perspectives must be retained, encouraged, and supported in their work.

If we see the curriculum as the core of the actual propagation of knowledge and methods in our psychology training programs, it becomes imperative that such a curriculum include fundamental relevant thinking derived from non-Euro-American cosmologies. Our students must graduate with the ability to integrate an array of ways of knowing and seeing into possibilities of understanding the world, a world that is ethnically diverse.