

greater overall distress and that Asian Americans suffered from discrimination-related depression and anxiety at the same rates as, or higher rates than, other ethnic groups. Further, individualistic forms of resources such as strengths and coping strategies showed equal or stronger protective effects against discrimination-related depression and anxiety than collectivistic forms such as social support and cultural identity did. This finding held despite Asian cultures' association with collectivism, or placing the needs of a family before individual needs; being relation-oriented, or defining themselves in relation to their family instead of focusing on themselves as individuals (Yee, Su, Kim, & Yancura, 2009); and focusing on filial piety, or abiding by family elder members and conforming to parents' expectations and cultural traditions (Iwamoto & Liu, 2009).

### Conclusion

In the context of public education in the United States, schools often fall toward the assimilationist end of the spectrum. Because U.S. public school teachers tend to be a homogeneous group and from culturally mainstream, monolingual backgrounds, they tend (if only unconsciously) to support the assimilationist ideology of U.S. society at large. This means that educational institutions and practices tend to do little to support cultural maintenance, and often actively discourage it. Again, this is particularly the case for the linguistic aspects of culture; other aspects that may be less evident to the observer, such as traditions and beliefs, may be more easily maintained by practices within the family. This also may be in part because these other aspects of culture, while not actively supported in the schools, are neither actively discouraged. Understanding cultural maintenance can help support achievement of learners from all backgrounds, especially among those students who may find themselves struggling to thrive in an environment that differs from their own background.

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## CULTURAL PLURALISM

### Definition

Cultural pluralism exists when minority cultures are present within a context of a larger dominant culture. In a culturally plural environment, minority or enclave cultures are permitted to exist provided that they do not violate the major culture of the dominant group. The relationship between the minority culture and the dominant culture can be one largely, though not entirely, of mutual exclusivity—such as the Amish who reside in Pennsylvania. At the same time, the relationship could also be one in which the minority culture retains high authenticity to their culture of origin yet interacts within the broader culture, such as the Hasidic Jews

in metropolitan New York. Further, the minority or enclave culture can become symbiotic with the dominant culture, both being influenced by it and influencing it. Such an example is the case of Italian Americans, who have an extraordinary influence in American culture, from the arts to cuisine.

A feature of a culturally pluralistic society is that diversity represented by the minority culture is valued and respected both by its own members and by the dominant culture. Today the United States is culturally pluralistic, but that has not always been the case.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the basic assumption of Americans and immigrants into the United States was that all ethnic groups would merge into one American identity, which schools then sought to Anglicize with a largely English-Puritan cultural coding. Immigrants themselves, and especially children, sought to shed much of their Old World cultural identity by Anglicizing names, refusing to speak their parents' language outside the home, and modeling themselves on the dominant culture. In this context, children were more likely to marry outside of their ethnic groups, further weakening the Old World cultural attributes.

During and after the great wave of Southern and Eastern European immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, attitudes toward cultural difference began to change. Reasons for this shift included the sheer numbers of immigrants, their high concentration in the northeastern United States, especially in New York City, and the cultural distance between these immigrants, which included large numbers of Eastern European Jews and large numbers of Italians and the dominant American culture. For Jews, a high degree of cultural maintenance and isolation was seen as necessary to preserve their faith. Though Italians were not as isolated as Jews, their poverty, lack of modern middle-class skills and values, and prejudice against them encouraged a degree of cultural maintenance different than other immigrant groups, such as Germans, typically experienced. Over time, the dominant culture of the United States began to recognize the merits of cultural pluralism. This shift was partially driven by historical experiences, especially that of World War II. The war effort was a homogenizing force, bringing large numbers of Americans

of different cultural backgrounds together. At the same time, Americans began to learn more about those who were culturally different and often came to value those differences. The war effort itself was well served by American cultural pluralism: many Americans, knowing the language of their parents, could read, write, and speak Albanian, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Navajo, Tagala, and many other languages needed to fight the war.

Recognition of the merits of cultural pluralism also stemmed from the intellectual, artistic, and cultural developments that, together, are referred to as postmodernity. Postmodern thinkers rejected the confidence and hubris of the Enlightenment and Positivism, both of which presumed that truth could be known and discovered and that truth was universal and constant. Postmodernists are much more skeptical about truth. For them, no direct, necessary correspondence exists between *reality* and ideas about it—because there is no unitary, unified reality. A center does not exist, ontologically, epistemologically, or culturally (Beck, 1993). As a result, postmodern thinkers reject the idea of a dominant voice or metanarrative with claims to authority. This rejection of a dominant voice legitimized different voices rather than strengthened the dominant culture (Eagleton, 1987). An outgrowth of this intellectual turn is that cultural minorities or enclaves began to be and are valued as different voices, each voice with its own claim to partial, provisional truth.

Taken to its logical limits, postmodernity would value multiculturalism over cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism assumes a dominant culture exists, such as the largely Anglo-Puritan identity dominated the American imagination for much of American history. If current demographic trends continue, however, within the twenty-first century, the United States will no longer have a European-descended, Caucasian majority. Every ethnic group will be a minority, which could conceivably lead to no dominant culture. Such a situation would indicate a shift from cultural pluralism to multiculturalism.

### *Recent Trends in Cross-Cultural and Ethnic Minority Publications*

In local contexts, some degree of multiculturalism already exists in the United States, though the

United States still has a dominant culture derived from European perspectives. Although the proportion of ethnic minority in the United States and thus cultural diversity has been continuously increasing, psychology has historically been dependent on theories derived from Eurocentrism (Hartmann et al., 2013). Hartmann et al. (2013) conducted a ten-year follow-up on Hall and Maramba's (2001) report of cross-cultural and ethnic minority publications in order to compare data trends in publications and psychology organizations between 1993–1999 and 2003–2009. They found that, despite numerous awareness-raising efforts, research on cross-cultural and ethnic minority issues continues to be under-represented. The absence of top cross-cultural and ethnic minority authors on their editorial boards of psychology's two flagship organizations' (i.e., the American Psychological Association and Association for Psychological Science) journals indicates a barrier to broader cultural diversity research. However, Hartmann et al. (2013) also found promising developments; representations of ethnic minority psychology in medical and health journals, as well as in marketing and business management journals, have been increased.

### *Recent Research Findings Related to Cultural Pluralism*

**INTEGRATED MULTICULTURAL IDENTITIES FOR WELL-BEING** Multicultural individuals are required to navigate the different norms and values related to their multiple cultural identities. How they manage these different identities within the self predicts their well-being, and individuals with integrated multicultural identity tend to show greater well-being than others (Carpentier & de la Sablonnière, 2013; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2013). According to Amiot et al. (2007)'s cognitive-developmental model of social identity integration, compartmentalization is where individuals maintain multiple and separate identities within themselves; and integration, the coherence within the self, is where individuals link their multiple cultural identities. Yampolsky et al. (2013) found that individuals with integrated cultural identities report greater narrative coherence than individuals who compartmentalized their cultural identities, showing that integrating one's multiple cultural

identities within the self predicts greater well-being than compartmentalizing one's identities. This indicates that individuals with integrated multicultural identity tend to be able to frame the context of their narrative better, to convey their story in a logical order better, to have a clear emotional evaluation of the events better, and to derive a sense of meaning and resolution in their narratives better than compartmentalized individuals who have a fragmented view of the self in relation to their cultures (Yampolsky et al., 2013).

**MULTICULTURAL SENSITIVITY REQUIRED FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM** If we want to develop multicultural sensitivity to understand individuals from diverse backgrounds and help them adjust to new cultures, we must recognize individuals' different cultural backgrounds regarding their unique expectations and interpretation of positive coping strategies that influence their subjective well-being. For example, individuals' active confrontation of stressful events mitigates their fear and uncertainty in individualist cultures, but in collectivist cultures, these strategies are not always desirable, and individuals who use these strategies tend to report higher levels of anxiety than those in individualistic cultures (Cheng, Cheung, Chio, & Chan, 2013). Further, we need to be also aware that cultural backgrounds also influence the way individuals see themselves. For example, for individuals in individualist cultures, their self is independent from others, but individuals' construal of the self in collectivist cultures exists in *relation* to their social network members, which also influences their well-being (Cheng et al., 2013).

**MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCY REQUIRED FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM** Counselors who exhibit multicultural counseling competencies show improved counseling outcome with clients across cultures. An extensive qualitative review (i.e., content analysis) study (Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Moreno, 2007) consistently found that counselors who exhibit multicultural counseling competencies tend to show improved counseling processes and positive outcomes with clients across racial and ethnic differences. When counselors exhibit multicultural counseling competencies, clients tend to (a) perceive their counselors positively; (b) show positive counseling outcomes; (c) show

less attrition and more self-disclosure; and (d) show no negative outcomes (Worthington et al., 2007).

Counselors or other mental health professionals who modify their interventions, such as psychotherapy or counseling, to better match their clients' cultural values and contexts tend to have better intervention outcomes. Another meta-analysis study (Griner & Smith, 2006) found that interventions targeted to a specific racial, ethnic, or cultural group are four times more effective than interventions provided to groups consisting of clients from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Further, interventions conducted in clients' preferred, native language, if other than English, are twice as effective as interventions conducted in English (Griner & Smith, 2006).

**MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR CULTURAL PLURALISM** The American Psychological Association and many other professional mental health organizations have developed multicultural education initiatives in psychology, and they require, as compliance with accreditation standards, graduate programs to provide education in multicultural issues to enhance mental health professionals' abilities to effectively serve an increasingly diverse society (Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, & Montoya, 2006). Mental health professionals who have had education in multicultural issues tend to show positive outcomes. An extensive quantitative review (i.e., meta-analysis) study (Smith et al., 2006) found an overall positive effect of multicultural education across a wide variety of participant and study characteristics. Further, they found that multicultural education interventions that are explicitly based on theory and research report almost twice as effective outcomes as those that are not. This indicates that when instructors develop multicultural education courses, they need to design all research- and theory-based curriculum, instructional strategies, competency-based objectives, multicultural competence principles, counseling skills, education and training resources, educational interventions, and assessments, which increase the effectiveness of multicultural education interventions (Smith et al., 2006).

### Conclusions

Cultural difference falls on a spectrum, from monoethnic (ethnocentric), to cultural pluralism, to

multiculturalism. The United States has never been monoethnic; and starting in the late nineteenth century, the United States increasingly became more culturally pluralistic. Since World War II, the United States has been shifting further along the multicultural spectrum, although Eurocentrism yet remains dominant.

Because cultural difference falls on a spectrum and varies according to context, it is not always clear whether research agendas relate to different cultural pluralism or multiculturalism. The findings reported above indicate that in the United States, appreciation of cultural diversity is improving, although cultural minorities still function in relationship to a dominant culture. As a means to improve the lives of cultural minorities, with an aim of social justice, researchers have reached some important conclusions, mainly that individuals such as teachers, counselors, and researchers need to develop multicultural competencies, which can enhance their ability to work with culturally diverse people and groups.

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## CULTURAL RELEVANCE

*Cultural relevance* is a concept that emphasizes the importance of individuals learning about, and developing relationships with, those outside their own culture and using that familiarity to improve cross-cultural interactions, engender effective communication, and empower others. Originally identified as a way to provide for the academic success of African American and other children underserved by America's public schools, the concept

was introduced to the field of education in 1992 by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings as culturally relevant teaching. However, anthropologists, sociologists, and teacher educators have also used terms such as *culturally appropriate*, *culturally congruent*, *culturally responsive*, and *culturally compatible* to describe this type of pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2009) defines this pedagogy as one that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 18).

There are many communities and cultures represented in the United States. Nevertheless, most individuals know little about those outside their cultural group. In the United States at this time, over 89 percent of teachers are European American; many of this number are also middle class and female. Meanwhile, an overwhelming number of U.S. students are children of the global majority, which is largely of color and lower socioeconomic status; at this time, this population of students surpasses 60 percent in larger urban areas and is only slated to grow larger in the coming years. Thus, there continues to be a clear and pressing need for U.S. teachers to become familiar, and develop relationships, with those outside their culture for the betterment of student outcomes. Teachers must accept the reality that most students are coming to their classrooms with cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds that are different from their own and, when faced with the heterogeneous mixture of students in their classrooms, teachers must be prepared to effectively work with, and thus empower, all students.

In defining cultural relevance, it is important to remember that this type of pedagogy is about more than cultural knowledge or familiarity due to its emphasis on encouraging the academic success of students through empowerment and elevation of student cultural perspectives. Ladson-Billings contends that pedagogy demonstrating cultural relevance is an aspect of the curriculum in its own right and should have three outcomes: (1) students must experience academic success, (2) students must maintain or develop cultural competence, and (3) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. These pedagogical

requirements are supported by the work of many scholars and practitioners of education, of which, Irvine (2003), Gay (2000), and Howard (2003) are only a few.

### *Academic Success*

To attain academic success for students through cultural relevance, teachers must consciously maintain or develop knowledge of the cultural components of their students' lives, and then demonstrate respect for the culture that students bring to the classroom by making this knowledge a key component of instruction. In doing so, teachers make the classroom a familiar place where students feel affirmed, supported, and accepted. Irvine (2003), explains that this type of culturally congruent behavior creates seamlessness between home and school—a supportive classroom environment where, regardless of social inequities, all students are provided with the tools to achieve positive academic outcomes (p. 7).

Further, Ladson-Billings (1995) maintains that culturally relevant teaching requires teachers to attend to students' academic needs, not “merely make them ‘feel good’” and emphasizes that culturally relevant teachers foster a desire for intellectual achievement in which they *make* students choose academic excellence (p. 160). Gay (2000) adds to the discussion by indicating that an essential element of culturally relevant teaching involves caring and indicates that, without such, students may have a difficult time experiencing academic success.

### *Cultural Competence*

Students frequently bring culture to the classroom that is incongruent with mainstream norms and worldviews, and as previously mentioned, teachers are frequently unfamiliar with the student's cultural experiences. Thus, here again, teachers must consciously maintain or develop knowledge of the cultural components of their students' lives and use this to inform their pedagogy. A primary way cultural knowledge may be gained is through active engagement and immersion in another culture. Earnestly participating in cultural engagement and immersion enables teachers to blend important aspects of student lives with curricular content, thus increasing the possibility of student comprehension

of and relation to the curriculum. Howard (2003) suggests that teachers must “construct pedagogical practices in ways that are culturally relevant, racially affirming, and socially meaningful for their students” (p. 197). However, self-development is not a teacher's only responsibility in this area.

To engage in effective, culturally relevant instruction, teachers must also assist students' development of their own cultural consciousness and competence. This involves encouraging students to maintain their cultural integrity while also providing opportunities for students to experience, analyze, and accept multiple mores, worldviews, and perspectives.

### *Critical Consciousness*

Schools make a difference in the life of students and are key in the establishment and maintenance of a democratic society. Ladson-Billings (1995) contends that culturally relevant teachers “should engage in the world and others critically,” and, in doing so, will help students “develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 162). Ladson-Billings suggests that providing opportunities for students to critique society may not only make them informed participants in a democratic society but will also encourage them to *change* oppressive structures such as institutional racism. In many proposed or attempted implementations of culturally relevant pedagogy, the aspect of critical consciousness is often overlooked; yet, without it, such an attempt is greatly weakened at best and totally ineffective at worst.

### *Social Justice, Education Policy, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Although cultural relevance embodies the ideals of a socially just society, present changes in education policy and practices, catalyzed by the No Child Left Behind legislation of 2001 (the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act), have threatened the very application of its tenants. Current curricular changes encouraged by a dramatic increase in standardized testing as required by the Act and the application of test and punish methodologies have created an atmosphere of standardization never