USING THE SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

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Abstract

All children participate in cultural practices that shape development. Meaningful, authentic connections and interactions with adults build the foundation for respectful integration of cultural diversity in the development of early childhood curriculum. The knowledge of how culture develops forms the foundation of cultural inclusion and appropriate practices in the early childhood setting. Cultural development encompasses the physical environment, the relationships built with people within the environment, and the expectations and roles placed on the child by the family, community and society. Culture is the context in which development occurs and directs the manner of development. The socio-cultural historical perspective, developed by Vygotsky (1978) and elaborated on by Rogoff, (2003) provides a framework for defining cultural development as participation and interactions among individuals as well as within the self. Research indicates recognizing and respecting cultural differences, however, remains a challenge for implementation of culturally appropriate practices. This paper reviews the connection between culture and development by applying the socio-cultural historical perspective to early childhood education classroom practices. Strategies for inclusion and culturally appropriate practice provide the focus for the discussion with illustrative examples from Hungary and the Midwestern United States. Implications for educators, administrators, and teacher training professionals are addressed.

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Chapter 1 - Relevance of Culturally Appropriate Practice

In early childhood education, recognizing and supporting cultural diversity is a pervasive issue due not only to the variance in ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, abilities, languages, and individual characteristics present within any classroom but because of the great plasticity within development early in life. All children participate in cultural practices that shape their development. The knowledge of how culture is reflected in a child's development forms the foundation of cultural inclusion as well as appropriate practices for working with young children and their families. In order to implement culturally based practices, cultural development must be recognized as an integral component of the child's overall development and not just as an external contributing factor. These practices are embedded in everyday life and observation of the child's daily interaction with the world illustrates how the routines and expectations shape how the child makes meaning of his world (Weisner, 2002). Just as human development is an integrated process, cultural development encompasses the physical environment; the relationships built with people within the environment; and the expectations and roles placed on the child by the family, community, and society. Mallory and New (1994) discussed the importance of examining cultural interpretations of development in terms of defining developmentally appropriate practices. This led to the current National Association of the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position statement on developmentally appropriate practices, which today recognizes that culture is inseparable from the processes of development and education. Both research and technological advances have provided further insight into culture and diversity in recent years. Professional associations, such as NAEYC and the Division

for Early Childhood, have recognized the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity and released position statements on the topic, which are discussed in Chapter 2. The push to be more culturally aware and tolerant is evident in curriculum standards from NAEYC and environmental rating scales. The end goal is not tolerance of cultural differences, but to value and appreciate diversity and demonstrate this in practice. As more children enter early education programs and schools with multiple languages and cultures diverse from the dominant population of a particular community, educators who have experience and skills working with diversity are sought.

One factor that contributes to understanding cultural development and cultural changes is technology. Children (and adults) have greater access now than ever before to people around the world through technology. This allows individuals to communicate with one another and obtain new knowledge different from his home community. Technology has also provided a means of global travel, enabling even more interaction from various communities and individuals. As a cultural tool, technology creates artifacts that are adapted and passed between generations (Rogoff, 2003). Examples of technology are vast and include books, writing tools, transportation, and medicine, as well as electronics. While these advancements generally are seen as positive, caution should also be taken to avoid judgments about other individuals and cultures that differ from one's own. The outsider's view (one who does not participate in the practices of the community) offers perspective; however, the outsider may not always be able to fully understand how someone else's practices and beliefs function within a given context.

Educators develop intercultural competence, i.e., the ability to effectively relate to and

communicate with members of other cultural groups (Fabregas Janeiro, Fabre, & Nuño de la Parra, 2014) through experiences with diversity. Consequently, the goal of culturally appropriate practice is to intentionally identify the practices with and expectations for each child and to respect and reflect diversity in a way that celebrates individual differences without being forceful or superficial. The interactions and experiences children have early in life continually influence their developing sense of self as well as cognitive and related processes (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010).

The dynamics of society, such as changing location, status, etc., play a major role in individual experiences and resource availability, thus creating a diverse set of experiences for each individual. Such differences may be the foundation for creating biases. In discussing anti-bias education (specifically with infants and toddlers), Janet Gonzalez-Mena, as cited in *Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change*, presents the idea that direct experience with the world, relationships, observation and materials influence development more than direct instruction of content in projects and activities (Derman-Sparks, LeeKeenan, & Nimmo, 2014). These ideas are also relevant for preschool aged and older children. However, a deeper interplay between the environment, people and content exists due to rapidly maturing cognitive abilities. The aim for culturally appropriate practice and anti-bias education remains focused on meeting children at their developmental level as well as helping children establish a sense of respect and critical perspective. Anti-bias education is an approach where teachers subscribe to the principle that all children deserve to and are capable of development to their full potential while respecting differences and change (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010).

Preparing a child to be interculturally competent begins during early childhood with respectful exposure and inclusion of diverse cultures and practices in everyday experiences. Educators must recognize that differences in children are culturally embedded in order to respond appropriately. The educator's role is to design and implement a curriculum centered on the children where each family and child are represented accurately, valued, and able to be active members of the classroom community. The value of an early childhood curricula where cultural diversity is seen as an indigenous process that develops within the child is detailed in Chapter 2. The socio-cultural historical perspective provides the framework for discussion.

Chapter 2 - Development and Culture

Halfway across the world, in a Hungarian university preschool, a group of early childhood education students, including myself, from Kansas State University watched intently as the teachers (pedagogues) worked with the children in various forms of therapy experiences. The preschool program consisted of several classrooms, divided by age and moderate to severe needs of the children. The program's philosophy differed from my own with the segregation of special needs students from typically developing children. As a group, we were interested in learning how and why the teachers were implementing the strategies through observation rather than contrasting them with our own practices. This attempt to understand behavior in its cultural context was surprising to the director and teachers of the Hungarian preschool.

We engaged in applied learning about not only early childhood education in Hungary, but also the culture and the people who shape the lives of the children there. Tours and discussions of historical events during the Soviet occupation, as well as current education regulations provided context of the country's current status in terms of caring for its youngest population. By offering further explanations of practices we observed, and supplying language and cultural translations, the host provided insight into the perspectives that guided educational practices and the learning of children. For example, the teachers value having a strong music education program and utilize music therapy approaches such as the Kodály method of music instruction (Kodály: n.d.). These musical experiences provide children with musical knowledge, opportunities to participate as a group, and speech interactions. The musical choices preserve history and pass along cultural knowledge. The study abroad experience provided us an enriched

experience in observing early childhood education practices as well as an opportunity to reflect on new Hungarian practices and new perspectives on familiar practices in Kansas.

Evaluating the meaningfulness of the experience is enhanced by using the lens of Rogoff's (2003) socio-cultural historical perspective of human development, which offers a framework to understand and appreciate the practices in Hungary, as well as a wide range of early childhood settings. This paper seeks to examine how Rogoff's theory, which stresses that culture comes from participation, informs current academic research in the field and the applicability in early childhood curricula.

Theoretical Foundation of Cultural Development

The socio-cultural historical perspective developed by Rogoff (2003) states, "Humans develop through their changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities, which also change." Instead of variables operating independently or being grouped together, cultural processes center around "multifaceted relations" within a multitude of community functions (Rogoff, p. 11).

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development provided a foundation for the socio-cultural historical perspective. Essentially, Vygotsky's theory centered on children's learning through engagement with others using cultural tools of thought (which are adapted to specific activities) first within the zone of proximal development and later on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, Brofenbrenner's ecological model (1998) and the dynamic systems interactions placed on human development also contributed to Rogoff's perspective. However, the socio-

cultural historical perspective places a greater emphasis on the relationship between the individual and community than do these other models (Rogoff, 2003).

Variation among and across communities is considered a "resource for humanity" that helps to prepare us for a variable, unknown future (Rogoff, 2003). Change can be biological, social, cultural, and cognitive. Vygotsky proposed four levels of development incorporating the individual and environment in different time frames: **ontogeneti**c (development in an individual's lifespan); **phylogenetic** (the legacy of slowly changing species history through genes over long periods of time); **cultural-historical development** (changes over decades/centuries in the form of technology, values, and social norms); and **microgenetic (**an individual's learning in certain context, moment to moment) (Vygotsky, 1978). These four types of development are interrelated and inseparable. Within the period of early childhood (birth through age eight years), the rapid change in development makes this the time to be mindful of the relationship between culture and whole child development.

This socio-cultural historical perspective examines how culture matters in a particular time and place by using a model that emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the community/communities in which they are involved. Rather than examining how past or present experiences influence the future, Rogoff seeks to observe how the present incorporates past knowledge and experiences are passed down and are used to adapt to a current situation. Patterns seen in a particular community may help to predict what comes next for the children developmentally or the community's locus of change. The study of human development often begins with one's self and extends outwards. Humans change and grow from the cultural

practices they experience and participate in throughout their lifetime. This idea helps to explain why there is so much variance in perspectives, practices, and values, even among individuals in the same communities (Rogoff, 2003). It is critical to remember that participation in cultural communities is not the same as a membership in a group, because being a member does not guarantee participation and that participation in multiple communities can occur simultaneously. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) expands on this school of thought, creating a continuum of culture (n.d.):

> "It is important to recognize that culture is a continuum and even though a family may self-identify as part of a particular culture, they may not ascribe to all of the practices and beliefs of that culture. Individuals and families will be found to lie along different points of their cultural continuum (from traditional, for example, to fully bicultural). These are valid cultural distinctions only in the very broadest sense of the term" (np).

The lens of the socio-cultural historical perspective observes culture as an internal process within an individual, while placing emphasis on reciprocal relationship the individual has with his external surroundings.

Understanding Cultural Diversity

Currently as a field, early childhood educators possess an understanding of the importance of cultural diversity and culturally appropriate practices; however, educators struggle with implementing culturally appropriate practices. Educators are asked to go beyond awareness and actively reflect on what cultural inclusion means for their daily work with young children

and families. A review of literature finds the culturally appropriate practices to be multi-faceted as well as presenting significant challenges to early childhood practitioners.

Murray (2012) conducted a study examining cultural diversity within teaching practices in South African child development programs using an intercultural framework- cultural diversity combined with social integration, values, attitudes, knowledge, and strategies. Using interviews and observational data, the author found that eight (out of ten) practitioners had a superficial and static understanding of cultural diversity, which was evidenced by cultural heritage days, where food and clothing were celebrated. These sorts of celebrations helped to enforce cultural stereotypes and associations. Teachers' beliefs were divided between the ability of young children (three-year-olds) to see racial differences or not. One strategy identified by the practitioners to be incredibly useful to gain insight into cultural diversity and working with the families were home visits. Another strategy identified was racial and ethnic diversity in book illustrations that were meaningful to the children enrolled, not just for the majority.

Researchers Lee and colleagues (2003) developed a four-part survey with open and closed ended questions to examine the early interventionist professional perspectives regarding culturally appropriate practices. Participants included professionals from multiple disciplines (in a metropolitan Midwest setting), who work with children birth to three years of age with developmental delays. Researchers concluded that the participants rated many of the culturally appropriate activities as highly important. However, they identified barriers such as lack of time, materials, and training that interfered with implementing the practices (Lee, Ostrosky, Bennet, & Fowler, 2003).

In a review of 226 four-year early childhood teacher preparation programs, Ray, Bowman & Robbins (2006) found diversity and special education to be a frequent course topic. However, the depth and reflective practice offered to students inadequately represented the future early childhood classrooms of the student educators. This was contributed to a limited exposure of diversity in course settings, in contrast to the very diverse setting of early childhood education programs new teachers entered after graduation.

A review of the scholarly literature supports the relationship between cultural processes and developmental tasks, or universal milestones. Cultural processes may look similar across varying cultures; however, it is important to recognize that neither the meaning nor the value may be the same (Guavain, Beebe, & Zhao, 2011).

The ZERO TO THREE organization created a task force to review the professional literature examining culture's impact on development. Refining the topic, the review focused on cultural influences on the developmental domains of language, socio-emotional, and cognition, reflecting practices in the United States working with infants and toddlers aged zero to three years of age (Mann, Steward, Eggbeer & Norton, 2007). In the cognitive domain, the findings focused on the activities in which parents were likely to engage with their children. For example, Mexican American and African American mothers were less likely to engage children in cognitive stimulation such as playing games and reading at an early age, unlike the Caucasian mothers who did so. Socioeconomic status was another influence on time spent in such activities. Mann and colleagues indicated that parents in lower socioeconomic groups were less likely to read with their children. Another influence in the engagement in cognitive experiences provided

by the family is the view on the role of the parent, whether it is to be a nurturer or a teacher. In the language domain, the authors found the main cultural difference to be the way parents saw children as communication partners. The taskforce also examined studies evidencing the benefits of dual language learning, even in lower socioeconomic homes. In the socio-emotional domain, the authors suggest that attachment elements reflect western values such as individualism, autonomy, and exploration, which may not be universally applied (Mann et. al., 2007).

In a 2011 study, Harkness and colleagues observed a sample of 183 children and families from six Western middle class cultural communities: US, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Poland. The children were divided into equal cohorts: 18 months, 3 years 4.5 years, and 7/8 years old, within each cultural grouping. Statistically significant relationships appeared between the amount of time spent in certain activities and the meanings placed on them by the parents, such as the time and emphasis spent on meals and academic lessons. Knowledge on how parents view their children's development and spend time (whether it is formal research or anecdotal) offers educators insight to provide continuity of care and respect between the home environment and the classroom and, in the process, create a greater understanding of the whole child (Harkness, Zylicz, Super, Welles-Nyström, Bermúdez, & Bonichini, 2011).

From the literature, key themes emerge. The parent and family's involvement in the child's life shapes the child's cultural development. The views of the parents play a part on how time is spent and what the roles of the parents are. These cultural processes may vary in meaning or value. When looking at early childhood education, there needs more depth to cultural diversity

training and courses in order for educators to be able to connect these processes to the children and families and move beyond a superficial understanding of cultural inclusion.

Considerations for Practice

Building from the base of current research and informed by the socio-cultural historical perspective, strategies exist that enable educators to extend beyond the superficial inclusion of cultural diversity. When discussing a topic such as cultural diversity, often the big differences (race, class, population, etc.) are recognized and addressed. Taking the socio-cultural historical perspective provides a lens for looking at the subtler but meaningful things that have a lasting impact on children and families. In early childhood, development is an integrated process, thus the need for a whole child teaching approach. When supporting a child's culture without bias or stereotypes, a teacher supports the sense of self and emotional development (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). When recognizing similarities and differences and understanding how the world works, the children experience a deeper social relationship with those around them. Being exposed to many meaningful experiences and engaging in a variety of play types and conversations stimulates problem solving and critical thinking skills (Derman-Sparks, & Edwards, 2010). Both Vygotsky (1978) and Rogoff (2003) recognized developmental changes occur that are biological, social, cognitive, and cultural. Therefore, the approach to working with children must take all domains into account. Each contributes to the foundation of development, how the child sees the world and his place in it.

National professional organizations in the US provide guidance for cultural diversity practices. The National Association for the Education of Young Children outlined three core

considerations for developmentally appropriate practices: knowing normative or typical developmental processes of child development (evidence-based), knowing what is individually appropriate, and knowing what is culturally appropriate (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Additionally, the National Education Association (NEA: n. d.) outlines five skill areas of cultural competence: valuing diversity; being culturally self-aware; understanding dynamics of difference; knowledge of students' culture; institutionalizing cultural knowledge and adapting to diversity. NAEYC's position statement of cultural and linguistic diversity (1995) emphasizes attention to social and cultural contexts of children's lives, in addition to a child's individual characteristics. The Division for Early Childhood (DEC: 2010) position statement states "For optimal development and learning of all children, individuals who work with children must respect, value, and support the culture, values, beliefs, and languages of each home and promote the meaningful, relevant, and active participation of all families" (para 1).

Creating an equal playing field for all children involves minimizing cultural discontinuity between home and school (Derman-Sparks et al., 2014). Curriculum that emerges from children's interests and questions, as well as skill-based curricula provides a base for incorporating meaningful, culturally relevant ideas and play into the classroom. Tourist curriculum (thematic explorations of other cultures) is advised against, since it sets the tone of a dominant culture and curricula often revert to normal afterwards (Derman-Sparks & Edwards, 2010). After examining parent-teacher relationships in early childhood programs throughout the twentieth century, Powell and Diamond (1995) support the need for partnerships between educators and families in order navigate the many roles, beliefs, and desires that individual

families have. As professionals, educators have the theory and background knowledge in child development while parents and families are the experts the individual needs and strengths of their own children, making parents often have the role of both a learner and a decision maker (Powell & Diamond, 1995).

As illustrated by Rogoff's framework, incorporating cultural diversity into the classroom becomes a multi-faceted participatory process between all members of the community, and in this case, the children, teachers, parents, families, and other staff members who work within the environment. The following are observations of integration of cultural diversity in small but powerful ways within the context of routines (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Reflections with the Socio-Cultural Historical Perspective

Observations (in a Midwest early education program)	**Reflections with the Socio-Cultural Historical Perspective**
A mother updates her one-year old child's list of approved foods. In a conversation with a teacher, the mother approves all foods, besides meat products, that the school serves. While personally she was willing to have her child eat meat at this age, as part of her family and culture, meat was not to be consumed into a trip back to the grandparent's home in another country and the traditional ceremonies preformed. The mother felt she wanted to respect her child's grandparent's wishes and waited to serve meat until the trip.	The mother and teacher's conversation provided clarity on what the child could eat at school, as well as why. Knowing why, the teachers could acknowledge to the children the differences at the lunch table. The dynamic of the family shows the historical component in the sense that the influence of previous cultural practices and other generational wishes are still impacting the child's day to day life.

A primary caregiver for a one-year old girl works closely with her mother, bridging the cultural gap in potty training of the home culture and the typical time that children at the center become interested in the potty (18 months-2 years). The caregiver helps the child sit on the potty at each diaper change, as well as using the small potty chair instead of the child size toilet.	The child experiences a difference in expectations of toilet training from home to school, which creates frustration for the child. It may look developmentally inappropriate for the child to be sitting on the potty at school.
At group time, most of the children are up on their feet dancing to a favorite song with the teacher. One child says, "I don't like it!" The teacher responds, "That's okay, you don't have to like it or dance, that's your choice." The child watches the group dance. When a new song comes on, she gets up and joins in.	The teacher acknowledges the difference in the way the child wants to participate as well as expresses that the child does not have to like something but leaves it at that, allowing the child to rejoin when desired.
A teacher encourages a child with a developmental delay to pull herself up on the railing, allowing the child do it on her own, even as she gets frustrated. The teacher acknowledges that the feelings of frustration to the child.	On the outside, it may look like the teacher is being unsupportive, when in reality, she believes that the child is competent and has a deep need, both physical and emotional, to do it on her own.
A teacher sits with an undergraduate student volunteer with several children in the block area, who are building several different structures. One child creates a pirate ship and invites peers to come aboard, while another child is off to the discovery center to see the wooly mammoth. The teacher provides background to the volunteer, explaining that the child building a pirate ship has an older brother who loves pirates and watches a TV show about them, while the	The student volunteer may lack the knowledge to make relevant, meaningful connections with the children. Also, the pirate play may be discouraged based on a lack of understanding of the teachers and what the children's play is intending.

other child recently took a trip with his family to the science museum.	

The examples illustrate observations of cultural development and diversity within the classroom between the child, teacher, and family in the context of routines. In all of the examples, the children are working on mastering a developmental task, such as toilet training, pulling up to stand, etc. If teachers understand that all human development occurs within a context (developmental contextualism) then analyzing a child's behavior through the socio-cultural lens allows greater ecological validity in its interpretation. Separating development from the cultural context in which it occurs is reductionist and risks misinterpretation of that behavior. (Rogoff, 2003). Geneva Gay, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching,* argues that culturally responsive teaching revolves around multicultural teaching strategies as much as adding content to the curriculum (Gay, 2002). Weisner (2002) emphasized routines and everyday experiences in research by developing the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI) to study the developmental pathways of children. These routines and activities embody culture by including values & goals, resources, relationships and emotions, tasks to accomplish, and societal norms (Wiesner, 2002). As a conversational based interview, the EFI mirrors the early intervention framework developed by McWilliam: *The Routines Based Interview*, used to obtain family goals and objectives for children with special needs while placing a heavy focus on the family and cultural community (2010). It becomes essential to have the family explicitly state their goals and expectations for the child. This way, the educator can recognize the family's priorities and abilities to facilitate their child's development in an effective, respectful approach.

One struggle for early childhood educators has been how to incorporate cultural diversity into planned experiences without it seeming external or forced. Cultural diversity produces inter-individual differences, whereas cultural development is an intra-individual process. Cultural processes, i.e., ways to organize thinking, occur all the time in the classroom, reflective of the decisions and behaviors of the individuals in the room. An intentional teacher not only respects and recognizes cultural differences among the families but also reflects on his/her own culture and the impact of what he/she brings to the classroom community. The students who traveled to Hungary reported an awareness of not only the culture experienced while there, but an even greater awareness of their own culture and the implications of that understanding to their practices in early childhood education.

The interactions in the classroom are the foundation for cultural diversity planning. Rogoff (2003) shares the concept of mutual involvement, where the participants engage in a shared endeavor. From this mutual involvement, the participants mold together common understandings to create new common perspectives. In order to bridge different perspectives in a shared endeavor, children and companions may use words and gestures as cultural tools to communicate. Mutual structuring transpires through the choices of activities that are accessible for children to observe and participate in, direct interactions of narratives, conversations, routines, and play. For example, in Hungary, several university students interacted with the Hungarian children in the classroom during playtime. Without language as a tool, they were able to connect using the pretend food. The university students held up a food to “purchase” and the Hungarian children would then name the food in Hungarian, providing the students with an

impromptu language lesson. This collaboration between the Hungarian children and American students achieved each group's goals: the children's goal of interacting with the visitors and the student's goal of observing the children's development through play.

Group or circle time, transition songs, clean-up time, free playtime, and small group experiences are all examples of cultural processes reflective of the way Western teachers conceptualize time and worthy activities. These routine experiences happen every day in the classroom setting, engaging the children in all areas of development (social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive). Within these everyday experiences, children learn through observation as well as participation of daily activities. Rather than introducing a cultural diversity piece into an experience, educators can observe what cultural knowledge and skills the children bring to the experience. Children (and adults) do this in a variety of ways: how they respond to conversation, what they expect from the other person, the way they interact with materials (dive right in, more cautious), actively participate or intently watch.

Cultural tools vary from place to place as does the value placed on them by the users; these become some of the most integral pieces of cultural diversity (Rogoff, 2003). Technology, such as pictures on an iPad, can be used to share experiences from home to school, as well as the acquisition of new knowledge. Open-ended materials in the classroom provide a blank canvas for the children to showcase their most important cultural tools. A dominant cultural tool observed in the Hungarian classroom was vocal music, which provided opportunity for holistic learning as well as cultural and historical transfer. A student noted the developmental progression of the children playing with vehicles and making the corresponding sounds, which were different in

Hungarian yet, reminiscent of American children. The value and use of these cultural tools change based by the focus of the curriculum of various aged classrooms: the emphasis the preschool classroom has on literacy and problem-solving, the focus of independence and autonomy in a toddler classroom, and the relationship centered infant room. This ties in the cultural developmental piece into the normative child development.

Cultural diversity and development is as broad a topic as the people it tries to define. By framing thinking with a socio-cultural historical perspective, educators gain understanding of how culture develops throughout the lifespan. Using a holistic, interactionist approach, such as the one Vygotsky suggests, allows for individuals to contribute and interact with one another in meaningful ways. Educators taking this approach move beyond valuing culture as something different or dominant, and towards an immersion of cultures that works for each party involved. The research indicates an understanding of how important cultural awareness is as well as the importance of valuing different perspectives. However, there remains a gap in the implementation of culturally appropriate, responsive practices. Lessons from Hungary that stand out are: becoming culturally self-aware and observing the interactions as the foundations for cultural understanding and appropriate practice. Practice should include intentional thought into the social, biological, and cognitive developmental changes occurring. Since these changes are interrelated, it is necessary for the strategies for culturally responsive teaching, establishing relationships and participation, to be interrelated as well. The socio-cultural historical perspective lays a foundation for understanding culture as participation and the context in which all development occurs. By applying this framework to early childhood curriculum, educators are

able to work on becoming culturally responsive and competent in working with children and families.

Chapter 3 - Implications for Practice

Implications for Practicing Educators & Administrators

Cultural development is an integrated component of the child's development. The implications are direct for educators. Culture, as does all development, stems from everyday interactions. Expectations placed upon individuals provide the basis for creating an environment that intentionally respects and welcomes diversity seamlessly within the curricula. The process of cultural development is symbiotic and cannot be teased apart from overall development; therefore, the educator must be able to support and facilitate growth within the environment. Materials and content are tools to support this, as Rogoff (2003) defines them, yet the basis of the socio-cultural historical perspective places the participation of the people involved in a given culture as the most important factors of change.

For administrators, educating and mentoring others about the relationship between culture and child development, as well as supporting families from diverse backgrounds are important aspects of early education programs. Providing educators with opportunities for reflection helps individuals gain self-awareness about their own culture as well as the culture of the community of the classroom and the communities from which the children in their care are members. Communication with families about expectations, values, and beliefs is essential in understanding and appreciating where individual members of a culture fall on the cultural continuum and what they are looking for in terms of education and care. Continuity between home and school begins with the home and communication among the families, teachers, and administrators, who all play a role in that particular community.

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

Another implication revolves around helping future educators become aware of their own culture. Many avenues can be accessed for this; examples include workshops, lecture classes, and volunteer experiences. Another experience to expand on one's self-awareness may be to study abroad, especially if the opportunity to study children and families in other settings exists. University initiatives provide examples of this in promoting students to pursue various independent opportunities, as well as providing faculty-led trips, such as the Hungary trip, to study early childhood special education in Budapest under the guidance of a local professional educator. Requiring pre-service teachers to fulfill a set number of professional development and volunteer hours, with part of that specified to meet diversity standards provides domestic experiences with diverse populations. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE: 2008) standards rate valuing diversity and differentiating instruction based on children's needs as acceptable, where integrating content and contextualizing from children's own experiences is the target. Within the early childhood program, students must develop specific experience lesson plans that detail how the experience supports cultural diversity. These examples show there is a great amount of thought and importance placed on cultural diversity within teacher education programs and the university setting. However, it must be stressed again that diversity is more than the differences and practices we can see; it is also the expectations and participation of the individual and his community.

Implications for Educational and Developmental Research

A review of the academic literature supports the idea that cultural diversity and culturally appropriate strategies are important to child development (Harkness et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2003; Guavain, Beebe, & Zhao, 2011; Mann et al., 2007; Murray, 2012).

A gap in the research exists in examining the implementation of culturally appropriate practices and the effectiveness of such measures. Going forward, research continuing to detail culturally responsive teaching helps provide validation and clarification for those strategies. More research on the relationship between child development, culture, and expectations is also needed, in a wider variety of settings to provide a more generalized understanding of cultural development processes.

Implications for Policy Makers

National organizations offer guidelines for educators regarding cultural diversity in early childhood education. These guidelines recognize the importance for cultural diversity in the field. However, these guidelines are often not mandatory and difficult to assess. Policies for early childhood education practices need to reflect the guidelines. All professionals who work children should have access to diversity training. Policies that support cultural diversity and educators help professionals achieve the goal of intercultural competence, which as the socio-cultural historical perspective details involves the framing of cultural development as a reciprocal, participatory process between individuals (including children) and communities.

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