Generalist Social Work Practice with Families

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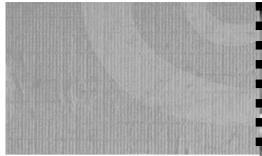Visit **www.ablongman.com/replocator** to contact your local Allyn & Bacon/Longman representative.

SAMPLE CHAPTER 3
Diversity Competent Practice with Families

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CHAPTER

3

Diversity Competent Practice with Families

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

1. Understand diversity competence and the process of becoming diversity competent.
2. Understand gender competent practice with families.
3. Understand diversity competent practice with gay and lesbian families.
4. Understand the development and use of a schema for studying families from diverse ethnic groups.
5. Understand diversity competent practice with African American families.
6. Understand diversity competent practice with Hispanic/Latino families.
7. Understand diversity competent practice with Native American families.

Diversity competence is an important aspect of social work practice. The great majority of clients are members of populations whose diversity places them at risk of experiencing prejudice, discrimination, and oppression. At one time, diversity was seen as a barrier to be overcome. More recently, theories evolved that called for ethnic sensitive practice in which the worker respected and valued the ethnicity and culture of the client. However, being sensitive does not necessarily mean that the worker makes fundamental changes to the manner in which services are delivered. Thus, the next step in this evolution has been to develop **cultural competence** that calls for the worker to be able to practice in ways that are consistent with expectations in the client's culture. In the previous two editions of our text, *Social Work Practice: A Generalist Approach,* we extended this a step further by considering diversity competent practice skills. This extends the concept of cultural competence to all forms of diversity. The Council on Social Work Education identifies diversity as differences related to age, class, gender, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, marital

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status, family structure, race, national origin, religion, sex, and sexual orientation. The National Association of Social Work (NASW) includes most of these populations in its standards for cultural competence. However, we believe that diversity competent practice is a more descriptive term. The lists of populations for both organizations extend well beyond culture and recognize that people can be different from each other in many ways, and in multiple ways, as well.

The diversity competent social worker explores ways to serve diverse clients in a manner that is expected within their diverse group. For instance, a white worker might need to be able to use an Afrocentric approach in working with some of her African American clients or a feminist approach in working with some of her female clients. The professional worker realizes that it is her responsibility to adapt her skills to meet the needs of her client. She meets that responsibility by engaging in lifelong learning activities throughout her career. She reads materials and attends relevant training programs. She seeks to learn from knowledgeable colleagues and members of the community. She realizes the value of learning from her clients about how they would like to be served and incorporates this into her repertoire of skills. She uses diversity-appropriate skills in engagement and relationship building, assessment, planning, action, and evaluation and termination with every client she serves. She realizes that diversity competence is a lifelong process that is never really achieved, but she seeks to add to her competence with every client she serves.

The importance of diversity competence can be seen in the demographic changes occurring in the United States. During the first half of the twenty-first century, sweeping demographic changes will alter the face of the United States. Population projections indicate that the number of people who are older will increase in the United States and in other industrialized countries. The United States will also experience dramatic changes in its ethnic and racial composition. It appears that sometime in the middle of this century, people of color will surpass whites in population, and we will become a nation of minority groups. By that time, more than half of our high school graduates will be children of color, as will half of our working-age adults. Martha Ozawa studied these trends and raised concerns about the high rate of poverty among children, especially African American and Hispanic children. She pointed out that federal spending has been eleven times greater for people who are elderly than for children. She concluded that child poverty, especially among children of color, will lead to a decline in our economic and social well-being unless we dramatically increase our investment in children.[1]

Nowhere is diversity competent practice more important than when the social worker works with families. Families are primary sources of culture and diversity. They are the purveyors of culture and the incubators of diversity. For most people they are both refuges from prejudice, discrimination, and oppression and support systems in the battle against these ills. Culture and diversity are always on the table when the social worker works with families.

■   DIVERSITY COMPETENT PRACTICE   ■

In order for the social worker to develop diversity competence, she must take a comprehensive approach to understanding the effects of diversity on herself, her clients, the environment, and the interactions among these. Table 3.1 presents an outline for developing a diversity competent approach to practice. There are two important aspects to this work. The

Table 3.1   Outline for Developing Diversity Competence

I. Understanding self
   A. Understand the social worker's own attitudes and beliefs about diverse groups
   B. Understand the influence of attitudes and beliefs of the worker's family on the social worker's own attitudes and beliefs about diverse groups
   C. Understand the influence of attitudes and beliefs of the worker's ecosystem on the social worker's own attitudes and beliefs about diverse groups
   D. Understand the influence of societal attitudes and beliefs on the social worker's own attitudes and beliefs about diverse groups

II. Understanding societal influences
   A. Understand the history of each diverse group in the United States
   B. Understand historical and current stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression
   C. Understand formal and informal mechanisms in U.S. society that cause or reinforce discrimination or oppression (past and present)
   D. Understand privileges and advantages that dominant groups have over the population (male privilege, white privilege, heterosexual privilege, wealth or class privilege, etc.)

III. Understanding a diverse group
   A. Understand the particular culture and circumstances that make each group diverse
   B. Understand the values, beliefs, and customs of each diverse group
   C. Understand strengths of diverse groups and resources available in their ecosystems
   D. Understand the social, psychological, economic, and political effects of historical and current stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression on diverse groups

IV. Developing diversity competent practice skills
   A. Develop knowledge regarding relationship building, assessment, planning, action, evaluation and termination that are necessary to provide services in a manner that is expected within each diverse group
   B. Develop a personal and professional value system that values diversity
   C. Develop skills in providing direct and indirect services in a manner that is expected within each diverse group

first is the need for the social worker to develop her ability to acquire and use knowledge, values, and skills in a way that makes diversity competent practice possible. This requires developing a view of the world and an attitude toward professional social work practice that is inclusive rather than exclusive, that seeks to include everyone rather than excluding anyone, that genuinely values differences, and variation, that taps one's natural curiosity about difference, and that truly values every human being. This means developing a system of thinking, feeling, and acting that opens the door to actively seeking new knowledge, to developing values that are consistent with this approach, and to trying new skills that may be uncomfortable for awhile. It means becoming a true professional by giving up the safety of what we know and risking to reach out and learn about what we do not know. This task also involves learning how to acquire knowledge in a variety of ways. It involves learning about values that are different from our own and respecting those values. It involves learning how to use new skills while coping with discomfort that may be associated with doing something different.

The second aspect is to actually acquire and use appropriate knowledge, values, and skills in practice with diverse groups. It means learning how to learn about others. It includes learning where to look, who to ask, what it means, and how to use new knowledge about others. It requires the social worker to learn about his own values and those of others without preconceived notions or judgments that prevent including the client's value system in the work to be done. It means becoming adept at altering one's approach or even abandoning it in favor of one with which the client is comfortable.

To become diversity competent, the worker must be able to reflect on his knowledge about himself and knowledge about each diverse group. He must be willing to critically examine his knowledge and be open to considering distortions that might be present as a result of prejudices and stereotypes. He must be able to acquire and use new knowledge about diversity from his client and from professional sources, such as articles, books, professional training, colleagues, and other sources.

In diversity competent practice, the worker needs to become more familiar with the different ways of knowing that each diverse group may use in acquiring knowledge. In white, male, Eurocentric society, great value is placed on knowledge that is gained by the scientific method. Other groups value knowledge that is more experiential and passed on from earlier generations. Women may value knowledge that is acquired through relationships.

In diversity competent practice, the worker needs to be aware of her own values and the influence these have on her attitudes toward various diverse groups. She needs to be able to change those values that are based on or lead to prejudices and stereotypes so that she is free to accept every client as a valuable human being. This brings her value system in line with the cardinal value of social work, which holds that all human beings have inherent value and worth. She needs to be able to reconcile conflicts between her personal values and those of her profession. The diversity competent worker actively explores her client's values with an open mind. She is aware of how the larger society values or devalues certain groups. For instance, the dominant culture values males over females, heterosexuals over homosexuals, Caucasians over people of color, youth over age, Christianity over other religions, and so on. The diversity competent worker understands how this affects diverse clients and her work with them. She seeks to ameliorate these affects and to reduce the barriers that result. She is constantly aware of the importance of values in her work. She seeks to develop an awareness of her own values in every situation she encounters. She explores her client's values and incorporates appropriate values into the work. She is aware of value conflicts that may arise between her values, her client's values, the values of the social work profession, and those of the larger society. She actively searches for mutually acceptable ways to resolve these conflicts and engages in lifelong learning to improve her appropriate use of values in diversity competent practice.

The diversity competent social worker tunes in on the attitudes and stereotypes toward diverse groups and the affect that these have on members of each population. He is also aware of the values that each group holds and is alert to value conflicts and their affect on relationships. The worker identifies ways of helping that each group uses and seeks to improve his skills so that he can serve members of each group in a manner with which they are comfortable.

In diversity competent practice, the worker needs to be knowledgeable about the values and beliefs of the population, its experience with the dominant society, the manner in which help is given and received, and good practices that need to be used with each group.

In understanding the environment, it is essential that the worker develop an understanding of responses to diversity from people and systems in the environment. The dual perspective proposed by Dolores Norton is especially relevant. Her discussion of the nurturing environment included family and the immediate community environment.[2] The latter refers to the neighborhood in which the person lives. Norton's sustaining environment consists of the organization of goods and services, political power, economic resources, educational system, and larger societal systems.

In understanding the ecosystem, the worker who is striving to become diversity competent also considers the attitudes toward diversity in his community and agency. He looks at each of the groups identified from his understanding of diversity. He looks for signs that indicate that diversity is valued by the community. He looks at patterns of race and ethnicity in the community. He considers to what extent these patterns represent current or past discrimination toward various groups. He observes how people of color, women, children, and people who are older or disabled are valued and respected. He evaluates community attitudes toward gays and lesbians. Some of these indicators are apparent in the institutions and services available to various groups. Some cannot be seen but can be heard in the stories of people who live in the community. As he becomes more diversity competent, the worker learns to look at the environment from a diversity perspective and to be an active listener.

Of special concern to social workers are diversity factors that exist in the community. The racial and ethnic makeup of the community are important to know. With regard to race and ethnicity, the worker should have knowledge about the degree to which various groups are integrated or segregated. She should note the attitudes of various groups toward each other. Is there respect or valuing of differences? Are there coalitions that have been formed? Are there adversarial relationships? How tolerant or intolerant are these groups toward each other? What groups hold power? Who has little or no power, and how does this reflect the general population? Similar questions should also be asked with respect to gender, age, and sexual orientation.

Becoming diversity competent may seem like an insurmountable challenge, especially for a student or a new social worker. But this work is not done over a semester or over a year. It is done over a lifetime. In fact, it is never really finished. However, the social worker can become more diversity competent if she is open to learning from each and every client she meets and if she accepts the responsibility to engage in the lifelong learning that is expected of a professional. In this chapter and those that follow, we address some of the knowledge, values, and skills that are needed for diversity competent practice, keeping in mind that no single text can do it all. What we seek to do instead is to learn about the process of becoming more diversity competent so that the student or practitioner has the knowledge, values, and skills to begin this endeavor as she experiences diversity in field placement and beginning professional practice. We begin this process in this chapter by considering diversity competent practice with various types of families. An outline is presented for studying families from diverse ethnic groups in Table 3.2 (see page 69).

Becoming Diversity Competent

Often students have difficulty in identifying their own diversity. Marty Dewees cited an unpublished paper by W. Nichols that found that "many students from White, dominant, middle-class status, particularly in geographical areas with limited racial diversity, regard themselves as having *no* culture or ethnicity."[3] This observation is consistent with the

authors' experiences in teaching BSW students. Some of this lack of cultural identity may be attributed to the mixing of cultures and ethnic groups in U.S. society. However, the inability to identify one's own culture or ethnicity does not mean that one does not have any cultural or ethnic influences. What it means is that one is not aware of these influences. In addition, the authors have consistently observed that many female students have difficulty in recognizing discrimination they have experienced as women. Often, this begins to slowly change when there are discussions about male privilege and who did what around the house when they were growing up or in their current living arrangements. Unfortunately, this type of discrimination is only the tip of the iceberg.

The danger here is that the worker will not recognize or be open to the affects of diversity on the helping relationship and will not be prepared to deal with issues his client experiences that arise out of diversity. To become competent as a social worker, the student must become "diversity competent," or competent in working with diverse clients, especially those who are different from oneself. Competence in working with diversity begins with an awareness of one's own diversity and the affect that diversity has in one's personal life. James W. Leigh suggested that knowing one's own cultural influences is critical to developing cultural competence. He points out that we all carry unconscious cultural influences that either are directly prejudicial toward certain other cultures or lead us in that direction because of cultural differences.[4] Barbara Okum, Jane Fried, and Marcia Okum have discussed the need to develop self-awareness first before being able to develop an awareness of others.[5] Doman Lum cited a number of references that reinforce the need for self-awareness.[6] Jerry V. Diller stated, "It is impossible to appreciate the impact of culture on the lives of others, particularly clients, if one is out of touch with his or her own cultural background."[7] Yuhwa Lu, Doman Lum, and Sheying Chen have developed a conceptual framework for cultural competency that begins with "awareness of cultural and ethnic experiences which are part of the personal and professional socialization of the worker."[8] They included the need to evaluate one's own experiences and reactions to "racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice/discrimination."[9] Two out of the four steps that Marty Dewees proposed for cultural competence with families are related to the need for students to identify their own cultural influences.[10]

Thus, the preponderance of work that is being done on developing models for cultural competence in social work practice points out the need for the student or worker to develop cultural awareness of herself. We propose to extend this requirement beyond culture to all forms of diversity in society. To become diversity competent, the student or worker must begin with an examination of her own diversity, along with an examination of how her experiences have shaped her attitudes toward her own diversity and the diversity of others. Cultural influences play a major role in both of these endeavors. It is not enough to be "color-blind" or "culture blind" or "diversity blind." Assertions of tolerance will not ensure the development of trust in clients who are different from oneself. In fact, it is more likely to lead to mistrust because clients get the idea that diversity does not matter when indeed they know that it does. Professing tolerance for diversity can easily come across as insensitivity toward diversity. Diversity competence calls for an active listening approach to diversity that seeks to know more. It uses diversity to create a dialogue with the client that will lead to a better understanding of the client and his environment.

All of the authors in the sources previously cited point to the need for the student or worker to obtain knowledge about the culture to which the client belongs and skills in working within the client's cultural system. Gargi Sodowsky, Richard Taffe, Terry Gutkin, and

Steven Wise have added another dimension to the skills related to cultural competence, namely, the multicultural counseling relationship.[11] Again, the requirement to develop knowledge and skills must be extended beyond culture to all forms of diversity in society.

Lu, Lum, and Chen suggested that the worker "engage in inductive learning that promotes investigation and inquiry."[12] Doman Lum also included this idea in his work on culturally competent practice.[13] The inductive approach is different from **deductive learning** that uses the scientific method. The deductive process involves moving from theory to hypothesis to testing the hypothesis to determine whether the theory is supported. The inductive process involves moving from making observations of phenomena to searching for patterns that may lead to theory development. Applying the inductive learning approach to becoming competent in working with diversity means adopting an open-minded inquisitive approach, laying aside preconceived notions, and listening to the experiences of the client. Self-knowledge must come first so that the worker can move away from experiencing the client's story out of her own experience and instead hear the client's story out of his experience.

As a professional, the social worker has a responsibility to engage in a process of lifelong learning. An important area of lifelong learning is learning about diversity. The student begins this process through coursework, research, assignments, reading, class discussions, and examining himself as a person and as a developing professional. He learns to use inductive learning and natural inquiry in his approach to diversity. In field placement, the student is frequently put in a position of working with people who are diverse, often for the first time. Many of these people have experienced considerable prejudice and discrimination related to their diversity. The student learns how to work with diverse clients by applying what he has learned from his academic experiences along with his new field experiences. He learns from his field instructor and from others with expertise who may be available in his agency, community, or university. Most important, he learns to learn from his clients. They are the experts on their own experiences with diversity. As a professional social worker, he learns to continue this learning, and he seeks out additional training through in-service training, conferences, and other continuing education activities.

Becoming "diversity competent" means developing self-knowledge—developing knowledge about one's own diversity. Learning about diversity continues as the student or worker takes an active, inductive approach to learning about diversity in others. This learning lasts for a lifetime as the professional social worker engages in a lifelong process of self-examination, seeks out knowledge about diversity, and develops skills in working with people who are different from her.

The number of families that are biracial or multiracial have increased substantially during the past several decades and will continue to increase as the United States becomes a more multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial society. Some of these families are produced by biracial couples. Others are a product of couples who adopt children of another race. In some cases, these are children from foreign adoption. Despite becoming more common, biracial and multiracial families face the same kinds of prejudice and discrimination as families and children of color. In addition, some of these families find that they are not accepted by either culture or racial group. The children may experience these same attitudes. Biracial parents need to bolster their child's self-image and self-esteem in order to withstand these negative attitudes. Social workers need to support these families in fighting and coping with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions. Social workers must stand up and fight prejudice, discrimination, and oppression in all its forms.

Families with same-sex partners are a special form of family that has gained greater recognition as gays and lesbians have advocated for legal status as couples. Children in these families may be a product of prior heterosexual relationships, adoption, surrogate mothers, or donor insemination. In heterosexual families, roles are often assigned by gender and culture. For same-sex couples, there is a need to establish a communication system that can be used to discuss the roles that each partner will take or how these roles will be shared. Egalitarian heterosexual couples have this same need. In many cases, discussing each day who will do what tasks—such as cooking, childcare, errands, housework, and the like—is necessary. Same-sex couples and their children often face a great deal of prejudice and discrimination. Children in same-sex families need assistance from their parents in establishing a healthy identity that can withstand these negative social attitudes, along with positive descriptions of their family and family members. For example, in a lesbian family, the child might be encouraged to see himself as having two mothers. It is important that he see this as a strength and that he feel he is just as worthwhile as a child of a heterosexual couple. Families are also headed by single parents who are gay or lesbian. In some respects, these parents become somewhat invisible in terms of their sexual orientation because it is more difficult to tell someone is gay or lesbian if he or she is single. Families may have members who are bisexual or transgendered. People who are bisexual are attracted to both males and females. People who are transgendered feel that they are actually the opposite sex from the one that they are biologically. They frequently describe themselves as being a man trapped in a woman's body or a woman trapped in a man's body. These individuals are people who may seek out a sex change in order to resolve this dilemma. Social workers need to provide support for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered families to counteract and cope with the consequences of negative attitudes and actions from society. Social workers must be advocates and fight prejudice, discrimination, and oppression in all its forms, regardless of personal values and beliefs.

When considering the ethnic family there are two levels of understanding that are needed by the worker: first is the more general level, which provides overall knowledge, second is the specific level, which provides understanding of a specific family. Table 3.2 presents an outline for studying families from diverse ethnic groups. We use this outline to examine important factors in working with each ethnic family. However, first we consider the role of gender in families and examine how the generalist social worker develops and implements a gender competent approach to practice.

■   GENDER COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH FAMILIES   ■

Gender is an especially important consideration in working with families. Expectations for males and females are interwoven into the fabric of nearly every society. These expectations are reinforced by various social institutions. Perhaps the strongest messages about these expectations come from within the family.

During the twentieth century, women in the United States were able to gain the right to vote nationally, have access to higher education, obtain many jobs from which they were formerly excluded, own property, and have other rights that had been denied. However, full equality has still eluded women. Gender-based roles carry the expectation that women will

do most of the domestic chores around the home including childcare and elder care. Women have not gained access to real power in the economic and political arenas. There are only a very few women who head major corporations or serve on their boards, and there has never been a female president or vice president of the United States. Women are more likely than men to be poor and to be victims of rape and domestic violence.

The plight of women internationally is not much better and in most regards is much worse than in the United States The exception is western Europe where in most countries women not only enjoy the same or better social and economic well-being but also have achieved real political power that is much greater than that of U.S. women. Globally, women own a very small percentage of the world's wealth. This demonstrates the extent to which women are oppressed.

In developing gender competent practice, it is important to understand feminist practice. A paradigm that is suggested by some social workers as applicable to many populations is the **feminist perspective.**[14] This paradigm is based on five principles: (1) the elimination of false dichotomies and artificial separations, (2) the reconceptualization of power, (3) the valuing of process equally with product, (4) the validity of renaming, and (5) the personal is political. In other words, this approach calls for a holistic view; a wide distribution of power; attention to how goals are implemented; the renaming of action so as to purge discriminatory language; and the recognition that personal problems are often the result of political injustice, requiring that the focus of intervention be on change in large systems. This paradigm seems useful in any situation in which discrimination is of major concern, such as in working with women or minority groups.

Feminist social workers stress the need for teaching clients how to empower themselves as well as how to work with systems that affect them. They also emphasize the importance of working with clients as equals in order to avoid replicating the "one-up" position common in other environmental interactions. Feminist workers attempt to link clients with others who face similar issues in order to build systems that can be used for networking, support, and education. The feminist perspective and method seem particularly relevant in addressing social injustice in that it acknowledges that many of the difficulties faced by populations at risk of discrimination are a result of their interactions with the environment or with the surrounding systems rather than within the clients themselves.

Feminist practice was developed by practitioners as an attempt to integrate feminist theory, commitments, and culture with conventional approaches to social work practice. It goes beyond a "nonsexist" or "women's issues" orientation. The underlying assumptions include the following: (1) The inherent purpose and goal of human existence is self-actualization, which is a collective endeavor involving the creation of material and ideological conditions that enable it; (2) systems and ideologies of domination/subordination, exploitation, and oppression are inimical to individual and collective self-actualization; (3) given the structural and ideological barriers to self-actualization, practice is explicitly political in intent; and (4) women have unique and relatively unknown histories, conditions, developmental patterns, and strengths that must be discovered and engaged by practitioners.[15]

Some aspects of practice theory for feminist practitioners have some similarity to the approach we use in our texts, including this one. For instance, assessment focuses on preferred and available patterns of strength in intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, physical, and spiritual domains. Special emphasis is given to basic, concrete needs, safety, and perceptions of personal power. An underlying principle informing practice is that healing,

health, and growth are the purpose of the social work endeavor. Feminist practice sees these as functions of validation, consciousness, and transformative action, which are supported and sustained through resources to meet basic human needs. Feminist practitioners seek the creation of validating environments and relationships that preserve and nurture uniqueness and wholeness. They use a range of conventional and nonconventional approaches. Feminists frequently use groups, which are seen as favorable for developing validation and raising consciousness. They encourage and facilitate individual and collective action and work for open, egalitarian, and collegial relationships with clients. Feminist practice can be used in all kinds of settings, with all populations. Particular attention is focused on women.

The oppression of women around the world presents many challenges for social workers in practicing gender competence with various cultural groups. There are numerous cultures that seek to perpetuate paternalism and have substantial power imbalances between men and women as major cultural constructs for gender roles and expectations. The challenge for gender competent social workers is to engage and work with members of these cultural groups without sacrificing the principles of good gender competence. The risk is that if the worker comes on too strong, the family may be alienated or feel that the worker's values and views are being imposed on the family members.

In diversity competent practice, the worker explores with the family actions that are consistent with the diversity of the family. She does not impose her own or society's view of what the family should do but seeks to find what fits with the family system. One of the difficulties in working with families from certain cultures is the strict boundaries between male and female role expectations. This generally results in the male being in the role of head of the household, called a patriarchal system. This system may be viewed as oppressive toward women. Most of these cultures define a "good husband" or a "good father" as a man who incorporates the needs and best interests of his wife and children into his decision making. He is obligated to see that the needs of his wife and family are met. This places tremendous pressure on him when faced with limited resources. Some men use their dominant position to meet their own needs or suppress the needs of other family members. Within their culture, this is a deviation from the "good husband and father" role. The worker can assist the husband to define this role within his culture and then work with him to obtain the resources that are necessary to carry this out. The worker might also help him to see that sharing his power is not necessarily a sign of weakness but may indeed be a sign of strength.

There are some substantial dilemmas for the gender competent social worker to resolve in her practice with families, especially those from patriarchal cultures. These are probably best expressed in terms of several questions: How does the worker respect the family's culture when some of the culture's values conflict with her personal and professional value system? How does the worker support power sharing and egalitarian relationships without imposing her views on the family? How does she maintain her personal and professional value system of valuing all human beings equally while working with a family whose culture does not reflect this value? How does she maintain her personal and professional value system of valuing self determination while working with a family whose culture does not reflect this value?

A feminist-informed approach appears to hold some promise for developing successful gender competent practice. Shelley A. Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, and David MacPhee from the Human Development and Family Studies Department at Colorado State

University have developed the Power Equity Guide to assist in assessing attention to gender in family therapy. They see a feminist-informed approach to working with families as mainly a philosophical and political perspective rather than a model or set of techniques.[16] The Guide can be used by family workers at all levels of development.

Using the basic philosophy behind feminist-informed practice, the gender competent practitioner would focus on both process and content that reflected gender equity. Process refers to the way in which he works with families. Content is what is actually said and done in his work. Because many cultures perceive differences in males and females, especially with respect to specific and overall competence, there are going to be differences in how male and female social workers are perceived. This also influences how male and female social workers are able to work with families. This includes both the content and process of working with families. Because of gender differences within the family system, male and female social workers may use techniques that are different from each other but have the same effect, and they may use the same techniques but have different effects. For example, a female worker who supports gender equity may be perceived differently by the husband than a male worker may be perceived. The husband may interpret the female worker as being culturally insensitive or threatening to his culturally determined status as head of the family. The husband might interpret the same approach by a male worker in the same way as he interpreted the female worker's approach or he might view it as acceptable because it is coming from another male.

Cross-cultural work with families is much more complicated when the work is also cross-gender. If the worker is female and the family system is patriarchal, it can be very difficult for the worker to gain credibility. Naturalistic inquiry can be especially helpful in these cases. Asking questions and giving the role of cultural guide to the family allows the process to unfold. The family will be more comfortable with a discussion of its cultural background if there is a focus on strengths. Actively incorporating cultural customs and values into the plan is vital. This lays the groundwork for action that is culturally appropriate. It is important for the family to take pride in its cultural heritage and to use that heritage as a source of strength.

The worker needs to be constantly aware of gender differences while also seeking ways to rebalance those differences toward greater gender equity. This is the essence of gender competent practice. It begins with working with couples to develop more egalitarian relationships. This includes encouraging equality in communication, problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution. Under no circumstances, regardless of the cultural background of the family, should the worker show any tolerance for violence or the threat of violence.

An important point to be made here is the need for the worker to allow adult female members of the family to decide how to proceed with encouraging gender equity. This is not a decision for the worker to make independently. It is her client's choice. Feminist practitioners may see this as "selling out," but if the worker is to respect her client's right to self determination, she is compelled to respect her client's right to make a decision with which the worker disagrees. This does not mean that the worker cannot model gender equity in her work with the family. However, in working with families on making decisions about family structure and functioning, the worker needs to respect their right to decide how they wish to do this.

It is also important to consider the involvement of male family members in this decision-making process, especially those in positions of power in the family. Because they are in the position of exerting power over female members and female members are thereby placed in a powerless or less powerful position, the worker should give preference to the

choice of the female members. This generally means that the worker uses influence, persuasion, and encouragement to move the family toward greater gender equity if that is what the female members choose.

In promoting gender equity, the worker should encourage sharing responsibility for parenting and household tasks. The worker can point out how men are often deprived of the pleasures of child-rearing and forming close relationships with their children. It is also important for parents to prepare their children for life in a free and democratic society that values independence. This means that children of both sexes need to learn how to take care of themselves by learning and doing all forms of household chores. The worker also encourages parents to support children of both sexes in pursuing education and careers that are growth enhancing and take advantages of opportunities that may not have been available in the home country of their culture. Many immigrants come to the United States for greater economic opportunity. Convincing them to allow their female members to take advantage of those opportunities may not be as difficult as one might expect. Certainly, the greater the opportunities for more family members, the more likely the family will become more prosperous more quickly.

Probably, the area that is of greatest concern for ethnic groups, especially for first-generation immigrants, is retention of their cultures. However, it is almost inevitable that some cultural influences will be diluted as their children are exposed to the dominant culture. In fact, this is often an area of great turmoil and conflict between earlier and later generations. Parents need to be realistic about this and select those aspects of cultural heritage that have the highest value for them. These are usually customs and traditions such as holidays and religious or spiritual beliefs. In order to preserve these, parents will likely have to yield some latitude in other areas. This is where gender-based roles may be loosened. In essence, the worker helps the family become bicultural and seeks to do so in a rational way that preserves important aspects of both cultures.

Many culturally diverse families have experienced prejudice, discrimination, and oppression both in their countries of origin and here in the United States. Another approach to use in encouraging more egalitarian relationships is to discuss these experiences and point out the parallels to the treatment of females. Raising consciousness and awareness of these experiences allows the family to decide what aspects of their culture will serve them best in this country. This is an empowering approach. In many respects, empowering the family as a system can lead to freeing it from cultural constrictions. It can empower them to make choices about a bicultural style that is in the best interests of the family as a whole as well as each member.

Some techniques the gender competent social worker can use in his work with families include both verbal and nonverbal. Verbally, the worker encourages everyone to tell their own stories and gives equal credibility to them. He addresses the parents jointly regarding parenting and child-rearing and is careful to initiate and maintain eye contact with both. Workers who are not gender conscious will tend to look at the mother first when it comes to these issues. The worker moves cultural influences from the nonverbal to the verbal level, openly discussing cultural issues and concerns and raising the possibility of decision making and choice. As much as possible, he assists the family through mediation and negotiation in settling disagreements in an equitable manner that is free from power and control.

Most importantly, the worker is careful to model egalitarianism in his actions and relationships with families. He demonstrates the advantages of an egalitarian approach and points out the disadvantages of power imbalances and control. He discusses the larger

social context in which the family finds itself and looks for ways to empower the family and its members to overcome negative aspects of that social context.

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■ DIVERSITY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH ■ GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES

In some respects, the description of feminist and feminist-informed practice described in the previous section on gender competent practice also applies to working with gay and lesbian families. This is especially the case regarding the need for empowerment and the principle

that the personal is political. People who are gay or lesbian are probably the object of more hatred than any other groups in the United States, especially by conservative right-wing religious groups and by people who are homophobic. The most common reasons given for negative attitudes are based on religious beliefs.

Recent political battles have been fought over gay and lesbian marriage and gay and lesbian rights. Some states have moved toward recognizing gay and lesbian marriages or civil unions, whereas other states have passed constitutional amendments prohibiting them. This population is the only one that can be legally discriminated against under federal law. In fact, people can be fired for being gay or lesbian without any protection by the federal government. The only protections afforded people who are gay or lesbian are under state and local laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. Fortunately, overall prejudice, discrimination, and oppression toward this group have been reduced considerably during recent years. Unfortunately, those who are prejudiced toward people who are gay or lesbian have become more intense in their opposition. Younger generations seem much more tolerant of diversity in sexual orientation, and it would appear that recognition of gay and lesbian marriage and preservation of rights for people who are gay or lesbian is inevitable.

On a professional level, social workers are committed to valuing all human beings and treating everyone with dignity and respect. On a personal level some social workers have religious beliefs that view people who are gay or lesbian negatively. Some may feel conflicted about working with people who are gay or lesbian. However, regardless of the client, social workers should set aside their personal values and act on their professional value system. Generally speaking, when asked, most people say that they would change negative attitudes they have toward people who are gay or lesbian if it were proven that being gay or lesbian was biologically determined. Most studies point in this direction. It is important that social workers use the term *sexual orientation* rather than *sexual preference.* Sexual orientation places sexuality in the biological realm. Sexual preference refers to choice. The term "lifestyle" should also be avoided.

Working with gay and lesbian families involves using similar approaches to those social workers use with other families. The main differences lie in areas related to dealing with the social and political ramifications of their sexual orientation. Prejudice, discrimination, and oppression along with homophobia and heterosexism on the part of others result in social and political reactions that affect people who are gay or lesbian and their families. Socially, these negative reactions range from stares and negative comments to hate crimes that include assaults and murders. Politically, most states do not give legal recognition or status to gay and lesbian relationships. This goes beyond the issue of gay and lesbian marriage. It creates difficulties with insurance coverages, inheritance, adoption, medical consents, child custody, and so on. Rights that are taken for granted by heterosexuals are routinely denied to gay and lesbian couples. Thus, advocacy and empowerment are often needed to overcome some of these issues.

Social workers are often unaware of the extent to which heterosexuality is assumed in society at large and even within the practice of social work itself. Estimates of the percentage of people who are gay or lesbian run as high as 10 percent. This means that as many as one out of ten clients are likely to be gay or lesbian. Many of these clients will not reveal their sexual orientation if they do not know that it is safe to do so. Social workers need to become comfortable in working with clients who are gay and lesbian. They should also

communicate to their clients that it is safe to reveal this to them. Some subtle ways of doing this are to display materials related to gay and lesbian services or issues. The rainbow is a symbol for gays and lesbians. There are also stickers and other materials that state that the worker or the agency is a safe place for people who are gay or lesbian.

Social workers should not assume that clients are heterosexual. They should incorporate this into their assessment both verbally and in the type of documentation that is used. Most agency materials including assessment documents are biased toward heterosexuality. Social workers should work to change this to an unbiased approach.

Focusing on family work with gay and lesbian families, there are three primary areas we examine here. These are concerns related to coming out, especially with families of origin; working with gay and lesbian couples; and assisting gay and lesbian parents and their children with social issues related to sexual orientation.

Concerns related to coming out as a gay man or a lesbian woman are quite common when working with gay and lesbian families. The dilemma is typically described as a need to be open about being gay or lesbian and to be accepted. The fear is that acceptance will be lost or rejection will occur if others know the person is gay or lesbian. This fear has a great deal of reality to it as many people who are gay or lesbian experience rejection from their families and friends and may even be fired from their jobs if they reveal their sexual orientation. This causes stress for many people who are gay or lesbian. Having to hide an important aspect of one's true identity can cause a great deal of stress and strain. It can also be quite complicated for couples because if one of them comes out the other person's sexual orientation is also revealed.

Working with adolescents who are gay or lesbian is quite challenging because of the extreme reactions by their peers, negative reactions by their families, and the volatility of adolescence itself. Both suicide attempts and completions are much higher for youth who are gay and lesbian as compared to heterosexual teens. The social worker must be vigilant about depression and suicidal thinking when she works with this population. It is best if these youth can work with a trained therapist in dealing with these issues. However, generalist social workers also work with this population. They need to be sensitive to the possibility that as many as 10 percent of their youthful clients are struggling with their sexual identity and the social stresses related to it.

Working with gay and lesbian couples and their families involve all of the same issues and approaches that are identified in Parts II and III of the text. What is different is the issue of gender-based roles. In heterosexual relationships, various cultures may prescribe certain roles to the male and others to the female. This will not work for same-sex couples. A common myth about same-sex couples is that one of the partners assumes the male role and the other the female role. Some same-sex couples do this, but the majority do not. It appears that many are able to develop egalitarian relationships and may even provide good models for heterosexual couples who are struggling with developing shared-role relationships. The key to developing shared-role relationships is communicating effectively and using an efficient and effective decision-making process. Roles cannot be assumed and need to be discussed every day to determine who is going to do what. Communication is discussed in the next chapter and throughout the rest of the text. Various aspects of decision making are covered in Parts II and III. As with any couple, disagreements can and do arise with same-sex couples. Helping them to develop and use effective conflict resolution skills is important. This is also covered in Chapters 7 and 8 and in Part III.

Social workers may become involved with assisting gay and lesbian parents and their children with social issues related to sexual orientation. Dealing with the reactions of others can be quite challenging. Fortunately, there are books and materials that are becoming available to help same-sex couples and their children with these issues. First, let us look at how same-sex couples become parents. Some were formerly in a heterosexual relationship in which children were produced. Some people who are gay or lesbian have been able to adopt children, although only one of them is typically a legal parent to the child. Some same-sex couples use formal and informal fertility options, including artificial insemination and surrogate mothers. Those couples who produced children in previous heterosexual relationships often experience a great deal of difficulty with the legal system regarding custody and visitation if their sexual orientation is revealed. The same can be true for adoption.

Negative reactions by peers toward children in gay and lesbian families can be very difficult challenges. Negative reactions by the general public toward the family as a whole or toward same-sex couples can also be quite challenging. Some same-sex parents will hide their sexual orientation to avoid these challenges. Many find that they have to be very selective about where they live and where their children attend school. They look for neighborhoods or communities where there is either tolerance for their sexual orientation or tolerance for diversity in general. Groups have been formed to assist with these issues and to offer gay and lesbian families opportunities to share time with other gay and lesbian families in order to escape from these challenges and to experience acceptance. These groups offer vacations, trips, cruises, and social events especially for gay and lesbian families.

Resources

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■   **A SCHEMA FOR STUDYING FAMILIES FROM**   ■
DIVERSE ETHNIC GROUPS

Table 3.2 displays a schema for studying families from diverse ethnic groups. It is intended to be broad enough to be used with any family, regardless of ethnicity. It can be adapted for use with families with mixed ethnic backgrounds by using it multiculturally and covering each

Table 3.2 Schema for Studying Families from Diverse Ethnic Groups

I. Overall knowledge of diverse ethnic group
   A. History of the particular ethnic group
      1. Significant information about the point of origin
      2. Immigration patterns, when, why
      3. Experience(s) with the dominant society, any legal events, prejudice/discrimination concerns
      4. Experience in coping or integrating with dominant society
   B. Significant cultural patterns
      1. Spiritual considerations, experiences, beliefs
      2. Relationship beliefs about the physical world
      3. Significant values/value system(s)
      4. Attitudes toward things, time and its use, age, authority, work, display of feeling or emotions
      5. Change and its meaning to group
      6. Past, present, and future orientation
      7. Ceremonies, rituals
      8. Traditional art forms—music—use of in daily or ceremonial life
      9. Taboos
   C. Family patterns and structure
      1. Relationships of importance
         a. Within cultural group
         b. With larger society
      2. Decision-making processes
      3. Generational factors, age, sex considerations
      4. Child-rearing and housekeeping practices
      5. Expectations within the family
   D. Communication patterns
      1. Language usage; concepts, values, philosophies
      2. Nonverbal expression
   E. Traditional coping patterns and mechanisms
      1. Adaptation, compensation, reaction to stress, stigmatization, stereotyping
   F. Community structures
      1. Traditional forms and ways of functioning
      2. Community provision for help
      3. Contemporary society structures relative to this ethnic group
   G. Current issues of the group or regarding the group
      1. Quality of life issues
      2. Economic, educational, spiritual
      3. Group identity
      4. Opportunity provision or restriction
      5. Discrimination, prejudice concerns
   H. Resources for gaining understanding of group

II. Knowledge of the individual family
   A. History
      1. Experience of this particular family
      2. Migration, movement within the United States

Table 3.2   Continued

      a. Social–economic mobility
      b. Identification with ethnic group
   3. Note urban–rural experience
   4. Fit within larger ethnic group
 B. Value concerns
   1. What of traditional ethnic patterns is important to this family? What is not? How do they deal with discrepancies?
   2. Spirituality within the family
   3. Traditions
 C. Family
   1. How does this family define itself (nuclear, extended, etc.)?
   2. Relationships in this family
   3. How does this family relate to larger ethnic group? To their heritage?
 D. Communication patterns
   1. Within this particular family
   2. With larger society
 E. Coping in this particular family
 F. Community
   1. Relationships to ethnic community, to dominant community
   2. Resources available, usable by this family, experience with
 G. Issues concerning this family

cultural background that is relevant. The use of the schema forms the framework for our studies of diversity competent practice with African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American families. It can also be used in learning about families from various parts of Europe, Asia, and the Pacific Islands as well as those who are immigrants from Central and South America and from Africa. Space prohibits us from covering every type of family, but three main types in which social workers are likely to encounter cross-cultural relationships are covered here.

When considering the ethnic family there are two levels of understanding that are needed by the worker: first is the more general level, which provides overall knowledge, second is the specific level, which provides understanding of a specific family. At the general level, it is important to consider the history of the ethnic group, including information about the point or country of origin. The worker should gather information about immigration patterns and reasons for the immigration of the ethnic group as a whole. Did this group experience discrimination and oppression in their country of origin? Religious persecution? Economic deprivation? Political persecution? The worker should also seek to uncover experiences the group has had with the dominant group in U.S. society and how they have coped with those experiences or have been integrated into the dominant group.

Significant cultural patterns provide the next area for examination. Spirituality, values, art forms, taboos, and attitudes and beliefs, including those regarding change and time, should be explored. Ceremonies and rituals are also important aspects of culture.

Within each culture are family patterns and structure. It is important to know about significant relationships, how decisions are typically made, child-rearing and housekeeping practices, and expectations that families typically have of their members. There are also

generational factors and age and sex considerations. These latter factors refer to inter- and intragenerational relationships and statuses, attitudes toward aging and the aged, and sex- or gender-based role expectations.

The diversity competent social worker needs to pay close attention to communication patterns, especially as these relate to language and to nonverbal communication. Because interaction is the staple of both family life and the social work endeavor, this aspect of culture takes on great significance.

Another area for study are the coping mechanisms that are typically used by members of the ethnic group. How do they respond to stress or to prejudice and stereotyping? What is accepted within the culture and what is not?

Looking beyond the family, the worker needs to be familiar with community structures that are typical for the ethnic group. How does the community typically function within the culture? How is help usually offered and received? What kinds of societal structures are constructed within this ethnic community? Some ethnic groups rely on neighborhood communities or clubs to preserve their identity and their culture. Others rely on religious institutions. Still others have little in the way of formal or informal structures, and, as a result, their ethnic identity may be quickly absorbed into the dominant culture provided they are not identified by skin color or some other recognizable feature that makes them a target for exclusion.

The worker should be familiar with current issues that are important for the ethnic group. For instances, the status of illegal immigrants is an important consideration within the Mexican American community. Other issues relate to the group's quality of life, economic and educational opportunities or restrictions, identity, and prejudice and discrimination. What are the important issues for this population and why are these important?

Finally, in the area of general or overall knowledge the worker needs to be aware of resources that are available for gaining an understanding of the ethnic group. These range from formal to informal sources of information. Formal sources come from census data, library resources, histories, educational institutions, community resources for the family ethnic group, and other community structures. Informal resources tend to be verbal and include colleagues, indigenous workers, experts, and members of the ethnic group, including the family system with whom the worker is working.

The second area of knowledge is at the specific level, which provides understanding of a specific family. This area recognizes that, although families may share a common ethnic identity, each family is unique in terms of how it experiences and expresses its identity. The information for this area of study comes mainly from the family itself. The worker seeks to have the family tell its story and she listens without any preconceived notions about what she will hear.

The first area for exploration is the unique history of this family. What were their experiences and those of their ancestors? What is their history of migration and their movement within the United States? What is their socioeconomic status and how mobile have they been in terms of increasing their status? What is the family's identification with their ethnic group and how strong is this? Have they lived in rural or urban areas and what affect has this had on the family system?

Next, the worker should look at values and how the family experiences or adheres to values from its ethnic roots. What has been retained and what has not? How does the family feel about discrepancies between its values and those of its ethnic heritage? What are the spiritual or

religious practices within the family and how do these reflect traditional ethnic practices? What ethnic traditions have been retained and what traditions are no longer practiced?

For the family itself, the worker should explore how they see themselves as a family. Who are considered members? How important is the extended family? What characterizes relationships within the family? How does the family relate to the larger ethnic group? How does it relate to their ethnic heritage? What are the communication patterns within the family and between the family and the larger society? What are the typical coping patterns and mechanisms used by this family and how do these relate to those that are typical for its ethnic group? What relationships are there between the family and its ethnic community? How does the family relate to the larger society? What resources are available to this family and how are these accessed and used? What has been the family's experiences with those resources? What are the main issues that concern this family?

The worker uses naturalistic inquiry as he explores these unique areas of family life. He draws out their story and takes the position that he does not know what he does not know. He respects the family as experts on their own lives and their cultural heritage and experience. The diversity competent worker is aware of his own attitudes toward the particular ethnic group and attempts to set those aside so he can be as nonjudgmental as possible. He is also aware of attitudes and stereotypes of the larger society toward the ethnic group and the effects of these on that group. As the worker explores these areas, he builds a meaningful relationship with the family that will carry them through the work to be done.

■ DIVERSITY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILIES ■

Diversity competent practice with African American families begins with the understanding that African American families are diverse while also sharing common experiences. African Americans have diverse roots and histories that create diversity within their culture. At the same time, African Americans share the experience of living in a society that is racist and has continued to marginalize them, even in the face of legal challenges to discrimination and oppression. Diversity within the African American culture exists because of variation in their roots. Although most African Americans have their roots in areas of West Africa, some are descendants of former slaves who lived in the Caribbean and

West Indies. In addition, there was a great deal of variation in their ancestral experiences in the United States during slavery and afterward.

Diversity competent practice with African American families generally means using an Afrocentric approach. This approach evolved primarily during the twentieth century. Jerome H. Schiele described three basic assumptions regarding Afrocentric social work: "1) that individual identity is conceived as a collective identity; 2) that the spiritual aspects of humans is just as legitimate as the material component; and 3) that the affective approach to knowledge is epistemologically valid."[17] The first two of these assumptions are particularly important in working with African Americans and their families. Whereas individual identity and materialism are highly prized in Eurocentric cultures, individual identity is tied to family, culture, community, and creator for African Americans, and people are seen as being spiritually connected with each other and with the world around them.

Historical Considerations

Most African Americans are descendents of the only non–Native American group that did not immigrate as such; they were brought to the United States against their will to be used as slaves. African American history during slavery and afterward is the predominant issue when it comes to understanding working with African American families. Although most slaves were brought to the United States from West Africa, there was a great deal of cultural and language diversity among the tribes to which they belonged. In addition, many African Americans are descended from former slaves who lived in the Caribbean and West Indies and had developed a rich and varied culture that was different from African American slaves.

The experiences of African Americans after slavery ended are also important historical considerations. Most former slaves remained in the South and were eventually subjugated again, especially after Reconstruction ended. Few owned any land and the system of share-cropping ensured that they remained poor and in debt. In addition to economic subjugation, African Americans were systematically excluded from voting and holding office. A social and legal system known as "Jim Crow" reinforced their status as second-class citizens. This economic, political, and social oppression was enforced by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and various vigilante groups who beat, murdered, and lynched African Americans who dared to challenge the system. Some former slaves migrated to the North and the West where they were free but still experienced prejudice, discrimination, and oppression in various forms. With the collapse of the cotton and tobacco economies, especially during the Great Depression, many African Americans migrated to cities in the South, the North, and the West looking for work. They were typically concentrated in poor neighborhoods with overcrowded substandard housing.

More recently, many African Americans have become economically successful and have been able to move to other areas with better housing and more opportunities. Unfortunately, a disproportionate number of African American families have not enjoyed the same success and are still mired in poverty in our inner cities. What is remarkable is that the progress that African Americans have made since slavery has been almost entirely at their own hands. Little if any assistance has been given by the dominant culture. In fact much of the progress made by African Americans has actually occurred in spite of barriers that have been and continue to be erected by the dominant culture.

Cultural Patterns

Efforts were made to eliminate African culture as part of the subjugation of slavery. However, African Americans were successful in using their African culture to survive both the ravages of slavery and the further oppression that has followed it. Afrocentricity gives us a view of various aspects of African culture that have survived and contributed to survival. Schiele's description refers to collective identity and spirituality. These two assumptions are intertwined in that spirituality includes a belief that all human beings are interconnected with each other, with the environment, and with the creator, which is the web that connects everything together. Thus, individual identity does not exist separate from the environment, but as a part of the collective identity of the community, the nation, and the world.[18]

In many traditional African cultures, the community is the most important social entity. This is captured in the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." Kinship extended beyond the nuclear family and included both extended family and nonfamily members of the community. Responsibility for child-rearing, preparation for adulthood, and rites of passage were the responsibilities of the entire village. This collective identity resulted in African Americans forming similar communities of related and unrelated kinship networks during slavery and afterward. The community made sure that the elderly, children, and widows were cared for regardless of how poor members were themselves.

The essence of Afrocentricity is best illustrated by the Nguzo Saba of Kwanzaa, which is an Afrocentric value system made up of seven principles. There are numerous renditions of this. The following is from an article by Vanessa D. Johnson regarding its use as a foundation for African American college student development theory:

> *Umoja* (unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.
> *Kujichagulia* (self-determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others.
> *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.
> *Ujamma* (cooperative economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and profit from them together.
> *Nia* (purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
> *Kuumba* (creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.
> *Imani* (faith): To believe with all our hearts in God, our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.[19]

The values that are expressed in these seven principles reflect values that have been preserved from African heritage. They could easily be used by any group that has experienced oppression.

Given the varied history of African American families, there are also variations in the extent to which families have retained and practice elements of their African heritage. Peter Bell and Jimmy Evans suggested four interpersonal styles they associated with the

degree of acculturation. Those who are fully acculturated have assimilated into mainstream white culture and do not typically identify with or express their African American heritage. On the opposite side of the spectrum are those who reject white culture and identify with and express only their African American heritage. In between these are those who are bicultural and who are comfortable with both white and African American culture. A fourth group are traditional. They tend to value their African American heritage and have limited contact outside the African American community. They may show some of the effects of their history under slavery and Jim Crow such as deference to whites.[20]

Family

As indicated under the Nguzo Saba, the family plays a critical role in the life of African Americans.[21] The African American family is an extended family that may also include fictive kin or members who are not related by blood or marriage. This reflects the African cultural heritage in which the community was considered the most important social unit. Unrelated family members may be referred to using the terms *brother, sister, aunt, uncle,* or *cousin*. Grandparents who raise their grandchildren or informal guardians who informally adopt children to raise may be called *mother* or *father*.

Probably one of the greatest impacts on African American families has been the effects of economic deprivation and oppression. Employment opportunities have been extremely limited. One could argue that the only legitimate economic roles readily afforded African Americans by the dominant white society were those associated with slavery, sharecropping, and domestic services. In addition, African American males have generally found it more difficult than females to acquire and maintain employment. Thus, one of the effects of economic oppression on the African American family has been to undermine the role of provider for African American males. From the emasculation of males during slavery and Jim Crow to the collapse of the cotton and tobacco economy, which relied on sharecropping, to the exportation of manufacturing jobs under globalization, many African American males have been robbed of the role of provider. These experiences have contributed to a situation in which the majority of African American families today are headed by females, whereas many of those incarcerated in prison or jail are African American males.

Communication Processes

Although African American families speak English, a form of English has evolved that is referred to as *Black English* or *African American language*. Valerie Borum differentiates between this and "Standard English" and points out that some families speak only one or the other and some will switch back and forth and are bilingual.[22] She describes African American language as allowing for flexibility and including "highly meaningful nonverbal communication and expression via body language."[23] She sees it as "dramatizing that which Standard English fails to communicate."[24] It "might be regarded as a 'highly exquisite form of pantomime.'"[25]

Accompanying this variation in language are variations in culture and worldviews, which are reflected in the principles of the Nguzo Saba, especially regarding collective identity, unity, and creativity.[26] Relationships are highly prized and are generally valued over the materialism that is seen as characterizing white culture.

Coping Patterns

The coping patterns of African Americans is also reflected in Afrocentricity and the seven principles of the Nguzo Saba.[27] Collective identity, a strong sense of community, and spirituality make for a strong base from which members can deal with adversity. The whole history of African Americans has been fraught with adversity beginning with the diaspora and slavery and continuing through pervasive prejudice, discrimination, and oppression that continues to this day. Through all of this African Americans have persevered and many are quite prosperous in spite of their mistreatment by the dominant white society.

Collective identity gives African Americans a means of overcoming negative messages from the dominant culture, which devalues people of color. By relying on their families, communities, and culture for self-esteem and respect, many African Americans are able to develop healthy self-images despite the actions of white society. Their strong sense of community and the high value placed on mutual aid provided their own safety net during slavery and the following hard times when there were no such structures in the U.S. social welfare system for African Americans. A strong belief in spirituality is the third leg of their coping system. A belief in a creator and a universe where everything is connected has given African Americans the will and determination to persevere.

Community Structure

The word *community* for African Americans means much more than the physical surroundings or place where they live. It is a network of relationships that connect them to each other, to all other human beings, to the world, and to the creator.

Using the Eurocentric concept of community, the physical structure and geography of the African American community varies based on their history. The majority in the North and the West live in urban areas, and traditionally they were restricted by discriminatory practices to the inner city where housing was old and frequently substandard. Most of the rest live in rural areas in the southeastern United States. Some of those living in the North or urban areas of the South have gradually migrated to suburban areas as they have been able to achieve a level of economic prosperity. However, they have generally not been welcomed by their white neighbors who often engage in "white flight" when an African American family moves into the neighborhood. Some of these African American families have experienced various forms of harassment including threats, racist graffiti or publications, or having a crosses burned on their lawns.

Most African Americans try to maintain close family ties by either living in close proximity to relatives or by maintaining contact by phone, Internet, and frequent family reunions. Even when close relatives are not nearby, African Americans are able to build their own family networks through the adoption of fictive kin wherever they may live.

The migration of African Americans to urban areas has probably undermined to some extent the strong sense of community that was built in rural areas. Social scientists who study human behavior in crowded communities typically see a breakdown in social structures when people are overwhelmed with a large number of relationships caused by overcrowding. When people are not familiar with their neighbors, they are less likely to establish mutual aid systems.

Current Issues

Current issues for African Americans involve those that typically would be expected. Overcoming prejudice, discrimination, and oppression continues, only in somewhat different forms. On paper it is illegal, but in reality these barriers still exist. Recently, a backlash has developed and there are attacks on such programs as affirmative action, which have opened doors for women and minorities. Poverty remains a reality for a disproportionate percentage of families, especially for a substantial minority of African American children. Substance abuse and incarceration are also overrepresented in the African American community.

Resources

Borum, Valerie. "An Afrocentric Approach in Working with African American Familes" in *Multicultural Perspectives in Working with Families,* 2nd ed. Elaine P. Congress and Manny J. Gonzales, Eds. New York: Springer, 2005, Chapter 12.

Boyd-Franklin, Nancy. *Black Families in Therapy: Understanding the African American Experience,* 2nd ed. New York: Guilford Press, 2003.

Fong, Rowena, and Furuto, Charlene, Eds. *Culturally Competent Practice: Skills, Interventions, and Evaluations,* 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001. (See Chapters 3, 8, 9, 16, 17, 24, and 25.)

McRoy, Ruth. "Cultural Competence with African Americans" in *Culturally Competent Practice: A Framework for Understanding Diverse Groups and Justice Issues,* 2nd ed. Doman Lum, Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2003, Chapter 9.

Schiele, Jerome H. *Human Services and the Afrocentric Paradigm.* New York: The Haworth Press, 2000.

Willis, Winnie. "Families with African American Roots" in *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide to Working with Children and Their Families,* 2nd ed. Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, Eds. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 1998, Chapter 6.

■   DIVERSITY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH   ■
HISPANIC/LATINO FAMILIES

Hispanic/Latino families represent a wide variation in race, culture, and roots. We use the term *Hispanic/Latino* to refer to those people whose language is predominantly Spanish and whose culture is at least partially influenced by the cultures that evolved in regions of North and South America that came under Spanish rule during and after the 1500s. This is a vast area with many variations in culture. The most common cultures found in the United States are Mexican, Central and South American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban. There are variations in language among these as well as culture.

Historical Considerations

The Spanish approach to exploration and settlement can probably best be described as one of conquest. Priests often accompanied the conquistadors, and religion, language, and culture were imposed on those who were conquered, often under the penalty of death. Spanish and indigenous populations intermingled, leaving a wide variation of racial and ethnic groups. Skin color ranged from light-skinned, blond-haired and blue-eyed descendants of Spanish origin to those descended from North and South American First Nations tribes and

from African slaves. Portugese language and culture is a major influence in Brazilian culture. Many people in the United States think of those who are Hispanic/Latino as a race, but they are really an ethnic group that includes various combinations of white, Native American, and African American genetic backgrounds.

The Spanish influence in the United States began in the 1500s mainly in the Southeast and the Southwest. The United States acquired Spanish and Mexican territory primarily through force or the threat of it. Florida was ceded to the United States to avoid a confrontation over its acquisition. Texans won their independence from Mexico. Texans included both immigrants from the United States and local residents of Mexican descent. Later, the Mexican-American War was fought so the United States could acquire Texas and California and the lands in between. This represented nearly half of what had formerly been Mexico. After the War, residents of Mexican descent were promised citizenship and property rights, but there were numerous instances in which this was not what ensued. Periodic mass deportations have taken place along with the seizure of land. Cuba was captured from Spain during the Spanish-American War at the end of the 1900s and was later given its independence. Puerto Rico was also captured but has remained a U.S. territory. Puerto Ricans are considered U.S. citizens and they do not need passports or visas to move back and forth between the island and the mainland.

Descendants of Mexican descent are either long-term residents of territory seized from Mexico or they are immigrants from Mexico. People of Central American descent are primarily relatively recent immigrants, mainly either refugees fleeing various civil wars in that region or those seeking improved economic prospects. Most Cubans have settled in the Miami area and are political and economic refugees who left Cuba after the regime of Fidel Castro began in the late 1950s. Most of the immigration policy in the United States during the past century has been aimed at controlling the immigration of Hispanic/Latino populations. Undocumented immigration is a major issue with estimates of as many as 11 million people living in the United States without proper documentation.

Cultural Patterns

Cultural patterns are influenced by the area from which the family comes. However, there are some common patterns of note. *Familismo* is a cultural value that is held by many Hispanic/Latino families. It places a high value on the family and family relationships and sees individual identity as a product of family relationships.[28] Another value that is closely associated with the family is *machismo,* which values traditional gender-based roles and a patriarchal structure within the family.[29] *Personalismo* is a cultural value that emphasizes closeness in interpersonal relationships, which includes valuing people over material objects and emphasizing relationships over individual achievement.[30] Religion plays an important

role in the culture, with most families adhering to Roman Catholic beliefs. Pentecostal religions have made strong inroads into this traditional pattern of beliefs in some areas, especially along the Mexican border.

Families experience a wide range of acculturation, which determines the degree to which cultural heritage and language are retained. Many families are bicultural and bilingual. However, language skills are frequently lost by younger generations who grow up speaking English at school.

Family

As mentioned previously, familismo places a high value on the family. Individual identity depends heavily on family relationships. Many people of Hispanic/Latino heritage would not consider making individual decisions without family input or considering the effects of the decision on the family. Patriarchy and traditional gender-based roles are prominent in most families. The family is generally considered the most important social unit, and cultural values are primarily family centered.

Communication Processes

There are a wide variety of patterns in Hispanic/Latino families with regard to the use of Spanish and English. Some families have a pattern of speaking Spanish within the home and English or Spanish outside of the home depending on the setting. Family members who are older may not speak or understand much, if any, English. This may also be the case for recent immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries. Children may become the first truly bilingual family members as they encounter English when they enter school. This may also be the case for adults who work and acquire English through their work setting. Generally, the latter remain more comfortable with Spanish. Younger Hispanic/Latino families may have lost their Spanish-speaking abilities and may speak only English although they might understand some Spanish.

Coping Patterns

Religion and spirituality are very important for coping for many Hispanic/Latino families. Celia Jaes Falicov describes how most Latinos attribute adversity to sources that are beyond one's control. She points out that many Latinos will add the phrase "God willing" when discussing the future, which is an indication of the belief that one's life is not under one's control.[31] Falicov describes several coping mechanisms that result from these beliefs. Controlarse is "control of the self," which refers to controlling one's mood or emotions as a way of mastering adversity.[32] This concept includes ". . . *aguantarse* (endurance), or the ability to withstand stress in times of adversity; *no pensar* (don't think of the problem), or avoidance of focusing on disturbing thoughts or feelings . . . ; *resignarse* (resignation), or the passive acceptance of one's fate; and *sobreponerse* (to overcome), a more active cognitive coping that allows for working through or overcoming adversity."[33]

The combination of deep religious belief and conviction along with the coping mechanisms mentioned previously give many Hispanic/Latino families incredible fortitude when they are faced with adversity. At the same time, these coping mechanism may not

be understood by members of the dominant culture and are easily misinterpreted or stereotyped.

Community Structure

There is variation in the community structure for Hispanic/Latino families. Some of this variation is caused by differences among the cultural groups described earlier. For instance, Puerto Ricans are more likely to be found in New York City and several urban areas along the Atlantic Coast. Cubans tend to be clustered in south Florida. People of Mexican descent have large populations in rural and urban areas along the southern boundaries of the border states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California. They are also found in both urban and rural areas where migrant workers settled.

Wherever they live Hispanic/Latino families form community networks. The Hispanic/Latino community typically comes together several times each year to celebrate traditional holidays. Some of these are religious and others are related to events from their native countries, such as Cinqo de Mayo which celebrates Mexican independence. In rural areas, many families travel to the nearest community with a Hispanic/Latino population. Some will celebrate with only their families or with some close neighbors. In urban areas, people who are Hispanic/Latino often live close together in certain areas. Mexican American communities in larger cities of the Southwest are typically referred to as *barrios.*

Current Issues

Most of the current issues for people who are Hispanic/Latino revolve around immigration, preserving their heritage, and overcoming economic hardship. Most recent changes in immigration law in the United States are aimed at people who are Hispanic/Latino. There is a great deal of disparity regarding experiences between various groups. Puerto Ricans are able to enter the United States legally because they are considered U.S. citizens. Cubans have generally been accepted as political refugees, although some were identified as mentally ill or former prisoners who were criminals in Cuba, and many of these were detained for some time. Immigrants from Mexico and Central American have not been able to immigrate quite as easily. The poverty and lack of opportunity to improve their economic well-being in their own countries lead many to immigrate illegally or without proper documentation. This has become a major political issue with intense debate about what to do to stem the tide of illegal immigrants along with the question of what to do with undocumented workers and illegal immigrants who are already here.

To some extent, the desire to preserve their language, culture, and heritage is reflected in the community networks that Hispanic/Latino families form. At the same time, they have been criticized for not assimilating into the larger culture when they do so. Within the family, including the extended family, it is not unusual to see conflicts over cultural preservation arising between older and younger generations.

Economic hardship is a primary reason for immigration for many Hispanic/Latino families. However, economic prosperity is not guaranteed, especially for undocumented workers. They are easily exploited by employers. This exploitation can go beyond financial to include sexual exploitation as well. Many Hispanic/Latino families have learned

to cope with economic hardship by working hard for long hours and pooling their resources within the family. So, even though several family members may be working at very low wages, the family may be able to experience some prosperity from their combined incomes.

Resources

Falicov, Celia Jaes. *Latino Families in Therapy: A Guide to Multicultural Practice.* New York: Guilford Press, 1998. This book provides a good base for understanding Hispanic/Latino families. Although it uses the term *therapy,* it is written in a way that can be used by generalist social workers working with this population.

Fong, Rowena, and Furuto, Charlene, Eds. *Culturally Competent Practice: Skills, Interventions, and Evaluations,* 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001. (See Chapters 4, 10, 11, 18, 19, 26, and 27.)

Romero, Mary, and Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierette. *Challenging Fronteras: Structuring Latina and Latino Lives in the U.S.: An Anthology of Readings.* New York: Routledge, 1997. Another look at the lives of Hispanic/Latino families in the United States.

Suarez-Orozco, Marcelo M., and Paez, Mariela. *Latinos: Remaking America.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. A comprehensive look at experiences of Latinos and issues they face.

Zuniga, Maria. "Families with Latino Roots" in *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide to Working with Children and Their Families,* 2nd ed. Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, Eds. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 1998, Chapter 7.

Zuniga, Maria E. "Cultural Competence with Latino Americans" in *Culturally Competent Practice: A Framework for Understanding Diverse Groups and Justice Issues,* 2nd ed. Doman Lum, Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2003, Chapter 10.

■　　DIVERSITY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH　■
NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES

When working with the Native American[34] families, two understandings are central: First, there are many tribes, each with its own culture, and each considered by most Native Americans as a sovereign nation. Second, each family as it lives in a world dominated by a majority group has its particular ways of dealing with dual perspectives of functioning. This makes it essential that any social worker rely on the Native American family to provide the understandings needed for effective work. An understanding of a family's ties to its culture are of prime concern. The ways in which a family functions is usually closely tied to this cultural base. Rural and urban context is also important. Educational policies and practices are important to understand. The impact of boarding schools, with their emphases, had great implications for the family in the past. This all supports the use of a diversity competent mode of practice that uses the client as the expert in determining what is important and what is to be done in the work together. However, a diversity competent worker strives to understand the client in the culture to the best of her ability. This, of course, suggests that a worker should concentrate learning about the tribes to which her client families belong. That understanding is far too diverse for this text to provide.[35] However, there are more general understandings that can be provided.

Historical Considerations

First of importance is an understanding of the historical relationship of Native Americans to the U.S. government. Zimmerman and Molyneaux describe this as "dispossession." To quote them, "There were three types of European invasion: physical (the occupation of territory by immigrants), spiritual (the imposition of Christianity), and material (the introduction of goods such as guns and alcohol). Native people were driven out, swindled by unobserved treaties, subjugated, shattered, plied with alcohol and confined to reservations."[36] Vine Deloria, Jr., describes this as "Promises Made, Promises Broken."[37] Continual changing federal policy regarding removal, resettlement, assimilation, land allotment, and termination have left native peoples with feelings of distrust of the majority society and great uncertainties when relating to a majority person. These practices and policies have also had two major effects on native peoples: the breakdown or even destruction of traditional ways of functioning and the extreme poverty that many Native Americans experience. Land is sacred to Native Americans, thus experiences that interfere or destroy the traditional relationship to the land are particularly destructive to society and family.

Cultural Patterns

Native American cultural patterns, although specific to a tribe or clan, also have some general characteristics. The Native American way of thinking, rather than being linear, tends to be circular or systemic, everything is related to everything else. Past, present, and future are very much intertwined. One means for depicting the native life concept is the circle, which encompasses nature or everything that comes from Mother Earth. Mind, spirit, and body are all seen as major parts yet a part of the whole. All life is sacred and all aspects of nature, as well as all things, all events, and people, are related.

Family is very important and it is the extended family that is the focal point. Children are valued and belong to the tribe and the extended family. Grandparents are of great importance in the raising of children; in fact, they often are of greater importance than parents. Elders are greatly respected. Sharing and giving are important. There is a sense that time is to be used in showing respect and caring for others, not the importance of "being on time."

There is usually a belief in a higher being. Creation stories are important but vary from tribe to tribe. All life is sacred. Spirituality is encompassed in all of daily living. It tends to be more of an individual expression rather than a group expression. Specifics relate to particular tribes' beliefs and experiences. Assimilation of Christianity is related to the historical policy of assigning particular denominations to specific areas. Where Christian beliefs and practices have been accepted, they have a denominational element blended with the native traditions and beliefs. Communal land is sacred. It is tied to the health of the tribe. It is a place to which to periodically return.

Each tribe has its own rituals and ceremonies. Each usually have traditional art forms, crafts, dances, and so on. Workers would do well to gain appreciation for the meaning of these art forms to the group. Each have various taboos. Many of these relate to relationships among people. Workers must have knowledge of these so as not to offend those for whom they are providing service. In many tribes, eye contact is to be avoided. It is seen as a sign of disrespect.

Family

As has been indicated, the traditional Native American family is an extended one. All members are responsible for one another. All share in childcare. They are expected to share what they have with this extended group. This sometimes become problematic when some members of the extended family gain opportunities to better themselves through education or other options and are then expected to share with members of the extended family who are poverty stricken, addicted to alcohol and other drugs, or otherwise not providing for their basic needs. It is expected that decision making will also be shared among family members. Elders are looked to for advice and guidance.

It should be noted that the more isolated the tribe, the less change there will be in family life from traditional ways. Native families in urban area have been most affected by majority ways of functioning. However, many keep close ties with the "homeland/reservation" or live within an urban enclave of Native Americans. These families tend to relate to two worlds with the tensions inherent in such situations.[38]

Communication Processes

Although most Native Americans speak English, there is a tendency to have a somewhat limited vocabulary and to word sentences somewhat differently from that which majority workers are used to. It is most important to listen carefully and use feedback techniques to be sure that there is mutual understanding. Native culture is strongly an oral culture. Truths and culture are passed along by means of storytelling. It is important to gain an appreciation for this means of communication and develop skill in interpreting the meaning of the stories.

Relationships take time to develop. Time needs to be spent in small talk, in letting a Native American person get to know who you are as a person. Often the provision of some small concrete service will further the development of a relationship.[39]

Coping Patterns

There is a strong emphasis on bringing situations into balance. Ceremonies are used to create or restore harmony with nature that reflects Native American beliefs in a holistic world

in which all things are interconnected and interrelated. There is strong reliance on beliefs and sacred wisdom. Because of historical experiences with the majority culture, there are themes of conflict, resistance, and survival.

Native persons are very skilled at hiding emotions. Attitudes toward authority are important because the worker is considered an authority person. Particularly older Native Americans respect authority and often express this respect by agreeing with the worker, although they have no intent to carry out what seems to have been agreed on. Younger Native Americans often display hostility toward workers or other authority figures.

Socialization is of great importance to these people. Each person is valued. When sanctions become necessary, shame and disapproval are the primary methods used.

Community Structure

Tribal structures have been compromised by the imposition of the majority culture's way of governing. Sometimes, the official governmental structure, the tribal government, may be corrupt, and care needs to be taken in assessing its usefulness to the Native American. The strengths of the natural community with its elders, medicine folk, and other natural helpers are often overlooked. In urban areas, this type of strength is often found in the Native American community that has formed.

There are special Native American resources administered by the federal government under the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Indian Public Health Services. There are also resources, particularly educational resources, in community colleges, which have developed on many reservations. Religious groups still provide resources, particularly educational resources. State and federal social welfare systems also provide Supplemental Security Income (SSI), child welfare, and other resources. The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 gives tribes jurisdiction over all native children in civil placement. Tribal courts usually carry out this responsibility. Education is today primarily in the public school system, but, as noted, tribal schools and religious schools provide for some students. Today some Native Americans are reaching out to the majority world through the gambling industry and through other recreation opportunities. Social workers can participate in cultural activities but they should avoid tribal politics.

Current Issues

A primary concern is the maintenance of the native culture in contemporary society. Extreme poverty, especially on some reservations, is widespread. Alcoholism and the use of other addictive substances is prevalent, especially where there is significant unemployment. There are many health problems. Tuberculosis, diabetes, and high blood pressure are quite high. The plight of urban Native Americans is concerning as they attempt to live in two cultures. Economic opportunity for those who choose to remain on reservations deserves attention. Educational opportunities in modes that are congruent with native cultures deserve attention at elementary, secondary, and higher education levels. The delivery of health and social services in diversity competent modes is another issue.

Resources

As has been indicated, a primary source must remain the Native American community and individual. If not the client, then other Native Americans become the source.

Brown Miller, Nancy, "Social Work Services to Urban Indians" in *Cultural Awareness in the Human Services*. James W. Green, Ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.

Fong, Rowena, and Furuto, Charlene, Eds. *Culturally Competent Practice: Skills, Interventions, and Evaluations,* 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001. (See Chapters 5, 12, 13, 20, 21, 28, and 29.)

Joe, Jennie R., and Malach, Randi Suzanne, "Families with Native American Roots" in *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence: A Guide to Working with Children and Their Families,* 2nd ed. Eleanor W. Lynch and Marci J. Hanson, Eds. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 1998, Chapter 5.

McMaster, Gerald, and Trafzer, Clifford E., Eds. *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America.* Washington DC: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. This magnificent book, done in cooperation with the National Geographic Society, contains multiple essays by native writers with scholarly recognition. These essays provide contemporary understandings about Native American people.

Riley, Patricia. *Growing Up Native American.* New York: HarperCollins, 1993. This is a compilation of stories by Native American writers about their growing up. It encompasses a number of tribal backgrounds and historical and contemporary experiences.

Weaver, Hilary N., "Cultural Competence with First Nations Peoples" in *Culturally Competent Practice: A Framework for Understanding Diverse Groups and Justice Issues,* 2nd ed. Doman Lum, Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2003, Chapter 8.

Zimmerman, Larry, and Molyneaus, Brian Leigh. *Native North America.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. This small, readily available book written by anthropologists who have had considerable experience with the Native American world provides an excellent overview of the variety of tribes and cultural aspects of this world.

In addition there should be a search for tribal-specific literature. Also there are very usable bibliographies on the Internet.

SUMMARY

It essential for social workers to become as diversity competent as possible so that we can serve families in a manner with which they are comfortable. All social workers are called on to serve people who are different from themselves in some way. Differences include race, ethnicity, age, gender, physical or mental ability, physical appearance, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic standing.

The diversity competent professional social worker seeks to gain knowledge and skills in working with diverse families. She begins with a thorough examination of her own diversity and an awareness of her knowledge about and attitudes toward various diverse groups. She seeks to add to her knowledge and skills by conducting research, discussing diversity with colleagues who have expertise in this area, and learning from her clients as she uses naturalistic inquiry.

The chapter discusses gender competent practice, especially while working with patriarchal families. Practice with gay and lesbian families is presented along with a schema for studying ethnic families. This schema is applied to African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American families.

Diversity competence is never fully achieved and is a lifelong process. Diversity competent social workers continuously work to learn more about serving diverse families.

QUESTIONS

1. List as many diverse groups as you can that have experienced prejudice, discrimination, or oppression at some time during U.S. history. Briefly describe their experiences.
2. Discuss attitudes and beliefs of your family, your peers, or other sources about each diverse group from item 1 to which you have been exposed.
3. Discuss your experiences with any of the groups from item 1.
4. Applying Table 3.2 to a cultural group different from your own and with which you have not had considerable contact, identify factors that you need to find out about to have sufficient knowledge to work as a social worker with people from that culture group.
5. Discuss your current level of diversity competence using Table 3.1. Where would you like to be? How might you get there?
6. What knowledge and skills do you possess that make you diversity competent in working with various families? With what kind of families would you feel comfortable working? With what kind of families would you feel uncomfortable working? How could you become more comfortable?

SUGGESTED READINGS

In addition to the resources identified in this chapter, the following readings are suggested:

Johnson, Louise C., and Yanca, Stephen J. *Social Work Practice: A Generalist Approach,* 9th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2007 (Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, and 13).

Fong, Rowena, and Furuto, Sharlene, Eds. *Culturally Competent Practice: Skills, Interventions, and Evaluations.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001.

Lum, Doman. *Culturally Competent Practice: A Framework for Understanding Diverse Groups and Justice Issues,* 3rd ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2007.

Saleeby, Dennis, Ed. *The Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice,* 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2007.