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Culturally relevant adult education can help learners validate their cultural identity and use their cultural knowledge as a basis for personal and social transformation.

Culture as Context for Adult Education: The Need for Culturally Relevant Adult Education

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The United States has been, is, and will continue to be a culturally diverse society. Despite this diversity of culture, however, the nation continues to be dominated by a macroculture (Naylor, 1998) that emphasizes Anglo-Western-European cultural values. Education has been a primary means of socializing individuals into mainstream culture. By the time children grow into adulthood, they have learned who matters, what priorities are important, and with whom and how to interact. Every aspect of adult life is shaped by culture, and education has served as a vehicle for defining the cultural values that people hold or that they view as central to being successful in their society.

When people learn about who matters and what's important in their lives, they can either be empowered or marginalized, depending on their own personal and cultural history. All too often, it is persons whose group identity is socially, politically, and economically marginalized—for example, African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans—who are most affected by the cultural mismatch between the learning environment and their own cultural history. This chapter argues that culturally relevant adult education is essential to helping learners from marginalized cultural backgrounds learn to take control of their lives and improve their social condition (Hollins, King, and Hayman, 1994).

What does it mean for adult education to be culturally relevant? What is different or important about educating adults in a culturally relevant way? The answers to these questions lie in an understanding of the importance of

the role that culture plays in shaping the educational process. Therefore, it will be necessary to examine the concept of culture, especially the role that cultural domination plays in privileging some and subordinating others.

Why should adult educators be concerned about these issues? Certain moral and political arguments suggest that helping the marginalized is the good or prudent thing to do. Whether or not adult educators are individually predisposed to focusing on the problems and issues of the marginalized, inevitable demographic trends are prompting many to reexamine their assumptions and values with regard to the adult education process. For example, adult educators are accustomed to data indicating that adult education programs typically serve the middle-class, employed, and usually white adult learner (Merriam and Brockett, 1997; Ross-Gordon, 1990). With the possible exception of the area of adult basic education (ABE) programs, which typically serve a higher proportion of adults from minority, poor, and undereducated groups, much adult education theory and practice is based on the white, middle-class experience (Flannery, 1994). Although the majority of learners in ABE classes are white, significantly more African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and other ethnic, linguistic, or racial minority groups are in that area than are in other areas of adult education (Martin, 1990). As the numbers of racially, ethnically, and linguistically marginalized learners increase, new approaches to teaching and learning based on the sociocultural experiences and backgrounds of the population must be developed.

Perspectives on Culture

Noted British cultural critic and activist, Raymond Williams, observes that *culture* is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language (Williams, 1983). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) list 164 definitions of *culture,* as the term is used in the social sciences. In addition, everyday usage includes *high culture, popular culture, organizational culture, ethnic culture, subculture,* and *uncultured*—only a few of the dizzying assortment of uses.

The etymology of the word *culture* reveals its multiple meanings. Derived from the Latin word *cultura,* the English word originally referred to activities related to agriculture—cultivating or tending. By the nineteenth century, culture had also come to refer to the manners and social graces associated with the elite and the educated. Nineteenth-century British cultural critic, Matthew Arnold (1994), popularized this new concept of culture, defining it as “contact with the best which has been thought and said in the world.” Arnold saw culture as crucial to a democratic society because of culture’s important qualities such as beauty, intelligence, and perfection. Arnold believed that by striving to achieve these qualities in its citizens, democracy would prosper because individuals who acquire culture are enlightened and possess an excellence of taste acquired by formal educa-

tional and moral training. For Arnold, these qualities of culture were universal and the same for all human societies. Moreover, Arnold's perspective held that culture is acquired over time through rigorous training as defined by the elite.

Arnold's conception of culture was the prevailing definition in the United States until perhaps the mid-twentieth century. Adult educators like Horace Kallen (1924) and Alain Locke (1944) proposed broader and more inclusive definitions of culture. For both Kallen and Locke, culture was an attribute of the "folk," the people—not simply of the educated or the elite. Kallen (1915) coined the term *cultural pluralism* to refer to a society in which different cultural groups would coexist democratically and peacefully. Influenced partly by the reformist nature of pragmatic philosophy but also motivated by the ethnic and racial politics of the day, Kallen believed that public life within the larger society would be all the richer because of the unique contributions of the variety of ethnic cultures. Locke wrote about the experiences of African Americans in adult education. For Locke, culture is baked into the "daily bread" of a people's life (Locke, 1989). Culture is what defines who they are—how they view themselves and the world around them.

However, it was not until the 1960s that the Arnoldian conception of culture began to be replaced with another definition. Based on the work of anthropologists, a new definition emerged that defined culture as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of creativity. Relatedly, culture has come be understood as "the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations (Herskovits, 1955, p. 4).

The popular definition of culture has come to refer to the shared values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and language use within a social group. These cultural values and beliefs and practices are at the core of group life and identity and are powerful factors that shape or influence individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. In other words, culture is omnipresent and is essential to human social life.

Controlling Culture. Despite the theoretical movement toward a more democratic or popular conception of culture, the Arnoldian version of high culture remains influential. It is fashionable nowadays for political and educational leaders to bemoan the decline in culture that they say is characteristic of contemporary American society. From E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987) and Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) to conservative politicians like Pat Buchanan and Dan Quayle, the criticism of a popular culture gone berserk at the expense of traditional cultural values is the sounding alarm for a political and religious backlash against non-Anglo, non-Western cultural perspectives. The control for the production and validation of culture remains an important issue that drives much public discussion and debate about the future of American society.

It is one thing to consider that culture is central to understanding human activity. It is quite another to consider the ways in which elites attempt to control cultural processes and means of production, which raises the question, Who has the power and authority over the processes by which culture is produced? For example, most dominant world cultures have been patriarchal. Western European culture has been the most dominant and transcendent of all world cultures in the past five hundred years (West, 1993). Historically, dominant cultures have systematically limited the power of women and people of color in their social, political, and religious institutions. Although important changes have taken place to advance women's and African Americans' civil rights since World War II, it is still an indication of the change that yet needs to occur that women and African Americans, among others, continue to be underrepresented politically and undercompensated economically for equal work. These structural realities of American society are indicative of the underlying cultural differences that pit Eurocentric cultural traditions against Africentric, Hispanic, Native American and other ethnic cultural traditions.

To question who has the power to determine culture serves as a reminder of the imbalance in the distribution of power between those who identify with mainstream cultural traditions and those who, in the spirit of democratic and popular culture, seek to redefine their identities and social practices in terms of marginalized cultural perspectives. In this discussion of the definition of culture, we should not only ask how culture is defined but who has the power and authority to enforce a particular definition. Therefore, we must examine any answer to the question, What is culture?, and ask what the implications of that answer are for the poor, the marginalized, and the less powerful in our society. To the extent that the answer excludes these people, the possibility of meaningful change in the lives of learners from marginalized cultures is diminished. Change cannot be achieved because these learners continue to operate within the cultural norms, values, and traditions of a dominant culture.

Cultural Diversity and Changing Demographics. The analysis of definitions of culture is more than a merely intellectual exercise. The practical demographic realities facing the United States make it an essential activity for adult educators. Even though the United States has always been a culturally diverse society, the *significance* of that diversity has rarely been as important as it is today. Demographic trends indicate that the population is changing from one that is predominantly white and of European ancestry to one that is more heterogeneous, with significant proportions of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. Although Native Americans will represent a substantially smaller proportion of the population than these groups, their numbers are projected to rise somewhat.

More than nine million immigrants entered the United States from Asian and Latin American nations in the twenty-year period from 1970 to 1990. As

a result the Hispanic American population almost tripled from 1970 to 1990, reaching close to thirty million. Similarly, the Asian American population has increased ninefold as compared with pre-1970 levels and now exceeds nine million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996). The African American population continues to grow at a faster rate than the European American population and will exceed thirty-three million by the year 2000. These changes have meant a shift in the composition of the U.S. population such that persons of color now represent one in four citizens (Hing, 1997; Lassiter, 1998). And current projections suggest that the relative proportion of whites to nonwhites could reach 50–50 by the year 2050 (Hing, 1997). These changes in the composition of the U.S. population mean that accepted Eurocentric cultural traditions and practices will increasingly be subject to question and challenge. The process has already begun.

One cautionary note is required here, however. As is always the case when discussing group-level characteristics and issues, one runs the risk of oversimplification or of overgeneralization. It is therefore advisable to qualify any discussion about the status of ethnic or cultural groups by saying that individuals within groups may have different experiences from those described as characteristic of the group. And so the discussion that follows proceeds with an acknowledgment that individuals are not determined by their group affiliations or identification. But this acknowledgment need not minimize the practical significance of the points made because many, if not most, persons within the groups described do experience some aspect of the group-level descriptions.

Assimilation Versus Separation. From early in U.S. history, European Americans have constituted the vast majority of citizens. Although strong ethnic affiliations and communities persist within this population, the large majority of whites see themselves as American, not as ethnic Americans or "hyphenated Americans," for example, as Italian-American, German-American, Anglo-American, and so on. Whereas European ethnic groups often entered the mainstream by becoming Americanized (Carlson, 1987), persons of color and of non-European ancestry remained separate. Even when European Americans retained a sense of ethnicity, it was not in the same way that excluded minorities did. Michael Novak's (1996) description of the "new ethnicity" among European Americans from Eastern and Southern Europe suggests that, although many European Americans acknowledge their ethnic lineage, they are uneasy about identifying themselves as ethnic American, preferring instead to see themselves only as American. He writes, "Many Southern and Eastern European-Americans have been taught, as I was, not to be "ethnic," or even "hyphenated," but only "American" (p. 347).

Ethnic identity among many European Americans is weakened by a more basic desire to self-identify as part of the larger human community. Ironically, then, American individualism and ethnic identity go hand in hand in the sense that one can have a loose sense of affiliation with an ethnic past

while seeing oneself as an individual not bound by the language, traditions, or customs of traditional ethnic culture. Novak notes: "Being 'universal' is regarded as being good; being ethnically self-conscious raises anxieties." Because one's whole identity has been based on being universal, one is "often loath to change public face too suddenly" (p. 346).

Mainstream American Culture and European American Ethnic Identity. In light of the earlier discussion, it should not be too surprising that many European Americans, and even persons of non-European descent, especially those who have achieved some level of educational or occupational success, view discussions about cultural difference with caution and suspicion. The emphasis on cultural differences suggests a tearing apart of American society—a destructive kind of particularism (Ravitch, 1991) that emphasizes racial and ethnic chauvinism over a general sense of American community. The criticism of race- or ethnic-based educational programs is often based on the belief that they are divisive and neither effective nor necessary. Samuel Betances (1985), writing about bilingual education, describes the position of the critics of ethnic culture who say, "My folks made it without bilingual education, what's wrong with yours?" (p. 7).

The tendency of white, middle-class Americans to question the experience of people of color from the perspective of their own ethnic experience suggests a broad view within U.S. mainstream culture that strives to diminish the significance of cultural differences within the population. One of the most active voices representing this view is an Asian Indian, Dinesh D'Souza, who argues that African Americans should follow the example of ethnic Europeans who immigrated and assimilated into mainstream American society (D'Souza, 1995). However, this view overlooks or minimizes the painful and distinct history and experience of people of color. The fact that European immigrants encountered different social and historical conditions than Chinese, Mexicans, Native Americans, or African Americans is largely understandable from the perspective of white privilege (McIntosh, 1990; Scheurich, 1993).

Culture, Difference, and Power. Although it may be said that cultural differences are ever endemic to American society, all cultures are not equally regarded. Carlson (1996) observes that, from its beginnings the United States has always privileged a monocultural standard favoring Anglo and Western European cultural traditions. Although the melting pot metaphor has characterized the way Americans have traditionally responded to the needs of minority groups, the historical actuality for many groups has negated the veracity of the metaphor. African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans continue to experience discrimination. But just as important, the culture of these minority groups is viewed negatively.

Furthermore, the assimilationist model advocated by D'Souza, for example, simply does not reflect the experience of African Americans and other groups. Ogbu refers to these groups as caste-like, indicating the resis-

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tance that mainstream white Americans feel toward accepting people of color into American society. The fact of the matter is that the assimilation model simply is not a viable option for some social groups (Novak, 1996).

The Dominant Culture. The idea of dominant culture is not far removed from the idea of mainstream culture. "Dominant culture" adds the component of power to "mainstream culture" and points to issues of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. Dominant cultural standards are emphasized and are easily identifiable to anyone familiar with American society. Naylor (1998) says, "If one accepts the notion that culture exists in ideas that then generate behavior, they [sic] have to conclude that American culture does exist in this suggestion of a mainstream culture in America, that body of ideas usually associated with the middle class" (p. 47). He goes on to identify a set of ideas that form the core of American mainstream culture such as individualism, freedom, toleration and nonconformity, materialism, and Christianity.

It is a mistake to assume that U.S. mainstream culture is characteristic of all groups in U.S. society. Those groups that do not conform to mainstream culture or who are viewed as being outside the mainstream assume a marginalized status and are oppressed. Minority status is highly associated with prejudice and discrimination. Although in common parlance, *minority* is usually taken to mean minority in numbers, the term more properly refers to low social status and lack of power within a highly stratified American society. Low status and asymmetrical power relations are associated with institutional arrangements that go beyond individual prejudice discrimination to reinforce the subordinate position of minorities.

In turn, negative beliefs and stereotypes are learned through mainstream cultural institutions and practices. Children receive systematic training from parents and from institutionalized sources such as the media about their roles in society and those of other groups. Absent any contravening influences, both white and African American adults "know" that *white* means right, good, normal and that *black* means less, bad, abnormal. Internalizing this permits white adults to be able to say, for example, "I am not prejudiced—but I don't want to live in a predominantly black neighborhood, and I do not want my children to attend a majority black school." These lessons produce stereotypes and myths and influence individual thought and behavior. This cycle of socialization (Harro, cited in Adams, Brigham, Delpes, and Marchesani, 1996) suggests how oppression is reproduced through culturally defined processes of learning. Thus stereotypes, myths, prejudice, and discrimination are reinforced and persist throughout society.

Consequences of Oppression. Both majority and minority persons are affected by the reproduction of oppression. Those persons who enjoy material and social privilege based on race, gender, or ethnicity (or other forms of privilege) often suffer from fear of crime and violence at the hands of minority group members. The rise in the number of gated communities that offer a

sense of security can be correlated with white, middle-class, culturally derived perceptions of racially, ethnically, or linguistically different people. Minorities often are blamed for the deprivation they experience such as poverty, crime, illiteracy, and drug addiction. Further, conservative ideologues argue that minorities are a drain on public tax dollars for social services. Within this environment, persons who are members of low-status social groups that are relatively powerless often internalize negative and destructive individual and group identities, which results in low expectations for life chances.

Majority group members hold the power to define and manipulate social space in ways that secure their sense of physical comfort and safety. Consequently, in many urban and suburban communities white, middle- and upper-class individuals restrict the number of minorities who are able to gain access to their communities and institutions such as educational, financial, and cultural and recreational establishments and organizations. Thus it is difficult to find large numbers of African Americans who are members of suburban country clubs or metropolitan civic boards. The absence of an appreciable number of persons of color serves to reinforce the myth that there are very few, if any, African Americans who merit participation in such organizations.

Moreover, minorities are then denied access to the kinds of public and private resources that can facilitate political or economic progress. Many predominantly minority communities are poor, undereducated, crime-ridden, and drug-infested, and they lack an institutional infrastructure to adequately deal with the problems facing them. Financial or material resources available at a grassroots level for community development or for group empowerment are minimal. Nevertheless, this cycle of oppression and its psychological and material consequences can be interrupted. Adult education serves as a fundamental resource for breaking this cycle.

Culturally Relevant Adult Education

Because learning is essential to cultural reproduction, learning is also a central way of combating cultural domination and oppression. Focusing on culture as both object and subject of individual and group learning serves as a way of breaking the destructive cycle of racial, gender, and ethnic oppression. This understanding of culture-based adult education has implications for adult educators who work with persons from traditionally marginalized social groups. In the context of culturally relevant education, then, educators have begun to question the relationship between the cultural origins of adult learners and the educational setting in which adults participate (Martin, 1990; Sheared, 1994; Colin, 1994). It is not enough simply to be culturally inclusive in a pluralistic environment (Moe, 1990). Inclusion does not guarantee equity. Rather, educational norms, processes, and goals must be reevaluated for their potential to assist learners whose individual and group identities are most at risk in terms of the dominant culture's definition of success.

The nature of the fit between learners' cultural backgrounds and their educational experiences is of central concern because of culture's importance in establishing criteria for success or failure. Thus, a principal focus of the educational experience, from the perspective of cultural relevance, is the reconstruction of learners' group-based identity from one that is negative to one that is positive. Learners from marginalized cultural backgrounds too often resort to a rejection of dominant cultural norms and standards (Ogbu, 1992; Quigley, 1990). However, such a stance consigns those individuals to further marginalization and exclusion (Darder, 1991). For adult educators interested in addressing the ways in which cultural domination affects learners in adult education settings, educational strategies must be developed to minimize the potential for further exclusion and marginalization of learners.

Biculturalism

Central to asserting a positive cultural identity so as to challenge racist, sexist, ethnocentric perspectives and practices is the learning that helps learners understand their culture and its value. Members of marginalized groups are, by virtue of the discrimination they face, forced to accommodate themselves to the dominant culture or be even further marginalized. One educational response to this situation is termed *biculturalism*. Darder (1991) argues that biculturalism should frame educational environments. She defines biculturalism as "a process wherein individuals learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture, and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live" (p. 48). This view of biculturalism is similar to the "double consciousness" concept of W.E.B. Du Bois (1990), who wrote that African Americans maintain a double consciousness by virtue of being both African and American. This double consciousness cannot be transcended but, Du Bois argued, can be reconciled, given the right social circumstances.

Other observers of color have made similar observations about the dual nature of minority identity in American society. Darder (1996, p. 49) states that "many studies of Black, Latino, Asian and Native American populations clearly indicate that a bicultural phenomenon is present in the development of people of color. They also support the notion of biculturalism as a mechanism of survival that constitutes forms of adaptive alternatives in the face of hegemonic control and institutional oppression."

Biculturalism is based on a philosophy of cultural democracy (Darder, 1996), asserting that people of color who come from subordinate cultures have the right to maintain their home culture as well as to become competent in the mainstream culture. Cultural democracy, then, refers to the goal of living in a society in which a multiplicity of cultures not only coexists but thrives. From this perspective, monocultural norms and practices must be rejected in favor of a restructuring of cultural and social processes that are

broadly inclusive. For adult educators this requires an examination of educational practices to make them culturally relevant to the needs and cultural backgrounds of learners.

Redefining the Norm. In his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973),Clifford Geertz argues that culture is essentially about shared meaning within a group. He identifies the importance of the symbolic—what he calls "systems of meaning" in the study of culture. He writes, "The concept of culture I espouse . . . [is] that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning" (pp. 4–5).

If we consider human action as essentially symbolic action, whenever we observe behaviors of people who are different from us, we should ask what is the significance or meaning of that action or behavior. Geertz says, "The thing to ask [of actions] is what their import is" (pp. 9–10). Understanding the significance or meaning of an action involves observing, questioning, and examining, and subsequently reformulating our own assumptions about what the action means. This is possible because, as Geertz asserts, cultures are open to interpretation by outsiders, as cultural meaning is a property of groups rather than individuals. Consequently, we should inquire among "insiders" as to what the action means, or we should seek assistance from someone in a position to know.

Applying Geertz's analysis to the adult education classroom, adult educators who observe learner behavior can raise questions about learner actions. By asking, What is the significance or the meaning that learners attach to their actions in the classroom?, adult educators can obtain a clearer understanding of how congruent learner and teacher perspectives are. When there is a significant difference in socialization between teachers and learners, it is vital that teachers question their assumptions about their learners' actions. For example, white, middle-class, female adult educators who have lived in middle-class homes and who work with African American single mothers may believe they have something in common with their students as either women or as mothers. Yet the barrier of race and class can lead to important misinterpretations and misunderstandings about how learners view the learning environment. In other words, the system of meaning shared among the students may be quite different from the beliefs, assumptions, and values of the instructor.

Rethinking Practice. Teaching in a culturally relevant way requires that adult educators examine the learning environment for communicative processes, instructional practices, classroom norms and expectations, learning evaluation criteria, and instructional content that is potentially culturally incompatible with the learners' culture. Marchisani and Adams (1992) present a useful model that can assist instructors in conceptualizing the classroom from a culturally relevant perspective. The model addresses four elements of the learning environment that should be examined through the

lens of culture: (1) the instructor's cultural identity, (2) the learners' cultural identity, (3) the curriculum, and (4) instructional methods and processes.

Instructor Cultural Self-Awareness. First, adult educators must engage in a process of self-examination about their own cultural identity. Because all human beings are essentially cultural beings, any examination of the cultural aspect of the learning environment requires that teachers also examine their own cultural beliefs, assumptions, values, attitudes, and behaviors. Individuals who are monocultural are especially vulnerable to misinterpretation of learners' actions and speech if the learners come from different ethnic, racial, or linguistic backgrounds (Adams, 1992). Rather than view learners from an ethnocentric perspective, that is, one's own cultural norms and standards, adult educators should suspend belief in their own cultural values and beliefs in order to find the meaning that learners attach to learning activities, processes, and materials (Colin and Preciphs, 1991). For example, a teacher who has chosen individual study time for learners who are accustomed to interacting in group work and in conversational style will need to reexamine the value and meaning of individualized learning in light of learners' cultural background.

Learner Culture. Adult educators sometimes find themselves responsible for the learning of students with whom they share little in common. Whenever teacher and learner cultural backgrounds differ, teachers should find a way to learn about who their learners are. Using Geertz's concept of "systems of meaning," understanding learner culture means, in a practical sense, discovering how learners attach meaning to every aspect of the educational environment. In describing elements of culturally relevant education, Ladson-Billings (1994) makes the point that while the racial identity, personality, teaching style, or educational philosophy of effective teachers of African American children may differ, these teachers *know* their students and their culture. They spend time in the communities where their students live. They feel culturally comfortable among their students even though they, themselves, may come from an entirely different cultural background. Simply knowing, or perhaps more accurately thinking that one knows, about heroes or about the music of a particular culture group is not sufficient. Educators of adults are well advised to follow Ladson-Billings' recommendation: know your students and their cultural background and use this information effectively and creatively during instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Inclusive Curricula. Adult educators should examine the curriculum to ensure that it does not contain stereotypical material or material that does not encompass learners' experiences. Colin describes the importance of selfethnic reflectors in the curriculum for African Americans (Colin, 1989). Course content that stereotypes the very learners it is designed to serve does those learners an injustice. Insensitive or unknowing teachers can overlook material that learners may find offensive or simply irrelevant to their daily lives. Sheared (1994; this volume) emphasizes the importance of connecting with learners' lived experiences. To the extent that classroom materials do not relate

to learners' life experiences, these materials become irrelevant and ineffective in facilitating learning. Teachers should examine materials to ensure that they do not stereotype and that they do not exclude learners. For example, if a class of Native American learners reads literacy materials that do not relate to their cultural backgrounds and that contain stereotypical images and representations of Native Americans, those materials do those learners an injustice.

Instructional Methods and Processes. Finally, instructional methods and processes that include or exclude learners require careful attention. The adult education literature is replete with examples of how teachers should share power and responsibility for learning (Apps, 1996; Brookfield; 1986, 1995; Knowles, 1980; Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 1996; Tisdell, 1995). The sharing of power between teachers and students is of vital importance in culturally diverse classrooms. However teachers honor the responsibility to ensure that classroom dynamics allow for maximum participation of all learners, care must also be exercised to avoid requiring just one form of communication. Chinese American learners, for example, may be uneasy volunteering to lead a class discussion because of their cultural values (Pratt, 1996). Issues of power (and who has it), inclusion, and participation are important elements of the culturally relevant adult classroom. Teachers should attend to classroom processes that maximize learner participation and power sharing.

Conclusion

Current trends in demographic changes in the United States will heighten the awareness and tension between mainstream American cultural values and practices and those of marginalized minorities and non-European immigrants. Learners from socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised groups are highly susceptible to being alienated by educational practices based on mainstream cultural values. Effective learning among these learners demands that adult educators reorient educational practices to incorporate learners' culture into the educational process.

Culturally relevant adult education requires more than a simple knowledge of techniques and methods. Cultural self-awareness and detailed cultural knowledge of learners is best achieved through experiential learning. Adult educators should find ways to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their learners and to discover learners' webs of significance. Cultural self-awareness, cultural knowledge about learners, and instructional skills that are inclusive and empowering constitute the kind of knowledge and skills required for service to marginalized learners.

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