

Diversity and the need for Multi-Cultural Education

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Introduction

The world is made up of many cultures and subcultures. That being said, each culture will be different. They will have different values and tradition and even different consequences for crimes. It is important that as a society we become culturally aware, living in America is a privilege. While we are not the freest country, there are aspects of the US that are more desirable than those of other countries. However, Americans tend to forget that other countries have different ways of doing things.

American culture is very independent, growing up in America you are taught how to be self-efficient and how to work on their own. From the time a child turns 18, it is expected that he/she moves out of their parents' house and becomes more responsible and independent. While in other cultures it is perfectly normal for children to stay with their parents until they are in their 30's. Being educated on multiple cultures and how it works can help create more understanding. For example, someone who is 19 and Guyanese may have a 10pm curfew, while someone who is 19 and American can stay out as late as they would like. Not being able to understand that the Guyanese individual may have different values and traditions may cause a rift in this friendship. If there was more multicultural education, then people would be more knowledgeable and understanding of the circumstances of others.

As you read on you will see how multicultural education can be beneficial to the everyday lives of humans, and how it can result in others being more understanding/empathetic towards certain situations.

My Cross-Cultural Experience

Culture plays a very important role in society; a culturally diverse society results in individuals understanding and learning from each other. Being born in Guyana and raised in new has definitely given me a sense of understanding for both cultures. My parents attempted to raise us as traditionally as possible, but that only lasted so long. Once my sister and I were able to think on our own we decided how we would want to live our lives. The norms and values in Guyanese culture are completely different from that of Americans. Certain ways of speaking are considered rude, women are not allowed to do certain things, and so on.

In reference to my midterm PowerPoint, you can see that my culture varies differently from that of Americans. My father has said that he would allow me to live at home until I'm married. They also do not believe in living together before marriage, which is something I think is smart to do. The taboos in Guyana are also different from those of America.

Norms

There are four subcategories that come from the word norms, each are folkways, laws, mores, and taboos. Each of these norms have a different meaning, they all aid in creating societies standards. Folkways are everyday actions/activities, such as holding the elevator, or saying hello or good morning when you walk into a room full of people. These things are not required for you to do but it would be more respectful. Mores are the norms based on moral belief; use/abuse of drugs are considered going against society's mores. Laws are heavily enforced in society by authoritative figures. The government sets the laws in America and the police enforce them. Lastly taboos, these are actions that society looks down upon heavily. As stated in the Midterm, Guyanese social norms include but are not limited to women moving out only after they are married, respecting elders because they are more experienced and wiser,

women usually take care of the household chores and kids while men work. This is very different from what is taught in America. Women in America are more empowered and more independent. There has been an increase of women who instead of starting a family, have chosen to work/build their career first and have children later in life. A very common norm would be the expectation that mothers should be nurturing and accepting of their children; however, this is not always the case. In some cases, “Mothers may find it difficult to accept serious societal norm violations because of the effects these violations have on parents” (Gilligan et al, 2015).” This means that instead letting the child be true to themselves, mothers worry more about how they will be viewed by others in society.

Values

According to Lumen Learning “Values are abstract concepts that certain kinds of behaviors are good, right, ethical, moral and therefore desirable.” (Evans, 2020). Looking at this definition of values Guyanese values would be that individuals are respectful, children should not speak out of turn, children should not express their opinions in a way that is perceived as rude. Overall, there is a very big theme around respect, in Guyana you will see individuals greet each other whether they know the person personally or not. Another value is teaching children correct behavior, to enforce this teacher in Guyana were given permission to hit the children. This is something that would be considered Taboo in American culture because hitting children excessively is frowned upon. Also, in New York Specifically, individuals keep to themselves, New Yorkers don’t say hello/good morning to everyone they pass by, but in Guyana that is normal, and you may be considered rude if you do not.

Taboos

Taboos are considered things that society as a whole frown upon. In Guyanese culture it is considered taboo if an individual engages in sex work, identifies as part of the LGBT+ community, lives with his/her partner before marriage, or if they have a child before marriage. These taboos are similar to those in America, Americans frown upon sex work and the LGBT+ community. While Americans are growing more educated and accepting on the subject it is still not fully accepted by society. Being more educated on a culture's norms and taboos can help limit judgment. People will understand that because of cultural limitations, you may not be able to engage in the same activities as others and so on. This is why multicultural education is so important, there is less room for judgement from others.

Cultural Appropriation

Cultural appropriation is a very controversial topic, it has been used to categorize multiple trends that have been going on in the last five years. Cultural appropriation occurs when one culture adapts the mannerisms and aspects of another culture and gets more credit/ is more accepted than the original cultures. This becomes a problem because minority groups are often stereotyped and discriminated against based off of their cultures, while the dominant culture gets praised.

Black Culture

Black culture has been a topic of controversy for a little while now. It is understandable that a race would be upset when other races adapt their culture and are treated better for it. The appropriation of black culture became more talked about when celebrities and other well-known individuals began wearing cornrows, dreads, and adapting to black culture. That being said, "Cultural appropriation is often mentioned in critical analyses of media representations and

commodification's of marginalized and/or colonized cultures.” (Rogers, 2006) The Kardashians are a prime example of how White women appropriating black culture and get praised and famous for it. Many of them have had surgery to give them bigger hips and a larger bottom half, others have gotten lip fillers and are called beautiful for it. The black community has always looked like this naturally but have been made fun of and bullied because of their appearance. A white woman then does it and it becomes okay. The stereotypes made about black culture also leads to other social problems. Police brutality is one effect of these stereotypes, black people are perceived as threatening which has since caused many of them their lives. In reference to the response paper on social injustice the black lives matter movement has become a prominent part of black culture. There are parents telling their children who have rarely experienced life how the world treats them, and how to act if the police ever approach them. This is instilling fear into the minds of younger children, which then leads to higher levels of intergenerational trauma. Intergenerational trauma is passed down throughout generations, think about it this way. Post-traumatic stress disorder is very real, from the beginning black people have had to watch their families get ripped away from each other, they watched their children be abused as slaves, then after slavery was over, they faced a lot of backlash from white people and never got treated for it. This trauma then evolves into aggression, being loud, unhealthy coping mechanisms and so on. Another example of social injustice and black people would be the image of the “welfare queen” which Ronald Reagan incorporated. This typically depicts a black woman as lazy, ghetto, and promiscuous. The welfare queen was also accused of having children just so that her benefits were increased. This depicts black women in a negative light and leads to misinformed communities. This all ties back to cultural appropriation and this disadvantage which minorities

face because there are many white people who are on welfare, but they are not seen as frauds or cheaters simply because they are white.

Asian/Indian Culture

Asian culture is another one that has been appropriated. Asian meaning all parts of Asia not just China, Japan and so on. Indian culture has also been appropriated by many celebrities and public figures; this type of cultural appropriation does not get recognized as much as it does with Black culture. Many fashion cultures are mimicking styles that are traditional to Asian culture, such as kimonos, hair chopsticks, and so on. Artists like Iggy Azalea, Selena Gomez, Beyonce, and so on have also used the clothing of Indian culture in their music videos and have been praised for it. Meanwhile, actual Indians have been teased for how they dress, the foods they eat, and so on. It paints an image for their viewers that wearing the clothing of a different culture is okay, without having knowledge on what they wear and why. The music videos use culture as a style, which is disrespectful to those actually a part of the culture.

Many people are partaking in these trends because they are misinformed and not well educated on this subject. Kleisath (2014) states “ I began to assume my experience as a form of evidence which would render me incapable of perpetrating acts of cultural appropriation. Simply put, the fact that I had “been there” justified my choice to wear Tibetan clothing.” this article speaks about a white woman's experience with cultural appropriation in Asia. She felt that she was entitled to be a part of Tibetan culture simply because she had visited the country. This also shows how educating individuals on different cultures can better help their understanding of what is right and wrong in regard to these different cultures.

Cultural Appropriation vs Appreciation

Cultural Appropriation is basically stealing the culture of someone else and getting more credit for it. As an analogy cultural appropriation can be compared to plagiarism. Cultural appreciation is more along the lines of giving credit where credit is due. There is a very fine line between appropriation and appreciation. And oftentimes people can mix up the two, for example if a white woman gets dreads but talks about how dreads on black people are dirty, or unkept. That would be an example of appropriation, now hair is a very controversial topic, but there are instances where white people can get certain black hairstyles and have it be for appreciation purposes.

Art teachers exhibit cultural appreciation on a daily basis “Art educators appreciate different cultural images. They research them, practice making them, and teach them in the art room. And so, the art room becomes an ideal place to teach cultural appreciation.” (Han, 2019). Art teachers are a great way to understand appreciation, they take the time to learn about the culture instead of jumping on a social trend.

Social Injustice

This paper will briefly touch on the topic of social injustice. The US has had many unjust cases when it comes to the public vs authoritative figures. The Black Lives Matter Movement, #METOO movement, and cases within the LGBTQ+ community shows how unjust society can actually be. Culture is not always based on a country or religion. Black culture, Woman culture, and LGBTQ+ culture are all forms of subcultures in society. It is not always seen that way but there are some things that each of these groups do, that may stand out to others. For example, men and women are raised very differently, the norms and values of a woman would be very

different than those of a man. Same goes for a white and black person, or a heterosexual person and a homosexual person.

The stereotypes surrounding individuals who are black, cause tension in society. A white woman clutching her purse while in an elevator with a black man or crossing the street because someone of a certain race is behind you. These are all microaggressions which can elevate. The black lives matter movement began because Trayvon Martin's murderer was not charged for his death. This caused outrage especially because Martin was not doing anything but walking home from the store. Since then, there have been protests all over the world for black lives lost to the police and others who were not charged. These microaggressions turn into hate, and people begin to believe the stereotypes. That is why cops are allowed to get away with saying they feared for their life when in an encounter with a black person. If there were better training, and police were taught how to deescalate situations before shooting, there would be less of these incidents.

We will briefly talk about the #METOO movement and the problems people in the LGBTQ+ community face. The #METOO movement started in 2006 but went viral when Alyssa Milano exposed her abuse by Harvey Weinstein. Since then, more women have gained the courage to report their own abuse. Because of this movement, workplaces have introduced sexual harassment trainings which depicts the proper behavior for workplace culture. Lastly the LGBTQ+ community, they face a lot of backlash in society for their sexual orientation of gender identity. If people were willing to listen, the LGBTQ+ community would be better understood. There are many studies showings that gender dysphoria is real, and a person can feel that way. However, society is not willing to change, it wants to keep things the way it was when their sub-groups did not have much power, the purpose is to keep society divided. Individuals who identify as transgender face the most backlash from society as of now. They even face backlash

from other members of the LGBTQ+ community. Being more educated would help ease the judgment and create a safer space.

Need for Multicultural Education

If there were more education courses based on different cultures, children and adults would be able to become culturally diverse. Learning about different cultures instills knowledge and because people would understand the circumstances of others, there may be less judgement. This also leads to effective cross-cultural communication in all aspects of life. This pertains to all types of cultures and subcultures as well.

Starting with the LGBTQ+ community, a study by Dessel & Gutierrez (2016) goes into depth about reducing heterosexism in African American Christian children. The study found that introducing multicultural education courses effectively decreased the negative outlooks to marginalized and stereotyped groups of people. This proves the point that if we are exposed to multicultural education as children, we will gain more knowledge about each other and the different struggles we face. This then leads to more compassion being spread throughout people.

Multicultural education can be very beneficial in preparing children for the real world and more diverse experiences. Keeping children sheltered and within a community of people who look just like them, does not prepare them for the real world. A study done by Kahraman & Sezer (2017) states “Considering the fact that education starts during the preschool period, it is thought that information and skills regarding the development of universal features, like being democratic, respecting difference, multiculturalism and globalization, should be practically added to class contents at every level of the education program” children are like sponges when they are young, so teaching them to be culturally diverse will stick throughout each developmental stage in their life.

The last topic regarding multicultural education is how to implement it when working with all white children. This paper previously stated that children who grow up in neighborhoods where everyone is the same, will not know how to communicate to those of different cultures. Things a white person says may come off as rude or privileged if it is not worded correctly. Children are generally very curious beings “Young children seek to make meaning from their experiences. In meaning making, young children ask questions or make assumptions about race, culture, and identity. Often when early childhood teachers are faced with questions about race and culture, they can fumble in their attempt to give the "right" answer.” (Anderson, 2012), by exposing white children to different cultures you are limiting the room for stereotypes, because they get to witness these people as they are. This also helps children identify and reject stereotypes when they come up. Adding multicultural education to school curriculums will teach students about the different types of oppression and how it affects each culture/race.

There are many ways to implement cross-cultural understanding into everyday life. First by adding a week or so into a school curriculum where students explore and research different cultures. This teaches the different traditions and ways of life for people who do not identify as them. An article written by Stobierski (2019) goes into detail about ways we can improve cross-cultural communication in the workplace. This means that co-workers from different cultures can effectively engage with each other while at work, becoming aware and encouraging being open minded are all positive ways to embrace the different cultures in the workplace. The next article will speak about building cultural fluency and steps to take in order to do so.

Cultural fluency is important because we live in a very diverse society. New York especially is considered a melting pot, there are so many different cultures and races that make New York so unique. New York City is the most diverse area of New York, with most of the

population residing here. Hyun & Conant (2019) write about ways an individual can build cultural fluency, there were 3 ways highlight in the article, these are “Reflect, Act with intent, and practice” (Hyun & Conant, 2019) The first step is to reflect which means that you need to assess your own biases and judgments of others, to act with intent means that you are actively trying to change your way of thinking, which will lead to you being a better person. Lastly practice means to continue to give your best efforts in being non-judgmental and thinking without ill-intent even when controversial topics arise.

By implementing these strategies into everyday life, one will build cultural competency towards each other which then leads to a more comfortable environment regardless of it being work, school, or other social environments.

Conclusion

To bring everything together, multicultural education would be very beneficial if it was taught in the various stages of our development. Being exposed to different cultures build fluency and social interaction between each other, which then leads to less biases between cultures. Multicultural education would be beneficial to various aspects of culture not only ethnicity wise but also subcultures in these ethnicities. Nonmaterial culture and Material culture are two different things and being knowledgeable in each type of culture is important. If individuals were more culturally aware then there would be less room for stereotypes and rumors to go around. Ideas such as the welfare queen and stigmatizing black people would not occur. Of course, the society as a whole would have to be willing to make this switch into becoming more accepting first.

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- This article speaks about the healthcare system in Australia. It speaks about the racial discriminations that are present in the Australian healthcare system. This is directly related to BLM because during the pandemic many individuals took to the streets to protest what has been going on. This was particularly dangerous because there was not much social distancing and people were putting themselves at risk for catching the virus.

Chaitman, S. (2013, May 15). The State's Attorney's LGBTQ/hate crime specialist talks crime and justice. *Windy City Times*, 28(32), 12.

- This article speaks on the difficulties the LGBTQ+ when faced with hate crimes and so on. It speaks about extra steps individuals who are LGBTQ+ have to take and what things they have to consider when reporting a case. This article is basically an interview with a state attorney who specializes in cases with the LGBTQ+ community.

Foust, M. (2018, August 15). Gender-Neutral Restrooms Are the ONLY Option at These New Public Schools. Retrieved from

<https://www.christianheadlines.com/contributors/michael-foust/gender-neutral-restrooms-are-the-only-option-at-these-new-public-schools.htm>

- This article speaks about a school which changed their bathrooms to gender neutral. Many people showed support of this especially because it accommodated transgender students. However, many also expressed their concern and disbelief in the situation.

Krieger, N. (2020). ENOUGH: COVID-19, Structural Racism, Police Brutality, Plutocracy, Climate Change—and Time for Health Justice, Democratic Governance, and an Equitable, Sustainable Future. *American Journal of Public Health, 110*(11), 1620–1623. <https://doi-org.york.ezproxy.cuny.edu/10.2105/AJPH.202>

- This article speaks on covid-19 and many other factors that have been affecting society for this year. The article speaks about the social injustice movements that have been taking place even though we are living in a pandemic. For people to have to protest inequality and put themselves at risk of catching the virus shows the problem America has.

Lee B. H. (2018). #Me Too Movement; It Is Time That We All Act and Participate in Transformation. *Psychiatry investigation, 15*(5), 433.

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- This article speaks about how the me-too movement has impacted women around the world. It talks about how sexual harassment in the workplace is not being tolerated. The article also speaks about how policies should be set in place, and what circumstances need to be set in place to make these policies most effective.

Oleszczuk, A. (2020). Hashtag: How Selected Texts of Popular Culture Engaged With Sexual Assault In the Context of the Me Too Movement in 2019. *New Horizons in English Studies, 5*(1), 208–217. <https://doi.org/10.17951/nh.2020.5.208-217>

- This article explores how pop culture has aided in the context of the me too movement. It also looks at how western culture has had a great impact on the me too movement as

well. It discussed how social media also plays a part in the expansion of the me too movement. Women are becoming more aware and speaking out more

Randis, K. L. (2017). *Spilled milk*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace.

- This book speaks about one girl's story of enduring abuse from her father for years. Her mother was addicted to pills and was never really aware of the situation, but when she did find out she ended up blaming the daughter. The author speaks about how she went about getting justice for herself and how she decided to send her father to prison. This relates to the me too movement because once she spoke out, many other individuals also spoke out against their abusers.

Reuter, E. (2019). Me Too Movement Goes to Work: LEGAL: Harassment Laws Get Tougher in Protecting Workers. *San Diego Business Journal*, 40(20), 1–.

- This article speaks on the increase in sexual assault cases since the me too movement began. The article gives several cases where cities have seen an increase of claims. It also speaks on how women are becoming more aware of the circumstances and more employees coming forward because they are aware of their rights.

Stagnitta, A. (2020, Jun 29). Catt Sadler reveals why she 'Didn't hesitate' to use her platform to support the BLM movement. *Hollywood Life*, Retrieved from <http://york.ezproxy.cuny.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.york.ezproxy.cuny.edu/docview/2418450286?accountid=15180>

- Catt Sadler, a reporter from E-News, speaks about why she took to social media in support of the BLM movement. Sadler used her very large social media influence in order to show her support in the BLM movement. Using her platform helps bring

awareness to the problem, even though it was being broadcasted all over social media and the news.

Swannell, C. (2020). COVID-19, Black Lives Matter and making a difference. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 213(4), C1–C1. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50723>

- This article speaks about how Covid-19 has directly affected groups of individuals who were already marginalized by society's standards. Swannell goes into speaking about systemic racism especially in the health related field, as well as how things can be improved. This talks about how the healthcare system can be improved, while also dealing with the covert racism that happens behind the scenes.