

Kabagarama, D. (1997). Breaking the ice: A guide to understanding people from other cultures (2 ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. ISBN: 0-205-26652-5

Goldstein, S. (2000). Cross-cultural explorations: Activities in culture and psychology. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. ISBN: 0-205-28520-1

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Across the teaching areas within leisure studies it seems educators are attempting to find resources to increase student involvement in the classroom and broaden the perspectives of students beyond middle-class white Americans. The following two books may be useful in that pursuit. While each of these books is formatted differently and provides differing value to leisure curriculums, both have a primary value of providing activities and discussions to involve the student in learning about their own cultural beliefs and those of others.

The stated purpose of Cross-cultural explorations: Activities in culture and psychology is to “contribute to the inclusion of cultural perspectives” (p. vi) in psychological research. The book contains over 300 pages of worksheets, case studies, and exercises. Several exercises are specific to psychology and are potentially less beneficial in the leisure studies curriculum, or may require prior knowledge of psychology to be useful. However, many of these learning tasks are very beneficial for recreation and leisure studies curricula. I think this is an excellent resource of learning activities to increase knowledge and understanding of cultural issues and how these are addressed in a professional leisure services setting as well as through research. One example of this is the activity to explore normal and abnormal behavior. Students are asked to describe a behavior that is considered abnormal at one point in history but normal at another; or normal in one setting and abnormal in another setting; or normal in your culture but abnormal in another culture.

Each chapter contains a group of ten exercises focused on a specific topical area. All of the chapters cover a wide spectrum of human differences such as age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and nationality. Chapter one provides exercises to open the discussion of culture and increase awareness of cultural beliefs and meanings. An exercise on cultural relativism and ethnocentrism offers various scenarios and asks the stu-

dent to support either relativism or ethnocentrism in each case. Similarly, chapter three includes activities to explore how we learn the values and beliefs of our dominant culture and the validity of intelligence measures across cultures. Exercises in chapter four are directed at the processes in the development of culture through families, schools, and social interactions. Several exercises point out the influence of media in this development. Other chapters include health, stress and coping, social behavior, and intergroup relations. The table of contents lists each activity with descriptive titles, making it easy to find an exercise pertaining to specific learning objectives.

Although all chapters include references to research findings, chapter two directly explores the issues of culture and research. One exercise instructs the student to interview a member and nonmember of some group, asking questions about group membership, purpose, and characteristics. Two exercises address the potential bias in the translation of research instruments. One allows students to practice preparing test materials for translation. The other introduces the concept of back translation, or having two bilingual individuals participate in the translation and then translation back of a particular instrument. One person translates the original item to another language then the second person translates it back to the original language. By comparing the two versions students can identify concepts or word forms that may be translated inaccurately.

Teachers of disability issues may find exercises on differences in daily life skills useful. They offer the opportunity to explain the strengths and potential of persons who may not exhibit intellectual skills as determined by IQ tests or other measures. Persons for whom video games are a “daily context of life” as opposed to persons who do not participate in the activity regularly was an example of the competencies of playing video games. The point can easily be made that the non-players are deficient in skills possessed by members of the other group, yet that deficit does not equate to being unsuccessful in other tasks.

The development of a cultural perspective is explored through language and social interaction. Activities guide the participant to observe and reflect on norms and values held within their dominant culture. Further, the participant is asked to reflect on how he or she “came to believe” what they believe such as modeling, informal or formal education, or punishment or reward.

This book could be a useful resource for teaching a research course as well as any course where an attempt is made to include issues of cultural differences. Because much of the material is written specifically for psychology, the user may find it necessary to rewrite some of the scenarios, or to bring in related research examples from leisure studies. Still, the breadth of approaches to providing interactive learning is beneficial.

Breaking the ice is an easily read book with the intent to guide readers to understand the process of accepting and respecting differences in people. The book includes useful exercises in each chapter that could be used in class or assigned for outside work. The exercises are directed at assisting the reader to become aware of his/her own cultural

bias and to begin to compare it to other belief systems. There are exercises for readers to be reflective about their culture such as to identify their favorite food, music, clothing style and then discuss in small groups how they came to favor that item. Another is to brainstorm a list of all the different cultures one belongs to, rank them according to importance, and then identify positive and negative aspects of belonging to each group.

Several chapters seem to add little to the overall intent of the book. The first chapter provides an overview of statistics about the diversity of the world population. As this book was published in 1997, the statistics are minimally useful for factual information but do provide a framework for exploring the influence of a global economy spurred by technology and again to remind us that our worldview is not the only view. Similarly, Chapter 3 addresses communication differences and ways to improve communication. Very little new information is provided here, rather the chapter provides an overview of communication skills useful in any situation and is not specifically directed at improving communication between people of differing cultural beliefs. For instance, there is no mention of how to address or overcome language differences. The final chapter is intended to address how systems can change to improve cultural understanding.

Chapter 2 provides a good primer on culture. In this chapter and throughout, real life examples of cultural differences are used to emphasize or clarify points such as how people from different cultures view timeliness. This chapter provides a simplified view of social construction and the values of symbols, norms, and aspirations. Further, the discussion illustrates how societies perpetuate their own belief systems. I feel this chapter would be appropriate for an undergraduate reader and the introduction of cultural determinism.

The heart of the book is the seven-step process of cross-cultural understanding. This section provides a step-by-step, although not linear process, of how to increase your awareness and understanding of cultural differences. Again, the information is fairly elementary and much of it is simply good interaction strategy. Tips such as being *genuinely* interested in a person who is different and to be *empathetic not sympathetic* are steps in the process. Advice is given to ask questions from general to specific when attempting to increase interaction with someone and to avoid sensitive subjects until a relationship has been formed. Each step is tied to the central message of realizing the cultural lens you are using and acknowledging that the person you are interacting with is judging the interaction through his/her lens too.

I find the most useful part of this book to be the exercises in each chapter and the real life scenarios presented. These underscore the fact that people see the world differently and that we need to be more open to opinions that are different and even in conflict to our own. I will use both books as desk references to vary the activities and stories I have to share with students. Each book might be useful in a diversity of leisure class as a supplement to other readings but would be weak as a primary text.