

Book Review

Multicultural Teaching in the University, David Schoem, Linda Frankel, Ximena Zuniga, Edith Lewis (Eds.), Westport, CT, Praeger Press, 1993, 361 pp.

Health education approaches that are grounded in the concepts of community empowerment and capacity building facilitate both individual and social change through strategies that enable people in groups, organizations, and communities to enhance control over their lives.^{1,2} In the United States, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and class shape the daily experience of individuals and groups, affect access to and experience with health care providers, shape the extent to which individuals and groups have power to influence social and economic processes within their communities, and affect physical and mental health status.³⁻⁷ Awareness of the dynamics that contribute to these effects within communities and engage community members in exploration and challenge to systems that maintain inequitable access to material and nonmaterial resources both within and between communities is an important aspect of community-based health education practice. Health educators who have the skills and resources to participate in a dialogue with community members about issues of difference and power are able to work with individuals to examine these dynamics within their communities, to recognize their relationship to health, and to develop interventions directed toward both individual and social change. Given the increasing diversity of the communities within which health educators work, the knowledge and skills to be effective in multicultural contexts are especially important.

As the title suggests, *Multicultural Teaching in the University* is a collection of articles that document and analyze the efforts of the authors to incorporate multicultural content and process in courses taught at the university undergraduate and graduate levels. Although written primarily for educators in academic institutions, the authors' analysis of structural and personal factors that maintain inequities contains valuable insights that have relevance beyond the university classroom. The collected experience of the contributors in addressing these barriers has value for those who work in different organizations and communities. However, an academic setting that brings together students and instructor to meet once or twice a week for a period of 15 weeks differs in important ways from community or organizational settings. The book may be most valuable for community-based health educators in identifying resources and issues, and in suggesting ways to manage conflicts or resistances that arise in working with diverse communities, with the recognition that both content and process will vary with the specific setting.

The book is structured according to thematic categories, and begins with an introductory discussion that frames the editors' perspective on multicultural

teaching within the context of contemporary debates on this issue.^{8,9} Of particular interest in this chapter is a discussion of power, conflict, social justice, and social change, in which the editors' analysis recognizes that power differentials shape both experience and the interpretation of experience. In this section they clearly separate themselves from a perspective that sees multiculturalism as "just difference" and highlight their own emphasis on the ways that difference is used to maintain differential access to social resources. This perspective suggests the importance to health education practice of engaging diverse groups, and especially those with less social power, in processes of change. It also highlights the importance of building in opportunities for critical analysis of social systems in community-based public health initiatives.

Following this introductory framework, the writers examine issues of pedagogy, content, process, and institutional barriers to change within the university from disciplinary perspectives that include sociology, psychology, math, science, law, social work, and public health. Course descriptions and issues identified reflect the particulars of the disciplines, but issues of pedagogy, the articulation of the goals of multicultural education, and attention to issues of power, conflict, and change that are highlighted by many of the authors have implications for social change work both within academic institutions and in organizations and communities that may be more commonly sites of health education practice. These essays (divided into sections on courses on intergroup relations; courses on racism, sexism and diversity; general courses giving attention to diversity; and Teacher Training and Nonformal Education) are followed by an informative roundtable discussion in which the contributors to the volume articulate their diverse visions and critiques of multicultural education. Perhaps one of the more useful sections for health educators working with community members is the one titled "Teacher Training and Nonformal Education." Included in this section are chapters on the use of dialogue groups as an approach to communicating across difference; informal educational techniques for combatting homophobia; faculty development in teaching about issues of racism and diversity (this section provides useful information for health educators interested in developing their own skills in this arena); and training teaching assistants, highlighting issues in training to enhance cultural competence.

The last two sections of the book will be of great interest to practitioners looking for specific and concrete suggestions about how to incorporate a more multicultural perspective into their work with community groups and service providers. In the first of these the editors pose a series of key questions about ways to structure the content and dynamics of courses that offer valuable insights for facilitating multicultural learning in a variety of settings. For each of the 15 questions in this section (e.g., how do you create an open, comfortable, and challenging multicultural classroom environment?; what do you do to empower "underrepresented voices" in the classroom?; and, what do you do when a student in class discussion makes an explicitly racist or sexist remark?), responses from three or more of the contributors to the volume are included, offering a range of insights, experiences, and ideas on each issue.

The final section of the book includes exercises used by some of the authors in their teaching experiences. Included is a description of each exercise, instructions for implementation, and comments and suggestions for introducing, struc-

turing, and processing the exercise. Although primarily directed toward a college-age population, these exercises provide a basis for practitioners working with other populations: both the exercises themselves and the ensuing discussions can be shaped to fit the needs of the group. Health educators involved in training, organizational change, and community organizing strategies with multicultural groups will find these exercises especially useful.

This book reflects the experience of instructors working at the university level, and aspects of their work will not transfer directly to health educators working in other types of settings with their own constraints and strengths. It incorporates a helpful collection of strategies, materials (there is an extensive reading list that covers a broad range of topics and perspectives), and exercises on which the health educator can draw. Through clearly articulated discussions of their own experiences, contributors highlight conflicts and the potential for change that arise in the process of addressing race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, and religious difference in organizations and communities within the United States. As health educators continue to work with increasingly diverse communities toward individual and social change, they will benefit from the analyses, strategies, and the wealth of experience collected in this volume.

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