



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1990 Volume V: American Family Portraits (Section II)

Cultural Diversity: The American Family—Past, Present, and Future

Curriculum Unit 90.05.01
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This unit is for seventh grade students in the Talented and Gifted Program. I meet with these students once a week and while our day together consists of a wide variety of creative thinking and problem solving activities, a large portion of our day is centered around a core curriculum entitled “The Future”. This unit will be used within that curriculum area and will focus on families: changes in the family in the recent past and families from different cultural backgrounds. Information from the past and present will then be used to discuss and write about the family in the future.

The “traditional” family, as I have thought of it, and as is often portrayed in the literature that my students read, is an institution of the past, if indeed, it ever really existed at all. I am aware that the majority of my students come from single-parent families or families that include a step-parent and step-siblings. Some move between their parents’ separate households or live under guardianship of other relatives. In addition, the roles of family members are changing. The most obvious in recent years is the increase in the numbers of mothers working outside of the home, but there are also changes in the roles of fathers and in expectations for children.

For this unit I propose to look at families in literature that represent the Black, Hispanic, White, Japanese, Chinese and Native American cultures. I became interested in the cultural diversity of American families as a result of two recent events. The first event was a conference I attended in March, 1990 of the Connecticut Association of Gifted, the theme of which was “The Culturally Diverse Gifted Student.” It was there that I had reaffirmed what I already knew: that among our minority populations, particularly Black and Hispanic, different behaviors are encouraged at home and receive attention that are not academic in nature. For example, in Black families children are recognized for strength in the areas of responsibility, humor, sensitivity, courage, manual dexterity, among others.

Furthermore, the 1990 Draft Revision of Excerpts from *ConnCept IX: Identifying and Programming for Hispanic Gifted and Talented Students* states that 1) Hispanic parents and children are modest about their special talents and that 2) a high value is put on the ability to share and cooperate and on social activism. These are gifts that need to be recognized and built upon in programming for these culturally diverse students. In addition, during the keynote speech entitled “Identifying and Enhancing Gifted Behavior in the Culturally Diverse child”, it was noted that America is not a “melting pot” but is rather a salad bar. Indeed, the salad bar concept is much more relevant to my experience with people—children and adults—from different ethnic backgrounds. I am aware that many people from different cultural backgrounds work hard not to be so

completely assimilated into the general American culture that they lose their ties with their country of origin or their cultural traditions.

In addition, I read a report from this school system that reported to the State Department of Education the number of students whose predominant language at home was a language other than English. I was amazed to discover twenty-three languages listed. Besides Spanish, these languages are:

American Indian

Cambodian

Chinese

French

German

Greek

Haitian

Hebrew

Hindi

Hungarian

Italian

Japanese

Korean

Laotian

Malay

Philippino

Polish

Portuguese

Punjabi

Taiwanese

Vietnamese

This means that there are twenty-four cultures represented including Black and White cultures. It is obvious that my students and I have only to look around us to find all the information we need about different cultures

and how families differ within these cultures.

This unit, therefore, will go in two directions. It will look at the family from a sociological point of view to see how the “family” in America has changed, especially in the last twenty-five years, and how societal changes have had an impact on family life. It will also present the American histories of the six different cultures in this unit.

Background—The following is historical information about the six major ethnic groups that this paper will examine. I am starting with the white middle class majority that has no identifiable ethnic group with which to identify since that is the group that much literature has been based upon. Let me add here, parenthetically, that much television programming has been based on the white middle class family also, and this is what we have also used to frame our definition of family. We should also note here that while one person’s past may be different from another’s, it may not be entirely different either. ¹ It is my job, therefore, to point out the differences in order that students may understand them better and to build on the similarities that do exist between cultures. Also, regardless of our culture, there is value in studying our pasts to better understand our present (D. p.xii) and to better predict what our future will be like and to prepare for it.

When looking at a culture’s methods, it is important to look at the cultural “Gestalt” (D. p.16) to see how it all fits together. Its traditions and customs will then not seem so strange to the outsider. I am beginning this discussion with the white middle class because of what John Demos, in *Past, Present, and Personal*, calls “central tendency” or the concept that those on the edges of society, over time, will move to the middle. (D. p.xi) Thus, it can be considered that the white middle class has played a style setting role in the U.S. and other cultures have been drawn into it, ambivalent though they may have been by this inclusion. (D. p.27)

Historically, the white middle class family was the building block upon which larger social institutions were built. The colonial family shared a common work experience which paralleled the community at large. (D. p.28) Parents worked side by side in carefully defined roles and both shared the child rearing responsibilities. The father of the past was a role model of good behavior and character. He oversaw the education of his children and arranged their marriages and inheritances because women as mothers were considered too lax and indulgent to handle these affairs of their children. (D. p.45) Students might be interested to learn that in colonial America there existed “stubborn child” laws that allowed the death penalty for children who were persistently disobedient to their parents. (D. p. 29)

The urban family in the 19th century was the first to change. For the first time the family became separate from the community and an adversary relationship developed in which the family was to protect its members from the rest of society. ² (D. p.31) It was during the Industrial Revolution that fathers were “taken out of the home” (F. p.16) and it was then that they surrendered their influence over their children to their wives who stayed at home as the children’s caretakers. As the mother’s influence over her children grew in importance, the father’s influence was reduced. (D. p.50) This was a time in which there were new ideas and sexual stereotyping became the norm. Women were judged to be “suited” by character to staying at home. (D. p.49) Furthermore, as the father became more and more a part of the outside world, and as he left the home each day in his role as provider, he became elevated in status because he could move about in the “real world.” His ideas had to be heeded, his orders followed. (D. p.52) He became the final disciplinarian. (D. p.50) Thus developed the ideals of father as “breadwinner” and the mother as “model” mom. (D. p.33). This also meant that as the father was placed under increasing demands to provide for his family, he concentrated on that more and more and did less and less at home. (D. p.55.)

Today most scholars agree that breadwinner-homemaker model was and is not the norm. Because Black and immigrant families were not able to afford only one wage earner, this family structure was a white middle class phenomena that existed between 1860 and 1920. As early as 1893, the census bureau noted an increase in the number of working women and in the divorce rate, although there was an increase in the trend toward the traditional family right after World War II when G.I.'s were returning home and the U.S. economy was strong. This trend reversed in the early 60's although television (e.g. Ozzie and Harriet) helped perpetuate the model. (F. p.17) In 1950, 22 percent of U.S. families had both parents working; in 1980, 42 percent were families with two wage earners. ³At present, two-thirds of all mothers are in the work force. (F. p.16)

Today there are many stresses on the family due to rapid changes that are taking place. The divorce rate has doubled since 1965 which means that one-third of all children born since 1980 will probably live in a step-family before they are eighteen. This is in light of consistent findings that step-parenthood does not re-create the nuclear family. ⁴

All of these stresses are compounded because we still hold onto some 19th century ideas about what the family should be like (D. p.39) This is intriguing since statistics show that existing family patterns consist of the following:

- 1/4 of family groups are childless couples, couples with grown children and families headed by females

- 1/4 of family groups live in communes or are couples living together, unmarried couples, and single persons alone or living together for economic reasons, and homosexual couples

- 4 percent of families are extended, with grandparents, aunts living together

These figures are important because it means that less than fifty percent of the families in the U.S. are what are referred to as a "traditional family" with mother, father and children living together. (C. p.18) In addition, the number of single-parent families has grown seven times faster than two-parent families. (C. p.63) This points out that there is a need for us to rethink our assumptions about what the family is, just as we need to rethink our assumptions about any family's traditions and values due to cultural differences.

Some words on ethnicity in general: as stated earlier, in recent years there has been a decline in the notion of America as a melting pot. It is now generally accepted that American society is made up of "unmeltable ethnics" and the salad bar or salad bowl metaphor has developed: the willingness of any one group to peaceably coexist with another ⁵ and taking the metaphor one step further, to complement one another. In this country, however, the white majority has had an ethnocentrism that "presumes superiority on the part of the host culture and inferiority of newly arrived immigrants' culture." (M. p.2)

Two definitions are worth noting here. Mandel and Habenstein, in *Ethnic Families in America*. define an ethnic group as "those who share a unique social and cultural heritage that is passed on from generation to generation" and a minority group as "any group with unequal access to power and who are considered unworthy of having power." A minority group is those discriminated against because of assumed traits or

characteristics. (M. p.4) This is worth mentioning since some ethnic and minority families face a variety of conflicting problems. They are looking for roots in the U.S. where, to the White majority, any one strange or different is considered suspicious. At the same time they want to maintain the traditions and values of their former country. This is not an easy task.

In the past, people paid little attention to ethnicity because they considered ethnic differences as transitory. As mentioned earlier, the “central tendency” would prevail and any immigrant to the U.S. would eventually gravitate to the center of U.S. society by adopting its culture and value. Ironically, many immigrants found that adopting an American identity was difficult, if not impossible, by the American social structure which condoned discrimination and prejudice. (M. p.5)

There has been an increase in the recognition of the importance of ethnicity in recent years. This has happened for a number of reasons. In recent years what happens to an ethnic group in the U.S. has become more important than what happens in their country of origin. As religion has become less important as a source of ethnic identification, ethnic groups have become political, economic and cultural interest groups. This has made conflict between groups possible (M. p.6) as each watches out for its own interests. All of this means that the family is important in maintaining a group’s ethnic identification and unity and in shaping and controlling the future behavior of its members. (M. p.7)

Since the historical experience of a group and the conditions a group has had to live under has influence on how persistently a family will strive to maintain its cultural identity, the following is a brief history of the following ethnic groups with which this paper is concerned: Afro American, Puerto Rican, Japanese American, Chinese American and Native American.

Black American Families— There are four traits that make Black Americans different as an ethnic group: 1) they came from a continent with norms and values that are different from America, 2) they came from many different tribes with different languages, cultures, and traditions, 3) they came to America without females at first, and 4) they came in bondage. Thus, the slave family was very important. It provided moral support and helped maintain the self esteem of its members. It taught its members the “ropes” of slavery—how to avoid punishment, for example—and it provided for the socialization of its children. (M. p.223) In 1917, 90 percent of Black children were born in wedlock. The notion that slavery weakened the Black family as an institution is not true. (M. p.225) It was in the late 1800’s that the strong role of women emerged. This was because, due to racism, Black men were not able to find employment, whereas Black women were able to find work, albeit in domestic and more menial capacities. In 1900, 41 percent of Black women were working whereas 16 percent of White women were. (M. p.225) However, it should be noted here that fathers were present and were the norm in Black families. The idea that they opted out of domestic life is a myth. The roles of Black parents were integrated. Fathers helped raise their children and protect them from racism while mothers helped provide support. The rise of illegitimacy and female-headed Black households came out of the 20th century ghetto. Black families were disadvantaged by northern segregation and the disruptions of urbanization that took its toll on *all* families. It is interesting to note that as the income level rises in Black families, so does the number of male-headed households. (M. p.226)

There is strong kinship among the black population. Extended families exist, especially in single parent families taking in other relatives. Black togetherness is at the heart of the Black community where the personal self and the family are the same. (M. p.228) Black middle class families don’t internalize white values, but do use them to their advantage. There is a high rate of divorce in all Black families which may in part be explained by the independence of Black females who are encouraged to be independent as they will

face racism and may carry on family and economic responsibilities alone.

Puerto Rican families— There has been a steady stream of Puerto Ricans coming to the U.S. mainland since 1898. In 1970, sixty percent of Puerto Ricans on the mainland lived in New York, mostly in New York City. They are also the minority group with the lowest income in that city. (M. p. 193)

Puerto Ricans vary in color from completely black to white. Therefore, in addition to many cultural adjustments, they must also adjust to racial prejudice in mainland U.S. Many are baptized Catholic but are attracted to neighborhood Pentecostal churches. This is important to know since many Pentecosts do not celebrate holidays, birthdays, etc. and this will have a bearing on the writing assignments given to these students as part of this unit.

The Puerto Rican's sense of self is based on his perception of his relationship with his family. Families are involved in courtship—there is no dating or intermingling without parental involvement in some Puerto Rican families. (M. p.196) There is also a deep sense of family obligation: a man's gains from business enterprises are used to benefit his family. Machismo is important to the Puerto Rican male who also has a deep sense of obligation to his family. (M. p.207) At the same time, freedom is granted young men who are encouraged to experiment with sex before marriage. (M. p. 198) There is at present some redefining of the male role, but for the most part in this culture, women are subordinate to men who feel that they must protect their women.

The Puerto Rican family living in the U.S. is often an extended family which provides support for its members; however, the nuclear family is becoming more prevalent. Values of the middle class Puerto Rican family focus on the uniqueness and goodness of a person as opposed to the average American's value of the ability of an individual to achieve higher social and economic status. (M. p.208) Because of this focus on the importance of the inner goodness of a person, Puerto Ricans are sensitive to any personal insults or making fools of themselves in front of others. I see this often in many of my Hispanic students who have a difficult time participating in, or who may even refuse, to participate in some of our theatre games or in activities that require them to be in front of their classmates. Puerto Ricans rely on their relationships with people; they trust in people rather than the American way of trusting in the system. Because of their sense of spirit and soul, they think in terms of the qualities of love, loyalty and justice rather than in setting up arrangements to get love, loyalty and justice as Americans do. (M. p.207)

Puerto Ricans who move to the mainland have to face many changes of values. More families on the mainland are headed by females than on Puerto Rico. Also, there has been an increase in the number of children born out of wedlock on the mainland in recent years. (M. p.209) Here women can get jobs much easier which gives them more economic status. If a Puerto Rican woman is poor, she will be associated with the community more here than on Puerto Rico as she takes advantage of social services. Therefore she will adopt more of the customs of the mainland than she would on the island. (M. p.211) Another conflict arises in the behavior of children who in Puerto Rico are expected to be submissive. Here, especially in schools, children are taught to be self-reliant, aggressive and to question. This often puts Puerto Rican children in direct conflict with their parents. (M. p. 213) Puerto Rican girls also find themselves in conflict with their parents as they want the same freedom as both their brothers and American girls who are allowed to date and move about freely. Since, in some families, allowing a daughter this freedom would be considered a moral failing on the part of her parents, it is easy to see that conflicts arise. (M. p.212)

Japanese American families— As with the Puerto Ricans, immigration of the Japanese began in the 1890's, when Japanese men settled on the Pacific coast and worked as laborers or established small businesses (M. p.42) Early on these people were stereotyped as sly, and sneaky although this stereotype was later on

replaced with one of hard work, conformity, and a cohesiveness of family in order to carry on the family tradition. (M. p.41)

The Japanese have also encountered a long history of discrimination in the United States. In 1906, the city of San Francisco tried to segregate Japanese students until Theodore Roosevelt intervened. In 1913, the Webb-Heney Bill limited Japanese aliens from owning or leasing land. During World War II, all people of Japanese ancestry were evacuated and put into “relocation camps” with the sanctioning of the U.S. Supreme Court. They remained there until after the war when these camps were closed. (M. p.44)

Chinese American families— The Chinese arrived here in America earlier than other immigrant groups described in this unit, coming here in large numbers in the 1850’s. These men were met immediately with hostility as they took the jobs of many white men (M. p.124) In 1883 the Chinese Exclusion Act was created which required all Chinese in the U.S. to register and carry a picture identification card. Because of the hostility towards Chinese men working in the mines and on the railroad on the west coast, they voluntarily removed themselves from these jobs and started businesses that provided services other people did not want to do. These were domestic services such as laundering and other small businesses. Also voluntarily, the Chinese segregated themselves from the population at large in order to keep their strong sense of group identification. Thus, many larger cities have “Chinatowns” which developed as a result of this voluntary segregation. (M. p.267)

Native American families— Native Americans are different from all other minority groups because they were in this country first. This ethnic group is culturally diverse and cannot be typified. This group has met with years of discrimination due to the White population’s inability and unwillingness to understand the Native American’s cultural values and the White men’s willingness, particularly on the part of White missionaries who misunderstood the purpose and importance of Indian customs, to impose their standards on Indians. (M. p.253)

Today laws of the Indians are more universal, rather than tribal, and adhere to national and state laws. They no longer have kinship councils to resolve marital disputes and polygamy, which was common, is no longer practiced. (M. p.255) Today the Native American is the fastest growing ethnic population in the United States. Their lives are generally those of poverty but this, for the Indian can mean an unmaterialistic life which is interpreted by White Americans as ignorant and valueless. While White society has gotten material elements from the Indian such as corn, tomatoes and chocolate, there is a trend now towards using social and ideological elements from the Indian such as freedom of the individual within a tolerant society and living in harmony with the environment. (M. p.267)

For this unit, I have chosen several very different pieces from a variety of adult and adolescent literature. Copies of all excerpts are on file at the Teacher’s Institute office. Because I only see these students one day each week, these readings are short stories and excerpts from books. I have chosen at least one work for each ethnic group and have included essay, fiction, non fiction, film and poetry. My choices have been somewhat arbitrary. I have chosen works with which I am familiar and comfortable. They are only a suggestion and the teacher using this unit should substitute his or her own choices for any that I have listed. The goal of this unit can be accomplished any number of ways.

For the White family I have chosen three short stories that describe different family structures. These stories are taken from the *Visions* anthology as are other short stories used in this unit. Two are of single parent families and one is of a close knit southern two-parent and extended family. “Amanda and the Wounded Birds” by Colby Rodowsky describes the relationship between a teenage girl and her mother. A widow,

Amanda's mother is a successful psychotherapist who listens to everyone's problems except her daughters. "A Hundred Bucks of Happy" by Susan Beth Pfeffer also describes a single parent family with two children (almost the traditional white American family) and the decisions that the daughter must make when she finds a one hundred dollar bill on the street. "The Beginning of Something" by Sue Ellen Bridgers is about the changes that occur in the life of a teenage girl when her mother's much loved cousin dies. This story, as with the others, is full of examples of White middle class American values. The traditions around the funeral in "The Beginning of Something" offer good material for classroom discussion as rites of passage in all cultures are full of tradition.

For Black American Families, I have selected several different pieces. "The Democratic Order: Such Things in Twenty Years I Understood" by Alice Walker is a wonderful essay written about her father as is her poem "Poem at Thirty Nine". This essay mentions, in the very beginning, an abortion that Alice Walker had. If a teacher is uncomfortable with that, the essay is written in two parts and just the second part can be used successfully. Gordon Parks "Learning Tree" on video is also a good example of Black families in the 20th century and provides ample examples of their customs and values. "Jeremiah's Song" by Walter Dean Myers also has good examples of an extended Black family and different values and attitudes between generations. All of the examples of Black families I have chosen have fathers or grandfathers in them to help dispel the myth of the absent black male.

Family Installments by Edward Rivera, pages 70-106, describes a Puerto Rican family. This humorous, yet poignant, chapter from Rivera's autobiography describes his first communion shortly after his family's arrival in New York City from Puerto Rico.

The excerpt I have chosen for Chinese Americans from *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston (pgs. 45 to 53) describes the author's feelings growing up as not only a Chinese in America but as a female in a culture which placed little value on female children. While this excerpt is very thought provoking, other sections of this book are not appropriate for young readers. "The All American Slurp" by Lens Namioka from *Visions* is written for adolescents and is a humorous account of her family's transition to American life and their social gaffes during this time. It depicts the family's willingness to try out the traditions of their new culture while sharing their own traditions with other American families.

Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston describes the internment of Jeanne Wakatsuki's Japanese-American family in a Japanese relocation camp during World War II. I have chosen excerpts (the introduction and pages 3 to 19) from this book because this is an event in the history of this country that is often overlooked and the descriptions of this Japanese family during this time show many of their attitudes and values that helped them survive their ordeal.

To Live in Two Worlds by Brent Ashabranner with photographs by Paul Conklin is a wonderful book about young Native Americans who move between two cultures. Any part of this book is appropriate for this unit. The photographs of the young adults featured in this book are especially moving.

Process—The first place to start a classroom discussion of the family is to develop what I call a "working definition" for our classroom purposes. What I have done on several occasions in different subject areas is to present my students with definitions of a word (actually a topic that we are going to study) from several different sources, and once they have read that material, we brainstorm and, as a group, develop a definition that becomes the one we use for the duration of our study. This approach would work well with a definition for the family as there are several definitions that are used by different organizations: Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary defines family as 1) parents and their children, whether living together or not and 2)

any group of persons closely related by blood, as parents, children, uncles, aunts, and cousins. ⁶ The U.S. Census bureau defines it as “two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who reside in the same home.” (F. p.18) However, the State of California Task Force on the Future of the Family bases its definition on what the family does for its members: maintain the physical and mental safety of its members, help shape the belief systems and value systems of its members, teach social skills and provide a place for recuperation from outside stressors. (F. p. 18) This definition is an interesting one as it allows alternative family structures to be included in its definition and actually excludes families that may be traditional in structure but are dysfunctional in that they do not provide the four provisions listed above. In other words, the family not only is, it does. It is unique, yet influenced by outside factors. (D. p.17)

Once this information has been presented to students, they can develop a class definition to be used during this unit, using the method described above. This definition should be kept posted in the room to be referred to whenever necessary. The teacher, armed with the background information in this unit, can help the class understand that every family brings with it a different history. In addition, all families have been effected in some way by the outside stressors of modern American life. For any of us to have one idea of what a “typical” family should be like is very limiting and just not realistic. It also prevents us from enjoying and appreciating the differences between us. This same technique can be used to define the words “ethnicity,” “culture,” “minority group” and whatever words the teacher feels are important to this unit.

I would, also, at the start this unit, introduce the students to journals. These journals would be for them to enter descriptions of customs and traditions in their families that occur during the course of this unit. Of course, holidays, both religious and otherwise, are a rich source for family traditions. These journals, however, should not be limited to just that. Many of my students belong to religions that do not celebrate holidays, birthdays, etc. Families still have traditions that they follow around family meals, family trips, family problem solving. These are all wonderful examples of traditions and customs that are a part of each family heritage. An interesting writing assignment associated with the introduction of journal writing would be to ask each student if he or she identifies with a particular ethnic group and what influence that identification has had upon his or her life. I would make the journal writing an ongoing process and ask students to share small portions of their entries with their classmates from time to time. What is most important in this unit is that parts of students’ journals and their writing be shared with one another. The goal of this unit is to help students understand one another. This cannot be done without a conscientious effort on the part of the teacher to allow time for the sharing of writing. This would also be a time when much would be gained by the teacher participating in the journal and other writing assignments whenever possible and sharing her or his work right along with the students.

Reading the selections chosen for this unit can take place in any order. Discussion should follow each one to examine what values and/or family customs have been described in the writing. Students should be asked to look for the similarities and differences between their own families and the ones described in the story. In their journals or in a separate notebook, students can make simple charts to organize the similarities and differences between the ethnic groups being examined. The writing that accompanies the reading should ask the student to examine his or her own values—has he or she ever had a similar experience? How did his or her family react to it? Some of the stories include rites of passage—confirmation and death. The students should be asked to write about these special times in their families to examine the customs and traditions that are associated with them.

One possible writing topic that is light and fun and could be saved and used after a very serious writing assignment would be to write about food. Whether associated with holidays or not, every family has its own

food traditions. What are they? When are they used? Can the students find out where the recipes came from? Is there a story associated with them? Of course, this could easily evolve into a food day when each student brings in one example of his or her family's favorite food to share with the rest of his or her classmates.

One additional component to this unit would be to plan a field trip to see the Chinese collection at the Yale Art Gallery when reading the two selections about Chinese immigrants to determine what values and customs are apparent in examples of Chinese art. This same approach could also be used by taking students to Peabody Museum to look at the dioramas of early Indian life when reading the excerpts from *To Live In Two Worlds*. All this serves to further illuminate the goals of the unit and to encourage students to make connections between the artwork and the culture that they would not do otherwise.

One last resource that is available and should be taken advantage of is people: the students themselves and any other people who have strong ethnic ties to their culture. As my list of languages spoken in the New Haven School system points out, my students and I will not have to look far to find students who have strong ties to their ethnic groups. Among the class itself, students can develop interviews for each other to find out about each other's family traditions and cultures. At the beginning of the year, as an introductory activity, I often have students conduct interviews. In this activity, students are paired up and within a given amount of time interview one another to learn as much as possible about each other. The information gained is written into paragraphs which each student uses to "introduce" her/his partner to the rest of the class. This same activity could be modified to focus on each student's cultural ties and family traditions. An additional source of people to interview would be from the local senior citizen's center. In the past, I have had students interview senior citizens in order to provide a different prospective on a topic of study. For this unit, seniors could be interviewed to discover their view of the changes taking place in the family due to societal factors as well as to find out about their cultural backgrounds.

The final activity to allow students to synthesize all of the information and ideas presented in this unit, would be the writing of a short story about a family in the future. Students would have to consider all of the information they have learned about stressors and pressures on the family in general as well as consider what, if any, ties their imaginary family of the future would have to a particular ethnic group.

I see this unit as a learning experience for me as well as for my students. We all constantly need reminding that that which is different is not wrong or bad. All of us, raised with strong family traditions and ties to our own culture, are able to forget occasionally that it is our differences that make our society strong and the more we understand each others' differences, the more tolerant we can become.

Lesson Plans

1. Charting—The objective of this lesson is to develop students' organizational skills while checking students' comprehension of the stories read in this unit and to improve writing skills. This is an on going activity that can be done for the duration of this unit.

Procedure—After the first story used in this unit is read, the class should, as a group, develop headings for a

chart to be used to classify information from each story. The class should be called upon to suggest headings that they think are appropriate for the story they have read and will apply to future reading. Examples of headings are: title of story, setting, main characters, time period, ethnic background of main characters, or specific cultural values described. The teacher should put these in chart form on the board after the students have brainstormed possible categories and then gone over them to prioritize for the four or five most important categories. This chart can be copied into student notebooks or the teacher can type it up and duplicate copies for the students.

Once the chart has been developed, the students will then use it to classify the information from each story. Once two or more stories have been read, the students can refer to their charts when looking for similarities and differences between cultures and their values. This information can also be used as the basis for discussions and writing assignments asking students to compare and contrast the values portrayed in two stories or to describe the obstacles a culturally different person has to overcome in white society.

2. Writing from photographs—The object of this lesson is to develop students' writing skills while learning about different family customs.

Procedure—Each student is to bring to class a family photograph taken at a family gathering. Holidays, of course, are the best source for these pictures but any family gathering will do, especially for those students who do not celebrate holidays, birthdays, etc.

Using these photos, each student is to write about the event that brought the family together, identify family members and describe the activities and traditions that took place that day. In order for students to identify their family traditions, a discussion should take place before hand that identifies what traditions are and have each student identify one of their own family traditions. It is important to stress to students that traditions do not just occur around holidays and food and to give them examples. For instance, a family tradition may be fishing with a parent in the evening after work or that the youngest member of the family sets the table for dinner or that Sunday afternoons are always reserved for family activities. Once these stories are written, they should be shared with the rest of the class and time allowed for students to discuss the writing in terms of their own families. These would also be important writings to be mounted with the accompanying pictures and hung up in the room to be enjoyed further and shared with visitors.

3. Interviews—The objective of this lesson is to develop students' oral communication skills, note taking skills, organization skills and writing skills.

Procedure—this activity can be used in place of or in addition to the preceding writing activity. After a group discussion of traditions and after asking students to identify one or two traditions in his or her own family, students should be broken up into pairs. Allow five to seven minutes for one person in each pair to interview the other to find out more about his or her partner's family traditions. The interviewer should take careful notes to be sure the information he has recorded is accurate. This process should be repeated so that the second person in the pair has the same amount of time to interview his partner. When this step is completed, each student is to organize and write up his or her notes into a narrative. The final step is to have each student share his narrative after telling the class the name of the person he or she interviewed.

Notes

1. Demos, John, *Past, Present, and Personal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. xii. (All further references to this text will be designated by the letter D.)
2. Footlick, Jerrold K., "What Happened to the Family?", *Newsweek*. Winter/Spring 1990, p. 16. (All further references to this text will be designated by the letter F.)
3. *Changing American Family* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1979), p. 5. (All further references to this text will be designated by the letter C.)
4. Kantrowitz, Barbara and Winger, Pat, "Step by Step", *Newsweek*. Winter/Spring 1990, p. 27. (All further references to this text will be designated by the letter K.)
5. Mendel, Charles N. and Haberstein, Robert W. eds., *Ethnic Families in America* (New York: Elsie Scientific Publishing, 1976), p. 2. (All further references to this text will be designated by the letter M.)
6. *Webster's Encyclopedia Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Dilithium Press, 1989), p. 514.

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