Reflective Practice and Anthropology in Culturally Diverse Classrooms

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Abstract

In this article I argue that reflective practice informed by anthropological perspectives offers a strategy that can help educators address their practice-based "puzzlements" and improve educational practice in culturally diverse classrooms. I present anthropological success stories to show (1) that anthropological concepts such as culture, context, social structure, and power provide productive ways of understanding culturally diverse classrooms; (2) that anthropological methods such as observation, open-ended interviews, and artifact analysis can contribute useful information; and (3) that by drawing on anthropological concepts and information educators can develop useful interventions to improve educational practice.

Steve, a new Euro American teacher, eagerly faced his science classes in suburban Washington, DC. Most of his students were Euro-American middle- and upper-middle-class; the remainder were from Korea and Vietnam. He found the Asian students well-mannered, conscientious, and hardworking.

In mid-September he gave his first science exam, which included math problems, theoretical problems, and some applied word problems. He had tried to make the word problems interesting and relevant to his students. For example, instead of asking students to calculate how far a bullet might travel, he asked them how far a fourth-quarter punt by the school's popular kicker might travel. He thought he had prepared the students well for the exam and expected all of them to earn high grades. As a result, he was surprised at what he found as he graded the exams. Although the class as a whole did well, his Asian students fell well
below the average of their Euro-American counterparts.

Steve could have ignored the differences he saw in performance. Or he could have interpreted the lower grades as indicating that the Asian students were not as capable as the Euro-American students. Instead, he wondered whether he might have created their poor performance by relying too heavily in the exam on cultural information unfamiliar to the Asian students. (For whatever reason, Steve apparently did not wonder or examine whether the cultural information in his exams might also be unfamiliar or uninteresting to many of his female students.)

He gathered information about his exam and his students. He studied the students' answers and found that the Asian students did as well or better than the Euro-American students on the problems that were purely mathematical and required little English or cultural knowledge. He also found that the Asian students misunderstood the word problems he had worked so hard to make interesting. In many cases the Asian students had not even attempted the word problems. When Steve examined the backgrounds of his Asian students, he found that they were relatively new to the United States; none had been here longer than 3 years. Some had just arrived the preceding summer.

Steve then began to consider whether some of the examples he used in class might also present problems for the Asian students. He talked with them privately about this issue, and many indicated that they did not understand his examples.

Steve decided to try to address the problem in both his teaching and his exams. Although he kept his "interesting" applications, he was careful also to provide a more mathematically oriented analog for each application. He also encouraged the Asian students to come to him for help if an example was not clear. During exams he allowed them to use bilingual dictionaries to clarify the meanings of words. As a result, on the second exam, the Asian students' scores improved greatly and did not lag behind their Euro-American counterparts. (This example was derived from Scholla, 1990.)

Teachers who have culturally diverse classrooms (i.e., classrooms with multiple cultural groups) frequently, and increasingly, are responsible for educating students whose lives, cultures, languages, and social statuses are very different from their own. Students whom they sometimes do not understand. Teachers with such classrooms sometimes are puzzled by the same kind of situation Steve faced: they have groups of students who perform less well than others in the class. In this article I address the kind of challenge Steve faced—namely, what teachers can do when a cultural group (or groups) of students performs less well than others.

An Alternative Strategy

My approach is different from most discussions of teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. Conventional educational theory and research assume that problems of practice fall into easily defined categories and that universally applicable solutions are available for each kind of problem (Schon, 1983). An example of this approach is a booklet published by the U.S. Department of Education (1986), titled What Works. The booklet aims to present universal answers to problems of practice. It represents a top-down approach to teaching, assuming that researchers and theoreticians can tell teachers how to solve the problems in their classrooms. Unfortunately, "what works" has not worked universally. Looking for universal solutions has failed to provide consistent and significant improvement in education.

Many "multicultural" workshops provide general information about the cultures of particular groups. However, broad background knowledge about a cultural group does not necessarily provide answers to teachers' puzzlements. Information about a cultural group in general may not be rele-
vant to a particular local community or a particular group of students, who may vary, for example, by gender, social class, or degree of acculturation. Moreover, presenting general information about cultural groups carries the potential of producing or reinforcing stereotypes, especially when only superficial information such as trait lists is presented.

I assume that neither I nor any other professional educator can tell any other teacher what is going to work in his or her own classroom, especially if the classroom is culturally diverse. The teacher, himself or herself, will need to determine what works on a class-by-class basis. However, I can suggest a strategy that should prove helpful to teachers. It combines two existing approaches. The first approach, reflective practice (Schon, 1983, 1987), provides a general framework for teachers to examine their practice critically to determine what works and what does not in their classrooms. The second approach, applying perspectives derived from educational anthropology, provides useful ways to frame puzzlements, alternative methods to gather information, and new ideas for interventions to improve educational practice. A strategy that combines these two approaches can be an especially powerful tool for improving education in culturally diverse classrooms.

In the sections that follow, I elaborate on the strategy of reflective practice informed by anthropological perspectives. I then provide illustrations of how reflective practice, illuminated by understanding of different cultures, can improve education in culturally diverse classrooms.

### Reflective Practice Informed by Anthropological Perspectives

Schon’s (1983, 1987) reflective practice approach invites teachers to reflect on surprises and puzzlements that they encounter in their classrooms. The first step in reflective practice is to “frame” these surprises, that is, to define the surprise or puzzlement. According to Schon, framing does not necessarily mean pigeonholing a surprise or puzzlement into a conventional category. Instead, he urges teachers to construct their own definition of the problem, derived from their own practice based knowledge.

According to Schon, competent practitioners of any profession develop tacit knowledge—recurring categories of people, situations, and problems—that informs their practice. As long as practitioners are confronted with the same kinds of people and situations, their “knowing-in-practice tends to become increasingly tacit, spontaneous, and automatic” (Schon, 1983, p. 60), resulting in a certain ease and flow of practice.

However, when practitioners are confronted with new people or new situations in which something fails to meet their expectations (as frequently happens in culturally diverse situations), they may respond in several ways. If the routine of practice is too strong, they may ignore the surprise or force it into preexisting categories. For example, Steve might have concluded, erroneously, that his Asian students were less able than his Euro-American students.

Another way that teachers can respond to surprises is to use them as opportunities to reflect on their practice (Schon, 1987). Reflection may occur before, during, or after action (Elliott, 1991; Schon, 1983). Reflection that occurs before or after action is my focus here, specifically when done consciously and systematically. Systematic reflection on practice, also called classroom research or teacher research, involves several steps: (1) identifying a puzzlement, (2) considering alternative ways to frame the puzzlement and selecting a focus, (3) gathering and analyzing information, (4) developing and implementing an intervention if needed, and (5) monitoring the results of the intervention.

However, reflection by itself does not guarantee that teachers can move beyond their habitual categories and assumptions. Teachers’ knowledge-in-practice derives
both from their own experience and from discipline-based knowledge in their field of practice (Schon, 1987). In education the discipline of psychology has had a major influence, with the effect that teachers' knowing-in-practice is heavily influenced by psychological categories and concepts. Although psychology undoubtedly will continue to provide valuable insights into classroom practice, it tends to focus attention on individual psychological factors rather than on the social and cultural factors that are especially critical in culturally diverse classrooms.

I suggest that anthropology can likewise provide discipline-based knowledge pertinent to educational practice, particularly in culturally diverse classrooms, by providing insights into the social and cultural issues that influence education. In particular, anthropology can offer reflective practitioners valuable ways to frame problems, alternative methods for gathering information, and new ideas for solving some educational problems.

**Putting the Strategy into Practice**

Steve's conduct illustrates this strategy of reflective practice informed by anthropological perspectives. Reflecting on the test results, he was surprised that the Asian students had done less well than other students. This was especially surprising to him because he knew that Asian students have a reputation for doing well in science and math. This is a case in which a stereotype, although positive, could easily have led the teacher astray. If Steve had assumed the stereotype was true, he might have concluded that these particular students were less capable than most Asian students.

However, Steve did not ignore the anomaly, nor did he assume that the students' performance indicated some deficit on their part. Instead, after considering several alternative hypotheses, he framed the issue in cultural terms. He asked whether features of his instruction might be contributing to their poor performance and, in particular, whether culturally based knowledge might be a factor. To answer this question, Steve gathered information about his exam and his students. When it seemed that cultural knowledge might be relevant, he devised and implemented a possible solution, and then he monitored the results of his intervention. Thus, by reflecting on his practice and attempting to understand how cultural assumptions in his tests and instruction interacted with the cultures of his students, Steve was able to improve education in his classroom.

Although the literature contains few examples of individual teachers applying this strategy, reports of collaborative work between educators and anthropologists illustrate how the strategy can be used successfully. The reports come from all levels of education. Most of the studies have focused on monocultural or bicultural situations or on individual groups in culturally diverse situations. However, the general principles illustrated in these studies are applicable to educators working without anthropologists in culturally diverse schools.

I organize this discussion around concepts that anthropologists have found to be useful for understanding culturally diverse classrooms: culture, context, social structure, and power. I discuss how teachers could use these concepts to frame their puzzles and gather information, and I provide examples where the concepts have been used to improve education.

**Culture**

For anthropologists, culture refers to shared meanings, patterns of behavior, and artifacts. Cultural meanings exert a powerful influence on behavior, and significant regularity exists across individuals within a culture. However, cultural meanings do not determine behavior because individuals must decide whether and how to apply cultural guidelines for behavior in specific situations. Moreover, individuals are socialized into cultures in different ways, and
individuals belong to different subcultures within their society.

Many people are comfortable applying the notion of culture to national groups (e.g., Japanese culture, Puerto Rican culture) and to ethnic groups within a nation (e.g., African-American culture, Italian-American culture). Anthropologists also apply the concept of culture to smaller groups of people who regularly interact (Goodenough, 1976), for example, a school's culture (Peshkin, 1986), a classroom's culture (Jacob, 1989), or even the culture of a reading group (Eisenhart & Graue, 1993).

Culturally diverse schools can be viewed usefully as sites of cross-cultural encounters. The artifacts and routines of schools and classrooms embody cultural assumptions and values, usually those of the majority Euro-American culture. Teachers (and other educators) bring to classrooms their own cultural meanings and behavior patterns, influenced by their ethnicity, social class, gender, and profession. Students, likewise, bring cultural meanings and behavior patterns from their home and peer cultures, which are influenced by their ethnicity, social class, gender, and degree of acculturation.

Moreover, culture is not static. Educators, parents, and students jointly develop cultures around educational tasks (Eisenhart & Graue, 1993). The culture of an immigrant group is not the same as the culture of the home community it left, and the culture of second-generation children is different from that of their first-generation immigrant parents.

Cultural meanings. Cultural meanings include shared ways of perceiving the world, guidelines for behavior, and standards for judging behavior and artifacts. Two aspects of cultural meanings in schools which may prove useful in framing puzzles are institutional norms and the meanings of school success to students.

Institutional norms are those shared cultural meanings that extend beyond individual classrooms and pervade a school. Competition is an institutional norm that pervades life in American schools today (Goldman & McDermott, 1987; Smith, Gilmore, Goldman, & McDermott, 1993). The normal curve used in grading is inherently competitive. Students compete in academic games and for positions of honor; they are acutely aware of their ranking in their classes. Most sports, even intramural sports, are competitive. Arts festivals are entered competitively; bands have an elaborate competitive ranking and bumping system. It seems that no area of life in school is free of competition.

Competition is not inherently good or bad, but when the system is set up so that some must fail in order for others to succeed, problems arise. Groups (or individuals) with a history of failure may decide to stop trying.

Teachers can identify institutional norms such as competition by examining the school’s rituals, activities, publications, slogans, and requirements for grading. Teachers can also observe students' reactions to the results of these norms. In some cases teachers may wish to modify the methods used to achieve institutional norms; in others, they may wish to change the norms.

One area that teachers usually control is the structure of their classrooms. Traditional whole-class instruction comprises a form of competition, “producing conspicuous winners and conspicuous losers in the classroom” (D'Amato, 1993, p. 199). D'Amato (1993) reported that in Hawaiian classrooms where teachers had modified practices so there were not individual winners and losers (“rivalrous approaches to contention”), students were more likely to comply with classroom routines than in classrooms where teachers followed traditional practices in which there were clear individual winners and losers (“overt competition”). The teachers’ changes included using “open” interactional structures that permitted students to overlap in their comments and to build on others' statements,
implementing small-group instruction, reducing criticisms of task performance, and distributing praise more or less evenly to everyone.

The educational program of a labor union in New York (Goldman & McDermott, 1987; Smith et al., 1993) illustrates a successful attempt to change institutional norms. Most union members had had poor experiences in schools and were afraid of tests. Yet the members needed to pass an extremely difficult examination to become licensed.

Instead of continuing to operate from a competitive norm, the union was committed to teaching its members until all had passed the test. The teachers in the program worked with a reading specialist and an anthropologist to develop a 10-week instructional program based on success. They set up peer teaching with 10 students and two instructors taken from those who had already passed the test. A part of the weekly classes involved taking sample tests. The first tests contained easy questions. Items that everyone got right were put on the test the next week. Soon all the men were doing well on tests with many items. Then the instructors adopted test questions from the manual. During the last 4 weeks students themselves generated questions for the tests. The result was a strong sense of confidence among the students, and “the union went to its next bargaining table with the claim that they were all licensed professionals” (Goldman & McDermott, 1987, p. 297).

Another basic level of meaning is what school in general symbolizes to different adult and student groups. What does school, and particularly succeeding in school, mean to the students and their communities?

Most classrooms are still dominated by Euro-American culture. The content of the curriculum, interactional patterns, and other norms are essentially Euro-American. This association with “white” culture can have clear implications for how the students interpret success in school.

Some students, particularly those from ethnic groups that have a history of inferior schooling and discrimination in hiring, may develop a collective oppositional identity that rejects activities, symbols, events, and behaviors that are characteristic of Euro-Americans. These students regard success as inappropriate in areas “traditionally defined as prerogatives of white Americans” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 182). For example, a study in a high school in the District of Columbia showed that African-American students often felt that doing well in school meant that they were “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). They saw schooling as diminishing an African-American person’s cultural identity rather than as fostering intellectual growth. This viewpoint influenced both underachieving students, who decided (consciously or unconsciously) to avoid “acting white,” and high-achieving students, who needed to find ways to cope with “the burden of acting white.” A vivid example of this same phenomenon in another cultural group was portrayed in the movie Stand and Deliver (1987), when a Hispanic student enlisted his math teacher’s help to hide his involvement in the advanced math program.

How can teachers find out what school success means to students? If teachers listen in a nonjudgmental way for cultural meanings in what students say or write, they will learn much. Teachers might interview students either alone or in focus groups. Students might conduct a research project to document peer cultures in the school (e.g., Heath, 1983). Community members and minority educators who are trusted by the students might be helpful in explaining students’ viewpoints to educators whose cultural backgrounds differ from those of the students.

Jeanette Abi-Nader (1990) documented how a successful college preparatory program for Hispanic students addressed students’ cultural meanings. The program

MAY 1995
helped students to create a vision of the future that "transformed and redressed the past" (p. 49) and to incorporate school success into the group's self-image. The program brought Hispanic college students and professionals to the school to serve as role models and mentors. The teacher who taught in the program continually talked about the successes of the program's graduates and stressed when (not if) the students would go to college. The teacher helped students develop a more positive self-image "as Hispanics, as learners, and as communicators" (p. 51). He set high standards and expectations, stressed the strengths and contributions of the students' Hispanic heritage, and talked of his own appreciation for and identification with his students. An important theme across all the program's efforts was that the program provided a "family," a supportive community among the students. Programs such as the one described by Abi-Nader can help students see academic excellence as compatible with their cultural identities.

Other successful programs also focus on changing the meaning of school success for minority students. For example, Carl Rowan's Project Excellence provides scholarships to African-American high school seniors for "daring to embrace scholarship" ("For the young," 1992; see also Horwitz, 1992). This program has helped over 300 students receive a college education.

Cultural behavior. Culture exerts a powerful influence on behavior. Although individuals are aware of some aspects of their culture, they frequently are unaware of other, "implicit" aspects of culture. This is illustrated in Deborah Tannen's (1990) best-seller You Just Don't Understand, which showed how social interaction is culturally patterned for girls and boys and for women and men. Before Tannen popularized the relevant sociolinguistic research, most Americans were vaguely aware that members of the opposite gender sometimes did not understand them but had little insight into how differences between male and female cultures influenced social interaction.

Culturally based interaction patterns likewise have a profound influence on students' learning in schools (Erickson & Shultz, 1992) and may prove a useful way for teachers to frame some puzzlements.

There is considerable evidence that social interaction patterns in schools differ substantially from those in some students' homes. Conflicts between home and school social interaction patterns can contribute to academic problems (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987, Philips, 1983).

Because social interaction patterns are generally beyond conscious awareness and sometimes involve subtle differences, videotape is almost essential for careful examination of these patterns. In examining tapes teachers might look for obvious times when the patterns of teacher and students are not in synchrony. Teachers might also study successful minority teachers to identify interaction patterns they use in their classrooms. (See Erickson & Mohatt, 1982, and Macias, 1987, for discussions of how minority teachers have adapted instruction to their students.) Although examining culturally based social interaction patterns used in students' homes is beyond teachers' resources, they can learn about these from "key informants" in the community.

The Kamehameha program in Hawaii is an example of a successful program that incorporated aspects of culturally compatible social interaction patterns. In Hawaii the majority of native Hawaiian children have done poorly in school (Gallimore, Bogg, & Jordan, 1974). In response to these students' needs, a multidisciplinary team, including anthropologists and teachers, developed a language arts program that incorporated aspects of the children's home culture.

Hawaiian children are given much responsibility at home, often working as part of a cooperating group of siblings. To build on this feature, the team organized classrooms into small-group, teacher-independent learning centers.
The teachers also adapted features of the social interaction styles of Hawaiian children. For example, most interactions between Hawaiian children and adults are mediated through a group of children rather than being one-to-one interactions. Children’s immediate interpretation of direct questioning by an adult is that they are in trouble. Building on this knowledge, teachers tried to avoid direct questioning of individual children who had not volunteered. They addressed questions to the whole group and reinforced volunteered responses. They also found that allowing children to engage in overlapping talk, similar to the home cultural pattern of “talk story,” also seemed beneficial. The result of these and other adaptations was a successful language arts program (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1993).

The culturally specific nature of this approach may raise some questions about its usefulness in culturally diverse classrooms. Culturally compatible classroom practices may not be important for every cultural group. D’Amato (1993) suggested that cultural groups who believe that U.S. schools are an avenue to success (i.e., groups who have a “structural rationale” for school) may not need culturally compatible practices to succeed. However, he suggested that culturally compatible practices may provide a “situational rationale” for groups who do not have a structural rationale for participating in school.

Cultural artifacts. Artifacts, whether bulletin boards, displays, or texts, reflect and embody cultural meanings and values. There has been much recent discussion of multicultural curricula that include materials beyond those of Euro-American origin (e.g., Banks, 1988; Banks & Banks, 1989). If the culture, achievements, and values of diverse cultural groups are not presented, then the message that is implicitly conveyed is that the achievements of these cultural groups are minimal or not valued. Thus, in exploring their puzzles, teachers might consider the messages school and classroom convey to students, and whether these messages support students’ self-esteem and interest in learning.

Teachers can examine texts (both textual material and pictures), bulletin boards, and other artifacts to see how the cultures of their students are presented. Are the messages consistent, strong, and positive? Or is there merely token attention given at “special” events?

Luis Moll and his colleagues (Moll, 1992; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) have documented the extensive “funds of knowledge” that exist in the working-class Latino communities in Tucson. They also report how teachers have explored these funds of knowledge and have incorporated aspects of them into the classroom, with the result of broadening and deepening the curriculum, linking the school to the community, and identifying and drawing on community members as valuable sources of knowledge.

The study by Abi-Nader (1990), discussed above, of the successful college preparatory program for Hispanic students provides another useful example. One characteristic of the program was the inclusion of artifacts that encouraged, supported, and documented students’ success. For example, the teacher videotaped students’ role-playing experiences they would face in college. The tapes of older students were viewed, and students could view their own progress over the 2 or 3 years they were in the program.

Instructional Context

A central principle of anthropology is that all behavior, including students’ academic performance, is influenced by the context in which it occurs. Students apply and use their cognitive and linguistic skills differently in different contexts (e.g., Labov, 1982). Thus, different contexts present varying opportunities for demonstrating abilities, and slight changes in contexts can bring out improved performances, as Steve’s work in the opening example illus-
trates. In exploring their puzzlements teachers may consider the role of instructional context in students' performance.

One way to detect whether changing instructional features might help is to observe students in different instructional contexts. The potential results of such comparative information are highlighted in the following example from Moll and Diaz (1993).

Hispanic students in a third grade English class were reading only at the decoding level. The teacher seemed to interpret their low performance as reflecting the extent of their current ability and responded by only offering the students opportunities for decoding. However, researchers observed that the same students were reading with comprehension in their Spanish class. Thus, although the students could comprehend text, they were not displaying their comprehension skills in their English class. The instructional context did not provide them with an opportunity to display the comprehension skills they did have.

The researchers worked with the English teacher to try some alterations of the context to allow the Hispanic students to display their comprehension skills in their English class. In the first of their modified classes, the researchers instructed students at the beginning to concentrate on understanding the text, thus shifting the focus to comprehension. The researchers read the story to the students to remove all potential decoding problems. They also told the students that they could ask questions in Spanish when needed to clarify meaning in the English text. By the third lesson the researchers required students to read the story on their own and to answer, with some bilingual assistance, grade-level comprehension questions, which students did successfully. This example suggests one way in which the context of instruction can be modified to facilitate higher-level performance. It also suggests that such assistance is not necessarily a permanent feature of a class but can be offered when needed and then removed when no longer needed.

Social Structure and Power

Subgroups in communities are hierarchically arranged and frequently have differential power. Relative power relations between the school and local communities may be a significant factor in students' performance. When minority parents have little influence on their children's education, they often feel powerless even though they may value education for their children (see Cummins, 1986, for a similar argument). In exploring their puzzlements, teachers might consider how power relations in the school and local community might be influencing students' performance. Teachers can gather information on power relations by examining artifacts, as discussed previously. They can also see whether there are community boards with influence and, if so, who holds positions of power. Which parents are able to organize and get what they want for their children? What are parents' perceptions of the school's receptivity to their concern or their power within the school? What is the parents' command of English? What is their knowledge of the culture of the school? What is their relative power within the larger community?

A study by Delgado-Gaitan (1990) in an elementary school in California demonstrated the importance of parental participation and empowerment. At the beginning of her study, teachers complained about the lack of involvement in the school by Mexican parents and interpreted the lack of involvement as reflecting the parents' apathy about their children's education. In interviewing and observing the parents in their homes, Delgado-Gaitan found that the parents did value education highly. Although some of the most educated parents were active, many—the less educated—felt intimidated by the school. They did not understand the culture of U.S. schools. For example, they did not know what the teachers wanted in the homework assignments, and they did not know the appropriate routes to follow to pursue their concerns. In addition, since many held jobs with little
flexibility, getting to the school to see teachers was difficult. Moreover, many did not speak English well. The result was that few initiated contact, and few knew how to respond to contacts initiated by the school.

To address these problems, the Mexican parents decided to organize (with the support of the district). They had two goals: to help the school know more about the Mexican families and their culture, and to help the Mexican families know more about how to help their children in school. Although Delgado-Gaitan’s book did not report the long-term outcomes of the parent organization, it did report initial success in increasing understanding and communication between the schools and Mexican families. Such understanding and communication could only help the students.

Local control of schools as exemplified in school-based management is ideally suited to address this issue because it provides more direct community control of the school. However, if the Euro-American majority continues to rule, even at the local level, little will have been changed. Ideas for changing power relationships include parent organizations like the one described by Delgado-Gaitan and local community boards with proportional representation.

Discussion
The previous examples suggest how reflective practice informed by anthropological perspectives can enhance education in culturally diverse classrooms. The examples illustrated (1) that anthropological concepts such as culture, context, social structure, and power provide productive ways of understanding culturally diverse classrooms; (2) that anthropological methods such as observation, open-ended interviews, and artifact analysis can contribute useful information; and (3) that by drawing on these concepts and information educators can develop successful interventions.

Although most of the success stories reported here involve collaborations between anthropologists and educators, my work with teachers suggests that they can also apply this approach on their own. By following this strategy teachers become learners. They identify their puzzlements, asking why something is happening. They develop alternative hypotheses about the puzzling behavior, using the concepts of culture, context, social structure, and power. After selecting a likely hypothesis, they gather and analyze information needed to explore their hypothesis. They then develop and implement an intervention, drawing on their pedagogical expertise and on relevant cultural information. Finally, they monitor the results of their intervention based on their new understandings.

What needs to happen for the strategy proposed here to be applied to culturally diverse classrooms? Teachers would need to develop the skill to reflect systematically on their practice, and they would need to learn basic anthropological perspectives to guide their reflection. Teachers could develop these skills and knowledge on their own, or others could facilitate the process.

Programs or courses (whether university- or school-system-sponsored, or collaborative) could be one vehicle to help teachers learn the strategy. Reflective practice, in some form or another, is already widely incorporated into educational courses and programs. Courses and programs would also need to incorporate anthropological perspectives. This does not mean teaching anthropology in a traditional foundations-type course; rather, it means focusing on the perspectives of anthropology and helping teachers view the world with anthropological perspectives.

The strategy could permeate courses in a program, or it could be taught through one or more separate courses. I teach a university course that combines anthropology and reflective practice. It focuses on helping teachers (1) to identify anthropological perspectives through discussions of anthropological studies, (2) to apply these perspectives to cases that simulate “real-life” dilemmas that teachers face, and (3) to ap-
ply the perspectives to their own practice (for a fuller description of the course, see Jordan & Jacob, 1993). Steve's work, reported in the opening example, was conducted as part of this course.

Another way to introduce the strategy is for anthropologists and teachers to work collaboratively in individual schools. In contrast to courses focused on individual teachers, in-school collaboration has the advantages of being school-based and of creating a local learning community. In the past, most school collaborations have involved university-initiated research projects (see Jordan & Jacob, 1993, for a discussion of the range of collaborations between anthropologists and educators). The kind of collaboration I propose is different because the anthropologist would focus on helping educators use the strategy outlined here to address educators' own puzzlements.

No matter what the means for initiating this strategy, some kind of support system would help it continue long-term. Teachers report that they find it difficult to continue systematic reflective practice on their own without some kind of group support. Teachers are more likely to continue using the strategy if a group of like-minded teachers work together to create a community that supports one another in this strategy. An added benefit of such a community is that teachers could help one another identify different ways to frame their puzzlements.

School support would also be critical for the strategy's long-term use. One important requirement would be a recognition of the teachers' professionalism and the need for this kind of strategy. Another would be a principal who supported such efforts, especially by providing time and funds. In such a supportive context, parents and other community members might be enlisted to help provide knowledge of the community and its cultures. Students might be asked to study their own community (e.g., Heath, 1983).

If the strategy presented here is applied widely and the results shared, educators could begin to compile information about strategies that might be applicable to a range of culturally diverse classrooms. Approaches found to be successful in one culturally diverse classroom will not necessarily be successful in others, but the results of other teachers' efforts could provide ideas and guidelines for colleagues to try out in their classrooms, continuing the cycle of reflective practice. This approach presents challenges, but I think it will be more successful in the long run than purported "universal" solutions.

One advantage of using anthropological perspectives to inform reflective practice is that the strategy can help educators identify and build on the strengths of cultures, not just see the "problems" the cultures encounter in interacting with U.S. schools. Cultural variability is a significant survival resource for humanity. Just as there is a concern with preserving the range of biological diversity in flora and fauna, preserving cultural diversity may offer important alternative strategies to deal with unanticipated social challenges. United States citizens live in an increasingly global society. People who are bicultural and bilingual, or multicultural and multilingual, are an increasingly important resource to our country.

Culturally diverse classrooms provide educators with major opportunities and challenges. Educators must remember that what currently is does not limit what can be. Each teacher is responsible for finding ways to bring out the best in all students. The strategy I advocate here provides an avenue to this goal.

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