

City College Learning Communities, fall 2007

From Diversity and Motivation (Chapter One: "Understanding Relationships Between Culture and Motivation to Learn") by Raymond Wlodkowski and Margery Ginsberg, 1995.

We, as well as our learners, will have beliefs and values regarding learning and the roles of teacher and learner. These are culturally transmitted through such avenues as history, religion, mythology, political orientation, and familial and media communication. The ways in which we experience a learning situation are mediated by such cultural influences. **No learning situation is culturally neutral.** If we teach as we were taught, it is likely that we sanction individual performance, prefer reasoned argumentation, advocate impersonal objectivity, and condone sports-like competition for testing and grading procedures. Such teaching represents a distinct set of cultural norms and values that for many of today's learners are at best culturally unfamiliar and at worst a contradiction to the norms and values of their gender or their racial and ethnic backgrounds (page 7-8, emphasis added).

Teaching that is culturally responsive occurs when there is equal respect for the backgrounds and contemporary circumstances of all learners, regardless of individual status and power, and when there is a design of learning processes that embraces the range of needs, interests, and orientations to be found among them. For the pedagogy of the educational system of a society espousing cultural pluralism, **the challenge is to create learning experiences that allow the integrity of every learner to be sustained while each person attains relevant educational success and mobility.** Meeting this challenge is transformative as well as integral to a major purpose of higher education: the intellectual empowerment of all learners to achieve equity and social justice in a pluralistic, democratic society (page 17-18).

If there is anything our experience has taught us, which research also strongly supports (Ogbu, 1987; Courtney, 1991), it is that motivation to learn among people is vitally released by a vision of a hopeful future (page 19).