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# A CROSS CULTURAL TEACHING MODEL FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHERS: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SERVICE-DELIVERY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS

BY CHRISTOPHER T. ARRA

Today's community college students come from increasingly diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds (O'Banion, 1997). In order for community college graduates

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*“This (cross-cultural teaching model) is achieved by putting into place a structured, yet sensitive dialogue between teacher and student called the reciprocal process.”*

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to successfully meet the needs of diverse working environments, they must be trained by teachers who are sensitive to today's diverse student population (Bailey, 2004). Community college teachers are, therefore, charged with the challenge of providing students with a curriculum that reflects the climate of today's ever-changing society. Theoretical training models can serve as templates for community college teachers to guide their practice.

However, at the present, there are few, if any, cross-cultural teaching models for community college teachers (Kane, Beals, Valeau, & Johnson, 2004; Laden, 1999; Lent & Worthington, 2000). Furthermore, few, if any of these models have any empirical data to demonstrate their efficacy beyond their self-positing theoretical merits. The proposed training model, however, differs from existing models in that it is based on empirically supported findings.

Community college teachers utilize a variety of approaches when teaching students cross-cultural skills (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). These approaches to cross-cultural training often include teaching students broad, general cross-cultural skills (Laden, 1999). However, students frequently have specific questions related to communities and ethnic groups that they may encounter when they enter the workforce, or as they complete internships (Arra & Gilligan, 2003). Therefore, it is the author's belief that cross-cultural competencies must first be addressed while students are on campus under faculty supervision, rather than during internship or upon first professional appointments.

This general discussion begs the question of how best to train community college students with regards to cross-cultural issues. The proposed model attempts to answer this question by providing community college teachers with a cross-cultural teaching model that focuses on a personalized, as opposed to a generalized cross-cultural teaching approach. This is achieved by putting into place a structured, yet sensitive dialogue between teacher and student called the *reciprocal process*.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to develop a cross-cultural teaching model for community college teachers that demonstrated empirical support, was sensitive to the practical needs of students, and was easy to implement. A second goal of this study was to determine if administering pre-test/post-test questionnaires and intermittent “guided journals” to students would enhance both student reported course competency and teacher course curriculum.

## Method

### *Participants*

A total of eight college students participated in the present study. As part of the requirements for the course, students completed guided journal entries and self-evaluations during class time. The self-identified ethnic composition of the participants was six Caucasian, one Latino, and one Asian. The study was conducted in 2010 at a university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

### **Materials**

***Quantitative tools.*** The Cross Cultural Competency Questionnaire (CCCQ), arranged specifically for this model, contained thirty-five items from Lopez and Rogers’ (2001) list of essential cross-cultural competencies (see Appendix A). Students responded to the items on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1, “Not at all,” to 5, “Very Much.” The Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained for this measure was .90.

***Qualitative Tools.*** The Guided Journal Activity Sheet was designed to formatively assess students’ perceptions, beliefs, and ideas about their cross-cultural competencies throughout the course (see Appendix B). Students responded in narrative form to three open-ended questions that compelled students to reflect upon their own cross-cultural competencies.

***Demographic Questionnaire.*** A third tool utilized in the present study was the Student Informational Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The researcher used it to explore students’ personal characteristics and professional experiences relevant to their cross-cultural competency development. Students’ previous cross-cultural coursework, practica, jobs, and internships illustrate students’ experience working in culturally diverse environments.

### ***Procedure***

At the beginning of the semester, students were administered both the Student Informational Questionnaire and the Cross-Cultural Competency Questionnaire (CCCQ). Both tools were administered by the course instructor. After students had completed the CCCQ, the teacher collected the questionnaires, analyzed the responses, and through item analyses, identified students’ cross-cultural strengths and weaknesses. Using this information, the teacher adapted the curriculum and course content to reflect the students’ areas of strengths and weaknesses. Activities incorporated to facilitate students included, but were not limited to,

supplemental cultural readings, class discussions, group activities, and role-playing activities. The CCCQ was re-administered at the end of the semester.

Guided journal entries comprised the second component. The journals were completed three times across the semester by the students. After each journal entry was completed, the journals were collected and analyzed qualitatively for emerging themes and frequent responses. The teacher used both emerging themes and frequent responses as ideas for possible ways of modifying the existing curriculum.

## Results

**Data Set One.** Repeated measured analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine if differences existed in students' perceptions of their cross-cultural consultation competencies over the semester (see Table 1). Specifically, students were administered the CCCQ at the outset and conclusion of the study. Analyses showed a statistically significant increase in reported competency from pre- to post-test,  $F(1,6) = 33.48, p = .001$ .

**Data Set Two.** Analyses of the participants' guided journal entries ( $n = 21$ ) throughout the semester revealed several themes for each question (see Table 2). The first question asked the participants to "reflect on the growth you hope to make in the area of your cross-cultural competencies." For the first journal entry, students identified themes such as "a desire to gain knowledge of different cultures," and also "sensitivity towards other cultures." One participant wrote, "I do have a deep respect and acceptance for people of all cultures, so I'm very willing and open to learn more about different cultures." At the outset, students perceived themselves as fairly sensitive and aware. Mid-semester journal entries revealed similar themes identified earlier, "a desire to gain knowledge of different cultures," but a new theme also began to emerge. The participants began wanting to apply the knowledge they had gained thus far to practical cases. One participant wrote, "I'd like to actually take part in a cross-cultural case. I think that's an important step in becoming cross-culturally competent." Themes at the end of the semester were consistent with earlier themes and included "gain knowledge of different cultures" and the desire to "practice what they have learned."

**Data Set Three.** The second guided journal question asked participants to "describe how components of the course to date have impacted the development of your cross-cultural competencies." Twenty-one journal entries were analyzed for this question. At the beginning of the semester, participants found readings and classroom discussions very helpful. One participant noted, "From reading and class discussions, I have developed an awareness of the importance of being culturally responsive and competent when working with clients from all cultures." As the semester progressed, participants noted that presentations on different cultures and role-playing activities were useful. By the end of the semester, journal entries revealed that readings, role-playing, and practice cases were also useful course components. One participant wrote, "Role-play(ing) and applied cases have made me feel more comfortable in the actual practice of cross-cultural psychology."

**Data Set Four.** The third question asked to participants was, “What ideas or suggestions do you have about the further development of your cross-cultural psychology competencies?” Fourteen journal entries were analyzed for this question. At the beginning of the semester, themes that emerged around this question were “role-playing activities” and “information about specific cultural groups.” One participant wrote, “Talk more about specific differences in groups, (and) also (about) possible role-playing with people from different value systems.” Other themes that emerged in the guided journals were “more cultural readings and discussions” and “more practice/field experience.”

**Data Set Five.** The final data set included written observations made by the course instructor throughout the semester. First, the instructor reported that what was observable was the students’ movement throughout the semester across activities (e.g., readings, discussions, role-playing). The instructor also noted that students’ existing level of self-awareness and prior exposure to cross-cultural themes were important to the positive growth trajectory of the students in the course. The instructor also stated that, “What the students did not report at the outset of this study was the recognition of their own cultural identities, and the implications of their identities on the psychological process.” The instructor also reported, as the semester progressed, that students progressed from more passive learning (e.g., readings) to more active learning (e.g., role-playing, applied cases).

## **Discussion**

This section begins with a description of the proposed community college teaching model. The five step model is described in detail for community college administrators and teachers. A visual representation of the model is also provided (see Figure 1). It is the author’s intention for community college teachers to utilize this model either as it is presented, or to modify the model to suit their unique classroom and curriculum needs.

### ***Arra’s Reciprocal Community College Teaching Model***

#### **1. *Initial Contact***

Students are evaluated by their teacher at the beginning of the semester. This is completed so the teacher can have a preliminary idea of where individual student’s cross-cultural knowledge base lies, as well as where the classes’ cumulative knowledge base lies. This is completed in a variety of ways. First, students complete an informational questionnaire that assists the teacher in determining such things as what previous cross-cultural coursework has been completed (see Appendix C). Second, the Cross-Cultural Competency Questionnaire (CCCQ), or another similar measure, is administered by the teacher in the first class session (see Appendix A). This provides the teacher with an initial assessment of each student’s cross-cultural competencies. Third, the students complete the first guided journal entry (see Appendix B). Finally, students also evaluate their own baseline cross-cultural competency at the beginning of the semester, by completing their first reflective journal. Reflective journals are used by students as self-assessment measures to monitor

and manage their cross-cultural growth. Although reflective journals were not included in the present study, journaling may be a useful way for students to monitor their cross-cultural competency progress.

## 2. *Student Preparation*

At this point, teachers discuss with their students the merits and rationales for the various activities and concepts unique to this teaching process. These include reflective journaling activities, group activities and the *reflective process* between teacher and student. Assessment techniques such as the CCCQ, other quantitative measures, and guided journaling activities are also discussed. At this time, it is important for students to have ownership of this process, for several reasons. By discussing the activities and concepts related to the process, students will develop a greater sense of ownership over the process. Furthermore, after the formal portion of the course is completed, students are expected to internalize the cross-cultural learning process and continue their own cross-cultural growth. Ownership of the process, therefore, facilitates the internalization, or learning of this process, and anticipated continuation of cross-cultural education after formal training has ended.

## 3. *Trainer Preparation*

Students have a variety of requests for their teachers, including literature on specific ethnic groups, discussions on ethnic groups, case-studies, and videos. This request for information is most typically revealed during teachers' perusal of guided journal entries. Therefore, in addition to the existing course curriculum that teachers are responsible for preparing and maintaining, they must also be prepared for student requests.

## 4. *Reciprocal Training Process*

This process is circular and reoccurring throughout the semester. The guided journal activities serve as a way for students to communicate with teachers, while at all times being 'guided' through the process by the teacher, since guided journal questions are ultimately chosen by the teacher. In turn, the teacher responds to the students' needs by modifying the curriculum accordingly, as he or she sees fit. This reciprocal process ensures that the students' needs are being met, while the teacher is able to implement student requests into the ever-evolving curriculum. A second aspect of the reciprocal training process involves the CCCQ or another similar measure. At the outset of the semester, students complete this questionnaire. Upon completion, teachers are able to complete a simple item analysis that allows for the determination of students' reported preliminary areas of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are then able to modify cross-cultural aspects of the curriculum according to student identified areas of weakness. In this way, the CCCQ acts as a curriculum guide for the teacher.

## 5. *Generalization/Maintenance of Skills*

Students are taught how to continue their cross-cultural education beyond the scope of the present course. Through reading literature, engaging in diverse



internships, working with diverse supervisors, working in diverse setting, being aware of best practice, and being aware of how to access the most current cross-cultural scholarly resources, students continue their professional cross-cultural development beyond the scope of the course.

The aforementioned model is intended to be as broad in scope as possible. This is to ensure that as many community college teachers as possible can utilize this model. The model presents a clear and succinct picture of how to implement the *reciprocal process* and how to foster formative curriculum modification throughout the semester. The discussion section will continue with supplementary activities to enhance student cross-cultural development, as well as principal investigator's thoughts and reactions to the process.

***A Self-Guided Process of Cross-Cultural Growth for Community College Students.*** This process is independent of the model, but is designed to run parallel with the model during the semester, and continue after the formal course has ended. Concepts key to this process are taught to community college students by the teacher at the outset of the semester. After the initial training has been completed, however, complete ownership of the process is handed over to the students. The formal component of this process is comprised of assigned readings, followed by journal entries completed by the students. During the training portion of the process, students are taught self-monitoring and self-management skills, in which they develop a plan for themselves and then reward or punish themselves for having met or not met set criteria. For example, if a student plans on reading about Japanese cultures and journaling about this culture for two weeks, and the student successfully completes the task, they may reward themselves by going to an authentic Japanese restaurant. This portion of the student training is meant to instill long-term cross-cultural interests in students. So, the self-guided process is, in effect, a launching pad to hopefully ignite long-term cross-cultural interest in students.

#### ***How the model has informed the principal investigator's teaching***

The present model has informed the principal investigator's teaching in many ways. First, as a community college professor, it has made me more sensitive to students' concerns in a formative manner. Through the years, I have grown accustomed to receiving summative feedback from students, in the form of teaching evaluation questionnaires. However, by implementing the present model in my courses, I have received much useful formative feedback. This information has assisted in shaping the content of my courses to better meet the needs of my students. Furthermore, the *reciprocal process* has given me a way of systematically analyzing student reported cross-cultural competency development and student needs over the course of a semester. Also, the model has helped to organize my teaching, while at the same time giving me flexibility to formatively modify curriculum based on student need. As a community college professor, I am expected to keep my curriculum current, and this process is one way of doing just that. Incorporating the present model into my teaching has also taught me that students have a variety of unique needs that must be addressed. As a psychology professor, I believe that time well spent in the classroom can provide students with rich opportunities to learn about the many faces of our cross-cultural society.

### ***Implications for the teaching-learning process***

The present model is ideal for community college teachers for several reasons. As previously discussed, the present model provides community college teachers with a comprehensive framework that has demonstrated empirical support. Furthermore, since existing cross-cultural models/theories (Kane, Beals, Valeau, & Johnson, 2004; Laden, 1999; Lent & Worthington, 2000) lack empirical support, the present model provides teachers with a powerful tool to complement teachers' existing curriculum. Second is the model's ease of implementation. The model is comprised of five steps that are very easy to understand and implement.

Unique to this model is the *reciprocal process* that allows for personalized dialogue between student and teacher. This personalized dialogue between student and teacher is the most important aspect of this model, and is what distinguishes it from other models. The *reciprocal process* is the catalyst of the teaching-learning process, allowing an informal dialogue to occur between student and teacher. Furthermore, the *reciprocal process* facilitates the teaching-learning process by first illuminating student needs that can then be addressed through formative curriculum modification. The current study demonstrates that the *reciprocal process* activates the teaching-learning process, and that this process is unique to the present model. Both the CCCQ and guided journal entries allow teachers to analyze data to determine how to modify the course to best serve the students' needs. Finally, teachers must be comfortable with the fluid, ever-evolving process that occurs with the implementation of this model. When a teacher opens a dialogue with his or her students, they must first be able to filter the volume of feedback that results. Quantitative analyses, such as item-analyses, and qualitative analyses, such as coding for emerging themes and high frequency responses, become these natural filters. The present model provides teachers with maximum flexibility in their curriculum, while maintaining necessary dialogue with their students.

### ***Limitations***

There are several limitations of this model. First, the model is invariant in nature and does not allow for skipping of steps or regression. Second, the model expects teachers to be very flexible with their curriculum and be willing to modify it in a formative way. Therefore, this model may be very problematic for teachers who are more static in the implementation of their curriculum. Also, the model creates extra "work" for teachers, which may be problematic for new teachers or teachers without additional support (e.g., student assistants). Finally, despite the small number of participants, this preliminary study provides educators with an opportunity to examine the exchange between teacher and student in a scientific manner. The study is also valuable in that it provides a base for further scientific inquiry in this area.

### ***Future Research***

Future research includes assessing teacher and student acceptability of this model. Furthermore, researchers may want to investigate the effects that different teaching styles may have on the overall effectiveness of the model. Also, researchers may consider investigating the long-term effects of the self-guided process. Finally, researchers may consider ways of transferring this model and techniques to on-line courses.



## Conclusion

The present model can be compared to several other teaching models/theories (Kane, Beals, Valeau, & Johnson, 2004; Laden, 1999; Lent & Worthington, 2000). Overall, the most glaring disparity between the current teaching model and extant models is the empirical support of the present model. This point must be emphasized since best practice in community college teaching clearly states that only teaching models with empirical support should be considered for use in the classroom (Maxwell, 1998). Other advantages of the current model over aforementioned existing models include its formative *reciprocal process*, the present model's overall sensitivity to student needs, and the model's ease of implementation.

The present model provides community college teachers with a framework for incorporating cross-cultural education into their curriculum. The model's utility is corroborated by its demonstrated empirical support. The key training aspect of this model is the *reciprocal process* that provides a sensitive and personal dialogue between the student and teacher. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses allow teachers to filter large volumes of student feedback and formatively modify their curriculum based on group deficits and needs. Finally, due to the model's generalizability and overall ease of implementation, the model can be considered as a useful framework for a wide variety of community college teachers.

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**Table 1**

*Cross-Cultural Competency Questionnaire (CCCQ) pre-test and post-test means and standard deviations by question*

Question	Pretest		Posttest	
	x	sd	x	sd
1	4.12	.35	4.71	.49
2	3.87	.35	4.43	.53
3	3.25	.46	4.00	.58
4	3.13	.35	3.86	.38
5	3.25	.71	4.00	.58
6	2.88	.64	3.57	.98
7	3.25	.46	4.14	.69
8	3.88	.64	4.43	.53
9	4.38	.52	4.41	.49
10	3.63	.52	4.43	.53
11	4.00	.53	4.43	.79
12	4.50	.76	4.57	.79
13	4.63	.52	5.00	.00
14	4.50	.53	4.86	.38
15	3.25	.46	4.14	.38
16	4.38	.74	4.71	.49
17	3.63	.74	4.57	.53
18	4.13	.64	4.57	.53
19	4.50	.53	4.71	.49
20	3.50	.53	3.86	.69
21	4.00	.53	4.57	.53
22	4.38	.52	4.43	.53
23	3.75	.46	4.57	.53
24	4.63	.52	4.71	.49
25	4.00	.76	4.71	.49
26	4.00	.76	4.71	.49
27	4.50	.53	4.86	.38
28	4.13	.64	4.71	.49
29	4.00	.53	4.71	.49
30	3.86	.64	4.43	.53
31	3.88	.83	4.57	.79
32	3.38	.74	3.86	.90
33	3.13	.64	3.71	.95
34	4.38	.52	4.71	.49
35	3.50	.76	4.29	.49

**Table 2**

*Frequency of themes and subcategories from journal entries*

- I. Reflect on the growth you hope to make in the area of cross-cultural psychology competencies.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Seek awareness of other cultures	17
Feel they have basic cultural skills	4
Want to begin applying knowledge	14
Perceive self as culturally aware	4

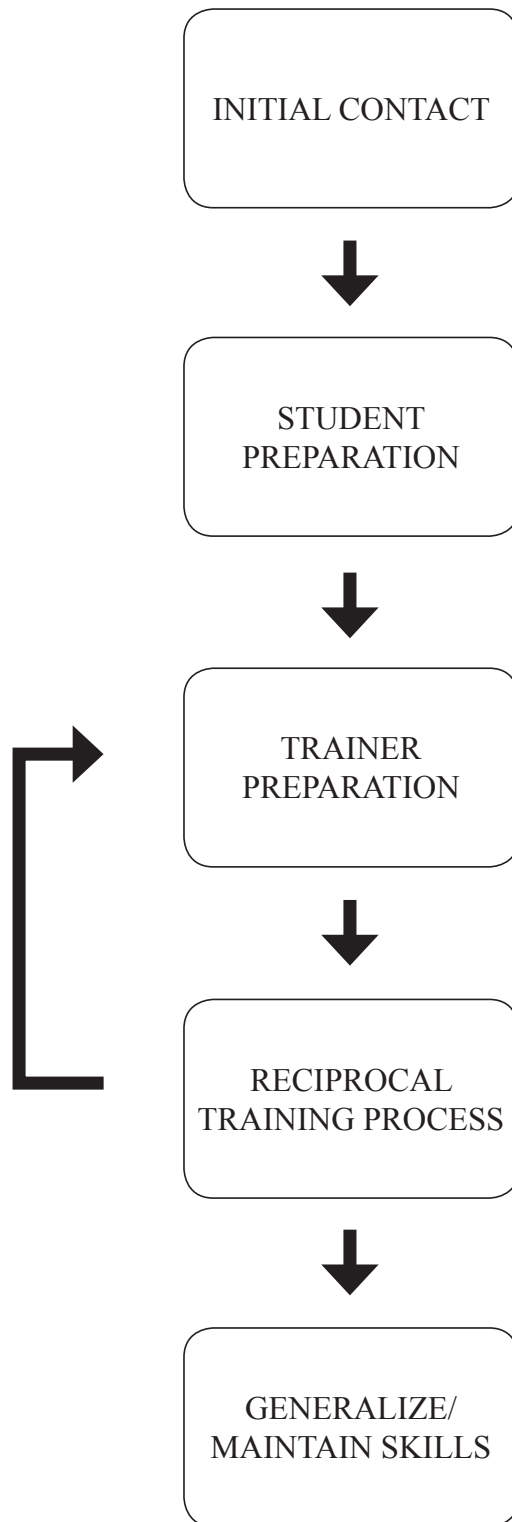
- II. Describe how components of the course to date have impacted the development of your cross-cultural psychology competencies.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Find readings and classroom discussions helpful	12
Find presentations on different cultures helpful	3
Find role-playing activities useful	9
Find applied cases helpful	4

- III. What ideas, thoughts, or suggestions do you have about the further development of your cross-cultural psychology competencies?

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Continue role-playing activities	4
Information about specific cultural groups is helpful	6
More cultural readings and discussions	2
Practical cases/field experience	5

**Figure 1. Arra's Cross-Cultural Teaching Model**



## Appendix A

### *Cross-cultural Competency Questionnaire*

	<b>None at all</b>			<b>Very much</b>	
1. Skill in working with others (e.g., patience, good judgment)	1	2	3	4	5
2. Skill in demonstrating sensitivity towards the culture of school personnel involved in consultation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Skill in responding flexibly with a range of possible solutions that reflect sensitivity to cross-cultural issues	1	2	3	4	5
4. Knowledge of the culturally related factors that may affect accurate assessment of the “problem” in the problem-solving sequence	1	2	3	4	5
5. An understanding of cultural differences of groups within the United States	1	2	3	4	5
6. Knowledge about a specific cultural group’s attitudes towards disabilities	1	2	3	4	5
7. An awareness of what is considered important about education by the members of a cultural group	1	2	3	4	5
8. Knowledge of how culture determines values and behaviors	1	2	3	4	5
9. An understanding and appreciation of cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5
10. Knowledge of the impact of culture on learning and behavior	1	2	3	4	5
11. An understanding of the pervasive impact of culture on individual and group behavior	1	2	3	4	5
12. An understanding of the need to retain one’s cultural identity	1	2	3	4	5
13. Respect for other cultures and peoples	1	2	3	4	5
14. An appreciation for the strengths brought to the American culture by peoples from diverse backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
15. Knowledge of survival skills and life demands that accompany the culturally different child	1	2	3	4	5
16. An awareness that tolerance for diversity and acceptance of differences need to be modeled all the time	1	2	3	4	5
17. Skill in modeling tolerance	1	2	3	4	5



	<b>None at all</b>			<b>Very much</b>	
18. Same skills as those a well-trained, competent school psychologist might have: (a) strong sense of responsibility for a job well done for clients, patients, students, community; and (b) interest in intellectual or cultural or artistic manifestations of different cultures	1	2	3	4	5
19. Respect and appreciation for the socioeconomic and cultural background of the child and his or her family	1	2	3	4	5
20. An ability to communicate and demonstrate an understanding of the culture in question	1	2	3	4	5
21. Sensitivity to culturally and linguistically diverse populations	1	2	3	4	5
22. Demonstrate personal qualities reflecting the absence of overt and covert hostility to various culturally different groups	1	2	3	4	5
23. Skill in behaving in a professionally appropriate and culturally synchronous manner	1	2	3	4	5
24. An ability to engage in continued professional development in this area	1	2	3	4	5
25. An ability to advocate for clients	1	2	3	4	5
26. Skill in recognizing the limits of their own knowledge and skills so that they can seek consultation or referral to other professionals as needed	1	2	3	4	5
27. Demonstration of a willingness to work with culturally diverse groups	1	2	3	4	5
28. Have a sense of values, strengths, and limitations of one's own culture	1	2	3	4	5
29. Awareness that you need to distinguish between cultural practices that may be harmful and those that are culturally different	1	2	3	4	5
30. An ability to establish a professional and comfortable relationship with a client in a way that respects and is congruent with the child's culture	1	2	3	4	5
31. Knowledge of when to refer the assessment to someone with more experience with that culture	1	2	3	4	5
32. An awareness of roles parents play in a child's country of origin	1	2	3	4	5

	<b>None at all</b>			<b>Very much</b>	
33. An understanding of differences in child rearing practices due to cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5
34. Respect of other values that clash with dominant culture	1	2	3	4	5
35. An awareness of the value placed in education by the client or parents of the client	1	2	3	4	5

## **Appendix B**

### ***Guided Journal Activity***

Take a few moments to reflect on the various components of this course, including readings, class discussion, role-playing, applied cases, lectures, and individual participation/investment (to date).

- I. Reflect on the growth you hope to make in the area of cross-cultural competencies.
  
- II. Describe how components of the course to date have impacted the development of your cross-cultural competencies.
  
- III. What ideas, thoughts, or suggestions do you have about the further development of your cross-cultural competencies?

## Appendix C

### *Student Informational Questionnaire*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

What previous cross-cultural courses have you taken?

Describe any diverse experiences you have had during your lifetime.

What is your understanding of cross-culturalism?

How do you think cross-culturalism relates to this course?

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