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This chapter is an overview of the understanding of cultural competence and context in evaluation, highlighting how other disciplines have addressed the importance of culture and suggesting the value-addedness of culture to program evaluation and design.

Cultural Competence in Evaluation: An Overview

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> My mission was clearly scripted: to treat the seriously mentally ill—those unfortunate individuals with schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, depression, and serious anxiety disorders. After expending plenty of time, money, and effort learning conventional American medicine, I needed to deprogram myself from its reliance on deductive reasoning to solve medical problems while in Zimbabwe. I needed to unlock my intuitive mind, opening it to the mysterious realms of subculture and spirituality in order to work as a psychiatrist in this new culture. I didn't have to junk those four years of medical school and another four years of psychiatric residency. I prescribed medications, performed physical examination, and made accurate diagnoses as per the fourth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*. But to go to Zimbabwe and simply apply *DSM-IV* and the American medical worldview would have been naïve and inaccurate.
>
> —Paul R. Linde (2001, pp. 53–54)

Evaluation inarguably takes place within social, cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts—the contexts defined by human existence and experience (APA, 2003). These contexts envelope many dimensions. Race, ethnicity, language, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation are

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among the commonly listed demographic attributes of contextual diversity. Not so commonly discussed in conversations about evaluation are the contextual dimensions of power, economy, living situation, and class, among other denominators of equity and sociopolitical status, *and* the contextual dimensions specific to culture.

That is, despite the recent flurry of activity and discussion in a number of disciplines meant to lift issues of culture and cultural context to the fore of discovery, theory, and application, the evaluation field has lagged behind. Yet culture is an undeniably integral part of the diverse contexts of evaluation, and therefore an integral part of evaluation. Culture is present in evaluation not only in the contexts in which programs are implemented but also in the designs of these programs and the approach, stance, or methods evaluators choose to use in their work. A common thread between culture and evaluation is the concept of *values*. Culture shapes values, beliefs, and worldviews. Evaluation is fundamentally an endeavor of determining values, merit, and worth. In making the case for cultural competence in evaluation, this chapter emphasizes this common thread.

The concept of culture itself is popularly considered in terms of such manifest activities as food, music, celebrations, holidays, dance, and dress and clothing. However, such manifestations are rooted in inherent beliefs and value orientations that influence customs, norms, practices, and social institutions, including psychological processes, language, caretaking practices, media, educational systems, and organizations (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, and Nisbett, 1998). The APA's multicultural guidelines (2003) posit that culture is the embodiment of a worldview through learned and transmitted beliefs, values, and practices, including religious and spiritual traditions. It also encompasses a way of living informed by the historical, economic, ecological, and political forces acting on a group.

Understanding these underlying dimensions of culture leads to recognizing value differences, and sometimes value conflicts, that go beyond simple demographic differences and move into such dimensions as intergenerational, socioeconomic, and other group identity characteristics. Lee (1997) offers an example of how cultural differences lead to value contrasts. She identifies the contrast between a set of parallel values drawn from Eastern (predominantly agricultural) and Western (predominantly industrial) values (Table 1.1). It is readily apparent that such values permeate policies, programs, and evaluations alike. For instance, in environmental policy analysis, whether the analyst holds a perspective of mastery of nature or living in harmony with nature significantly influences the character and content of his or her analysis.

Evaluation practice is largely driven by policy decisions, including funding, and by programmatic needs such as service delivery. The literature in these areas has already moved to embracing a deeper view of culture that includes discussion of the inherent power structure in society and the role the dominant culture plays in shaping the debate. Policy decisions and service

Table 1.1. Contrasting Values Underlying Cultural Differences in East and West

Eastern Agricultural System: Values of Traditional Society Values	*Western Industrialized System: Values of Modern Society*
Family and group oriented	Individual orientation
Extended family	Nuclear or blended family
Multiple parenting	Couple parenting
Primary relationship: parent-child bond	Primary relationship: marital bond
Emphasis on interpersonal relationships	Emphasis on self-fulfillment and self-development
Status and relationships determined by age and role in family	Status achieved by individual's efforts
Well-defined family member roles	Flexible family member roles
Favoritism toward males	Increasing opportunities for females
Authoritarian orientation	Democratic orientation
Suppression of emotions	Expression of emotions
Fatalism, karma	Personal control over the environment
Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Cooperative orientation	Competition orientation
Spiritualism	Materialism and consumerism
Past, present, and future orientation	Present and future orientation

Source: Adapted from Lee (1997, p. 9).

delivery systems are also the primary venues where the cultural contexts are operationalized first. Therefore attention to the cultural contexts of policy and program development is needed before discussing the cultural contexts of evaluation. Accordingly, this overview is divided into two main sections: a discussion of the cultural contexts of policy, program, and service delivery; and a look at the implications for evaluation, where the debate currently stands in terms of both evaluation theory and methodology, and an attempt to define what culturally competent evaluation means when one takes these viewpoints into account. The chapter concludes with examples of what is happening in evaluation practice in terms of incorporating cultural competence, and what still needs to be done.

Cultural Contexts of Policymaking, Program Development, and Service Delivery

In several important areas, culture defines the context and language in which the policies are framed, program theory developed, and programs implemented. Often the policy discourse and formulation stem from identification of a lack or a problem. This section discusses the role of culture from problem definition to program implementation and how cultural competence has been defined in the programmatic context.

Culture in Problem Definition and Program Theory. Developments in the areas of program and service delivery systems design in the last

decade have begun to underscore the importance of recognizing, understanding, and appreciating the cultural contexts in which programs operate. This is evident in the evolving conceptualizations of health, mental health, education, and social service program models. For instance, in K–12 education, cultural heritage and immigration generational status have been identified as factors to consider when developing educational media and curricula (Suzuki and Valencia, 1997). Similarly, in counseling and therapy there has been extensive discussion of how individuals' worldviews and life experiences often manifest themselves in presenting symptoms, the meaning of illness in life, motivation and willingness to seek treatment, and perseverance in treatment (see APA, 2003).

More broadly, because values are so integral to culture they are also integral to cultural dimensions of program design. One key site for the cultural expression of values is in how social problems and the programs intended to address them are conceptualized. It is also in this context that one needs to be especially aware of the dangers of imposition, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation of values, of viewing a particular context with a different cultural lens in program design. Values and worldviews that are informed by one's own culture are formidable. Patton (1985) notes that the power of culture makes us relatively oblivious to the limitation of our own perspectives, behaviors, and values. Parham (2002) and Madison (1992) discuss the pitfalls of normative models, whereby the models construed from "other" cultural and belief systems are often viewed as deficient. Madison, for instance, cautions against dominant cultural interpretations and unidimensional cultural orientations of the world explaining those of multicultural participants and stakeholders. She suggests that "the cultural biases inherent in how middle-class white researchers interpret the experiences of low-income minorities may lead to erroneous assumptions and faulty propositions concerning causal relationships, to invalid social theory, and consequently to invalid program theory" (1992, p. 38). This is a clear warning that evaluators themselves should be wary of culture-free evaluative inferences.

In discussing the conceptualization of social problems, Madison (1992) emphasizes that the most important role program participants can play is in program design and planning, and preferably also in problem definition. She convincingly argues that problem definition, a core activity that drives ameliorative program development, is often a dominant culture's interpretation of reality that perpetuates the myth of the deficit model. This has also been echoed by various authors in counseling (Parham and Parham, 2002), social theories (Hage, 1972; Kaplan, 1964), and evaluation literature (House, 1983, 1999). Examples include program theories framed by such terms as *underprivileged, at-risk, chronically unemployed,* and *chronically homeless*. Madison (2000) describes an at-risk youth program where some probing from the program planners and administrators revealed that most of the needs identification and program planning were based on stereotypical and negative

views about the families and cultural attributes of the population to be served. In an article describing an HIV/AIDS prevention program, Hopson, Lucas, and Peterson (2000) further show serious discordance in understanding of the issues among the stakeholders that, when clarified, led to a better program design.

Culture in Policy Discourse and Decisions. House (1999) presents an analysis of policymaking in the United States and the seeming contradiction between deep-seated beliefs about democracy, equality, and fairness on the one hand and lack of comprehension by "white" Americans of the extent to which racism exists in this country on the other. From sociologist Wilson's contention (1987) that Americans are unlikely to support policies believed to primarily benefit minorities but support the ones perceived to benefit all Americans, House comes up with a corollary that Americans support policies harmful to minorities that they would not tolerate if those policies were applied to majority populations. He cites educational retention policies as an example of this corollary since minority students are much more likely to be retained in grade than majority students. House provides a scathing assessment of the education system in this country in that inherently racist and biased policies go unnoticed behind the appearance of equality. He characterizes the system as one of institutional racism, whereby racism can persist even in the absence of hostile racist thoughts.

Policies influence and often control funding streams that support program development and service delivery. The funding streams may be based on a needs assessment model, where needs are construed as problems or deficits. This runs counter to a strengths-based approach in which the community's strengths and assets are identified and reinforced in program design. The entire program planner and administrator class in human services has been inculcated in the methodologies of needs assessment, a strategy Patton (2000) points out as having become all too powerful to recognize the strengths or assets in the community or among the program participants. On the one hand, one can see why funding should be driven by particular needs, but on the other hand a programming ideology dominated by such reasoning makes it difficult to obtain funding for initiatives that actually work to identify individual and community strengths, and then further them in a visionary way toward social betterment. In health care, this kind of funding bias is exemplified by the dearth of funding for prevention and primary care programs. The health care safety net in the United States is disproportionately directed toward emergency and life support services, rather than providing timely primary care and preventive services to those who need them. The disease-based medical system that drives such funding formulas is another example of the "fixing the deficit" approach that fails to recognize the value of cultural and contextual strengthening approaches.

Cultural Competence in Policy and Program Development. Cultural competence has been defined in the social program literature from a systemic viewpoint. Although the cultural attributes of mental illness have been

recognized for a long time, the roles of culture and cross-cultural situations in assessment, diagnosis, and therapy were extensively recognized by the American Psychiatric Association in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (APA, 1994) and in a supplement to the U.S. Surgeon General's report (U.S.DHHS, 2001). In 1989, Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs offered a definition of cultural competence in the children's mental health system that is widely quoted in the human service literature: "A set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together as a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. iv).

The operational details of such a definition are being worked out in policy formulation, building practice skills, and evolving behaviors and attitudes of the practitioner in the service delivery system. In psychology, detailed guidelines have been published that deal with both practice and research (see APA, 2003; CNPAAEMI, 2000; APA 1990). One emerging theme in this development has been an elevation of the importance of practitioners' recognizing culture-specific strengths and uniqueness. Taking counseling and therapy as an example, the progress in cultural competence in practice is evidenced by further literature addressing specific ethnicities such as African Americans (Parham, 2002) and Asian Americans (Lee, 1997).

Cultural Context in Evaluation

This section builds on the discussion of cultural competence in the policy and program arena and constructs a definition of cultural competence in evaluation, including methodological and ethical considerations.

The Common Thread of Values. An examination of the cultural context of evaluation is best initiated by looking at the common thread between culture and evaluation. The concept of *values* is a fundamental aspect of evaluation. Classical evaluation theorists such as Scriven (1991) define evaluation as determining the merit, worth, or value of things. In his view, this is what separates evaluation from social science research, which, he argues, "does not establish standards or values" (Coffman, 2004, p. 7). Similarly, Stufflebeam (2003) describes values as the core of an evaluative endeavor.

According to House and Howe (2000, p. 8), "Evaluation is a procedure for determining values, which are emergent and transformed through deliberative processes into evaluation findings." Critical analysis of the use of value systems, including perceived biases and problems associated with them, has also emerged in the social science research literature. For instance, Pettigrew (1979) argues that unexamined in-group and out-group values contrast can lead to attributional error whereby the in-group characteristics are often viewed in an overly positive light and the out-group ones in a more negative fashion. The evaluator also needs to be cognizant of not losing track of the values systems because too much focus is placed on the means to derive the value judgment. Greene (2000) uses the phrase

masking of values by methods to describe the situation where the stakeholder's valuing of different outcomes is overcome by methodological discussions that essentially dislocate the evaluative endeavor from its fundamental mission.

Cultural Competence in Evaluation: Continuing the Conversation. The field of evaluation has a long road to go in incorporating cultural context in its everyday practice. Various aspects of broader cultural issues have begun to be addressed, but the term *cultural competence* has not been commonly used to characterize evaluator competence in incorporating cultural context in evaluation. An examination of the titles of evaluation publications in the last two decades demonstrates this. Culture and evaluation (Patton, 1985), cross-cultural evaluation (Ginsberg, 1988; Merryfield, 1985), responsive evaluation (Hood, 2001; Stake, 1975), social justice issues (House, 1993), minority issues in evaluation (Hopson, 1999; Madison, 1992), social justice and multicultural validity (Kirkhart, 1995), inclusive evaluation (Mertens, 1999), race and institutional racism (House, 1999), deliberative democratic evaluation (House and Howe, 2000), culturally responsive evaluation (Frierson, Hood, and Hughes, 2002), and multicultural evaluation (Hopson, 2004; Kagawa-Singer and others, 2003) all deal with cultural contexts of evaluation and in some cases offer the tools to implement culturally related theoretical perspectives in evaluation.

It is worth noting that some of the recent papers in this list have critically analyzed earlier works and started to frame the issue in a culturally responsive framework. For instance, Hopson (1999) asked what the term *minority issues* really means and whether the term itself has the unintended consequence of marginalizing cultural values and strengths. Hopson lays out an analysis of the themes that emerge once minority issues are examined from a cultural lens and proposes the need for creating a new and positive framework for evaluation theory and practice that recognizes and incorporates the cultural context. Hood (2001) and Frierson, Hood, and Hughes (2002) present such a new framework underscoring responsiveness and building upon the earlier works of Stake (1975) by explicitly discussing the cultural context.

One hallmark of evaluative responsiveness as framed by these authors is the evaluator's active recognition, appreciation, and incorporation of culturally related contextual factors into his or her practice. The contextual factors include many of the more readily discussed dimensions of culture, including the demographics and some aspects of socioeconomic factors. But these factors also include the less spoken issues of power, institutional racism, and social justice.

Theorists such as House (1999) address these issues directly in terms of both policy and implications for evaluation (House and Howe, 2000). In discussing the implications for evaluation of incorporating contextual factors related to institutional power and equity issues, House and Howe point out the need to address them through deliberation, inclusion, and dialogue.

They make two important points. First, in an ideal world, democratic institutions imply the existence of deliberation and dialogue, but this is not the case in the real world. The evaluator needs to proactively engage these democratic practices in a cognizant manner. Second, House and Howe emphasize the importance of implementation. Though noting the idealistic nature of the terms *deliberation* and *dialogue,* they advocate the proactive use of these terms in guiding the planning and implementation of an evaluative endeavor.

Joh, Endo, and Yu (2003) note that there is some hesitation among evaluation scholars and practitioners to define what cultural competence in evaluation means. However, examination of ideas related to cultural responsiveness and consideration of contextual factors bring some initial clarity to understanding and defining the concept. Cultural competence in evaluation rests on active awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the context at hand, and it uses responsive and inclusive means to conduct evaluation. The main driving force behind cultural competence is the growing recognition that in a pluralistic society situations involving evaluators and evaluees from different cultures, as well as cultural diversity among the evaluees, are inevitable. In such situations, the best hope for conducting an evaluation lies in increased cultural competence on the part of the evaluators.

Merryfield (1985) began to address the issue of cultural competence in the context of cross-cultural evaluation, in particular in the international evaluation arena. She identified some basic problems and proposed some solutions to these issues. Among the problems she identified were cultural differences, inapplicability of Western methods in a non-Western setting, and various ethical issues. Among the possible solutions, she listed use of a variety of strategies and sources, involving host country people, and using a team approach that includes culture specialists.

The problems and possible solutions identified by Merryfield are not without implications for domestic evaluation. In comparing an international evaluation project and a domestic one, Conner (1985) argues that "international evaluation provides insights about some of the important but typically unconscious assumptions that underlie—and sometimes undermine—the conduct of our everyday evaluation work" (p. 19). For instance, Merryfield's prescriptions for involving host country people and for using a team approach can quite easily be translated in the domestic context. These are exemplified by Laurine Thomas's evaluation capacity building work in the Mississippi Delta (Thomas, Rogers, and Fraser, 2000); Ross Conner's HIV/AIDS prevention program evaluation work in the Latino communities (in this volume); and Hopson, Lucas, and Peterson's work on understanding discourse in HIV/AIDS prevention work in the African American communities (2000).

Merryfield's call for a variety of strategies and resources as part of culturally competent evaluation practice is echoed by Wadsworth (2001). She calls for a range of methods, including not-so-common methods that are

"needed to bring out the tacit, to surface the undiscussables, the repressed and suppressed, or to illuminate deeper values or structures operating" (p. 47). Wadsworth (2001) ventures further to define evaluation as dialogue across difference and distance. In this context Wadsworth distinguishes between evaluation that *seeks* (open or inquiry) and evaluation that *checks* (audit review). This quality of openness is important to ideas of culturally competent evaluation. More generally, the open, dialogical, deliberative, and democratic approaches to evaluation (Ryan and DeStefano, 2000; Wadsworth, 2001) and the challenges thereof—including the possibilities of key stakeholder absence and limited evaluator authority (Greene, 2000)—are all germane to the concept of cultural competence in evaluation in that addressing issues of power in evaluation constitutes a significant task.

In addition to actively engaging the existing power structure and employing a variety of strategies, methods, and resources, it is critical for the culturally competent evaluator to practice constant self-examination of values, assumptions, and cultural contexts. What Wadsworth (2001) calls "immersed engagement" has been discussed in therapeutic practice by Parham (2002). Indeed, there are concepts discussed in the counseling literature that have relevance in advancing culturally competent evaluation practice. Parham identifies four stages of evolution using the concept of social distance in cross-racial therapy situations: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, and internalization. He argues that the best therapeutic alliance is achieved when the therapist-client duo are in an internalization stage of social distance where each is comfortable with his or her own cultural identity and the other's, and ready for the true therapy to begin. This is reflected in the first APA guideline (APA, 2003) on commitment to cultural awareness and knowledge of self and others: "Psychologists are encouraged to recognize that, as cultural beings, they may hold attitudes and beliefs that can detrimentally influence their perceptions of and interactions with individuals who are ethnically and racially different from others" (p. 382).

From this varied conversation about culture, context, and competence in evaluation (and other fields), the beginnings of a definition of cultural competence in evaluation emerge. Cultural competence in evaluation can be broadly defined as a systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place; that frames and articulates the epistemology of the evaluative endeavor; that employs culturally and contextually appropriate methodology; and that uses stakeholder-generated, interpretive means to arrive at the results and further use of the findings.

This definition incorporates several factors that have been discussed in this chapter. It incorporates the notion of responsiveness to contextual factors with explicit reference to the cultural context. The importance of an appropriate framework and methodology is emphasized in this definition.

Finally, the definition takes into account the means through which evaluation findings are arrived at and used by a culturally competent evaluator. Also implied in this definition but not explicitly mentioned is the concept of ethics in evaluation.

Ethics questions raised by Merryfield in 1985 in cross-cultural evaluation settings are being addressed by the field of evaluation, although much work remains to be done in terms of universal application of proposals put forward by a number of practitioner-theorists. Bamberger (1999) identifies five ethical principles and frames them in the context of multicultural evaluation. He focuses on two particularly thorny issues: (1) the practical aspect of the extent to which the evaluator should respect local customs and values, and (2) how the evaluator can involve stakeholders in international settings. In addressing both these concerns, Bamberger notes some challenges facing participatory empowerment evaluation, the current approach of favor within the enlightened circle of evaluators in cross-cultural settings. For example, how participatory evaluators challenge or ignore the power structure in a given evaluation context can contradict professional principles of respecting other cultures and protecting the legitimate concerns of clients and stakeholders, including such basic items as personal safety. Bamberger offers some useful suggestions for improving the methodological practices in international evaluation, but the thought-provoking article makes it immensely clear there are no black-and-white solutions to the challenges of becoming a culturally competent evaluator. Rather, cultural competence in evaluation is a nuanced endeavor that demands context-specific flexibility and a capacity for understanding and appreciation.

Conclusion

As the quote from Paul Linde at the beginning of this chapter succinctly states, accomplishing cultural competence in one's practice does not mean abandoning one's cultural background, worldview, training, and skill sets. Accomplishing cultural competence requires increased and critical self-reflection as the first building block. In the field of evaluation, one needs to also recognize the pluralistic nature of our endeavor, expand and polish one's tools accordingly, and most important be able to challenge the status quo of the existing power structure as and when needed in order to build a culturally competent practice. However, the individual evaluator cannot be left alone in this venture. The American Evaluation Association (AEA) and the field of evaluation as a whole have significant roles to play. This volume is one building block toward it, and we need to recognize that much remains to be done.

The persistent disconnect between "acceptable" methodologies and the cultural aspects of evaluation remains strong. This is evidenced by various governmental funding opportunities for demonstrating program effectiveness. An example is the recently declared U.S. Department of Education

evaluation standards for the No Child Left Behind initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2003), in which it is stated that "proposed evaluation strategies that use neither experimental designs with random assignment nor quasi-experimental designs using a matched comparison group nor regression discontinuity designs will not be considered responsive to the priority when sufficient numbers of participants are available to support these designs." A similar scenario arises in large-scale federal multisite study designs where a common instrument becomes the primary measurement tool for the overall evaluation design. This is simply incompatible with culturally competent evaluation strategies as discussed in this volume. In the first case, the tenet of employing multiple strategies is grossly violated by the prescriptive, normative methodology selection. In multisite study situations, a vitally important aspect of culturally competent evaluation—that of responsiveness to the context—becomes difficult to accomplish.

One critical need for the profession lies in formulating policies regarding cultural competence in evaluation and developing culturally competent practice guidelines. Cultural competence, by its very nature, calls for a flexible approach to evaluation. However, such an approach still has to be principled, and these principles must be articulated at the professional level. The American Psychological Association (2003) has taken a giant step in officially publishing multicultural guidelines in education, research, and practice of psychology. The section on research guidelines amounts to an excellent starting point for the AEA to consider developing its own guidelines reflecting what culturally competent evaluation would mean in the context of all its topical interest groups. Examples in evaluation can be found in the guidelines for the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University (Goode and Jones, 2003), which take into account community-related actions. Such a conceptual definition and identification of relevant dimensions remains a major task for the field of evaluation.

A second critical need is development of a critical pool of multicultural, multifaceted evaluators. The former AEA Building Diversity Initiative (AEA, 2000) and internship program with Duquesne University to build the pipeline of evaluators of color are steps in the right direction. However, this is an area where we are all individually, collectively, and professionally responsible for making our practice culturally competent. We must ensure that at our workplaces we are cognizant of this need and that it is reflected in our internship, hiring, and contracting opportunities. One example of this is the effort by Georgetown University's National Center for Cultural Competence to build a consultant pool (Goode and Jones, 2003).

There is an obvious need for more available reports and literature on examples of culturally competent evaluation theory and practice. Again, both the association and the practitioners should take part in this together. In highlighting exemplary practices, literature reviews, and ethical dilemmas, one should set how the issues of cultural competence are addressed as an explicit criterion rather than an unspoken expectation. The California

Endowment's efforts (Joh, Endo, and Yu, 2003; Kagawa-Singer and others, 2003) in developing a knowledge base in culturally competent health evaluation practices is a good example of what can be done in various content areas to develop a literature in culturally competent evaluation. In the academic environment, Arredondo and Hood's work with the annual RACE Conference (2004) is a good model for promoting theory and practice that explicitly deals with cultural issues.

Cultural competence in evaluation is a growing demand in the field. There is a grassroots change happening, fueled by the changing demographics in the United States and global exchanges of unprecedented scale. A lot remains to be done, but the signs of changing times cannot be ignored. The evaluation profession must be a catalyst for change in this new world through acknowledgment, development, and encouragement of culturally competent practice on the part of its members.

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