

Development of “The Respect for Differences Scale” (RDS): A New Parent Report Measure¹

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Background

Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) serves a diverse population, and part of its mission is to help programs honor the home culture of the children it serves.

No measures currently exist that can be used to examine the extent to which programs support home culture. The development of the scale was an attempt to fill this gap. Using an iterative process, our development of the measure led to a change in the focus of measurement.

OBJECTIVE

- Learn through focus groups and cognitive interviews the ways that parents would like to have their home culture supported by their LAUP preschools.
- Develop a rating scale that examines parent perceptions of children’s respect for differences and is sensitive to the domains that parents feel are important.

METHODS

Data were collected in 3 stages: The first two during the UPCOS pilot phase (spring 2007) and the last during baseline data collection (fall 2007)

- **Stage 1:** Conducted focus groups with 57 parents of non-LAUP preschoolers from 6 groups (Spanish monolingual Latino, bilingual or English speaking Latino, Filipino, Korean, Chinese, and African American) in the spring 2007 pilot to explore cultural values that parents wanted preschools to foster.
- **Stage 2:** Conducted iterative cognitive interviews with 53 parents of LAUP children (24.5% with Spanish as main language, 43.4% born in US) to further develop the scale and assess validity in spring 2007.
- **Stage 3:** Conducted interviews with 1,586 parents of children attending LAUP programs who were part of the UPCOS baseline study in fall 2007.

FINDINGS

STAGE 1: KEY FINDINGS (Spring 2007)

Identified main cultural practices parents found important to share with their children, and explored with them their feelings about the ways in which preschools could support home culture:

- Support respect for adults (especially from Filipino and Latino parents)
- Provide knowledge of cultural traditions rather than just celebrate holidays (some parents objected to widespread celebrations of holidays they did not believe in)
- Provide appreciation for and use of home language in the classrooms

STAGE 2: KEY FINDINGS (Spring 2007)

Ways the cognitive interviews informed the final scale:

- **Scale focus:** In early versions of the scale, parents were unable to provide concrete examples of the ways programs promoted home culture. We shifted the focus of the scale from classroom activities to child behavior and attitudes.
- **Need for pre- and post-test:** The next scale iteration asked parents about change in their child over the year. Without a baseline this scale was hard to interpret, especially if the parent said “no change.”
- Pre-test version (fall 2007) asked about child’s behavior at baseline. Post-test will ask about change in children over the preschool year.

STAGE 3: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS (Fall 2007)

- Adequate reliability (Coefficient Alpha = .77).
- Reverse-coded item h showed some misfit. Opportunities for parents to observe their children playing with children from different cultural backgrounds may vary.
- Mean score = 3.2, S.D.= .5, Range 1.6-4.0.
- Parents of African American (non-Hispanic) and parents of multi-racial (non-Hispanic) children rated their children more positively than parents of children who are White, Latino, or Asian/Pacific Islander (p<.05).

Respect for Differences Scale (Fall 2007)

How often is/does your child.... (percentage of responses)	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely or Never	N/A
a. willing to try foods from different cultures?	27.2	14.9	36.8	21.1	
b. respectful to adults in your family?	59.9	24.4	14.1	1.6	
c. willing to play with children from different backgrounds?	75.3	14.1	9.0	1.6	
d. talk disrespectfully to adults in your home? (reverse coded).	3.9	2.0	11.6	82.5	
e. willing to play with children who have special needs or physical or mental disabilities?	40.9	5.3	4.5	1.6	47.7
f. interested in different cultures?	39.2	18.1	31.4	11.3	
g. interested about why different people celebrate different holidays?	38.8	15.9	27.0	18.3	
h. avoid playing with children from different cultural backgrounds? (reverse coded)	4.6	2.1	8.0	85.3	
i. willing to speak your home language?	38.7	11.2	12.5	6.6	31.0
j. willing to take part in events that are important to your family’s cultural traditions?	70.0	13.7	12.4	3.9	
k. interested in words from other languages?	53.9	16.8	20.5	8.8	
l. respectful of people from different cultures or backgrounds?	73.7	16.6	8.0	1.7	

CONCLUSIONS

Focus groups revealed themes that were common across groups and allowed us to exclude categories that were not critical to any of the groups.

Cognitive interviews showed that parents had difficulty reporting on activities teachers do to promote respect for differences. They could respond to questions about how their children behaved or had changed. We were also reminded of the importance of avoiding idioms (such as “talking back” as opposed to “talk disrespectfully”).

This approach reinforced the importance of having a multi-mode approach to the development of a measure and including representatives of the entire population in all steps of the development.

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