

Working With Families in Poverty: A Cultural Construct

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Cultural Competency

- "Culture" is used because it implies an integrated pattern of congruent human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a group;

a set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals that enable effective interactions in a cross-cultural framework."

Competence

is used because it implies having the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior as defined by the group

an ongoing, continual process that requires long term commitment to examine our own personal biases and cultural values and understand how they can sometimes inhibit effective communication

Why study the culture of poverty?

- Become more aware of each other's similarities & differences
- Be more sensitive to varying values and perspectives
- Increase understanding of experience & its impact on behavior
- Create service delivery environments of inclusion

Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

- **Generational poverty**
 - Living in poverty for at least two generations
 - Patterns emerge sooner if living with others who have experienced generational poverty
- **Situational Poverty**
 - Lack of resources due to a particular event
 - May be transitory or chronic

SUDHIR VENKATESH

Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor

- "...we would probably think of it [culture of poverty] as a uniquely American phrase, but in fact it began with Oscar Lewis, anthropologist, who was in the slums of Mexico...(in the 50's), trying to understand why generations of poor people seemed to reproduce the same circumstances.

Generational

- He said, maybe there's something in the way they live, in their lifestyle. He called it their subculture, such that certain behaviors get transmitted from generation to generation.

Family

- Daniel Patrick Moynihan, before he became senator, suggested that perhaps there are cultural issues...ex. the family structure. ...He said that the family structure in most inner-city communities is so weak that it transmits these values to generations over time. (study controversial because focused on inner city African American families)

The following are excerpts from an article by:

Robert J. Samuelson

Newsweek Inc.

Wednesday, April 30 1997; Page A21 ©

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Susan Mayer of the University of Chicago.

- Ms. Mayer asks a basic question: "How important is money in enabling families to help their children escape poverty? Having once been a single mother without much money, she believed that money was critical. "It's terrible to be a parent," she says, "and not be able to buy things that your kids want." She recalls having to borrow to pay a doctor's bill. Money must matter..

Well, it doesn't –
at least, not
much

The impact of Protective Factors

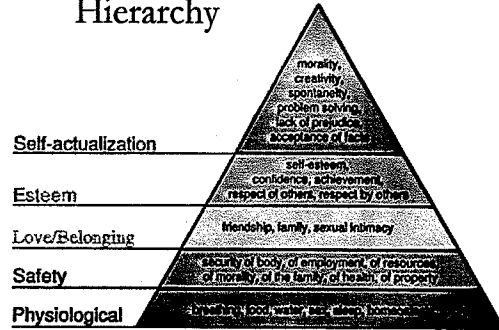
- "Characteristics that employers value and are willing to pay for, such as skills, diligence, honesty, good health, and reliability, also improve children's life chances, independent of their effect on parents' incomes. Children of parents with these attributes do well even if their parents do not have much income."

Susan Mayer

J. Kevin Tumlinson

-You probably have some interest in current events. Possibly you have a preference for local events, or national, or international.
- But for those living in the culture of poverty there's no news more important than that of the immediate circle of family and friends.
 - Who needs a place to sleep tonight? Who has food? Who was disrespected by someone? Who needs to be avenged.

Maslow's Hierarchy



Relationships

The circle becomes all important. Friends and family become all that matters, even above the self. The definition of the individual-who they are-comes from the culture that dominates them. They are defined by the poverty.

Communication

Registers of Language

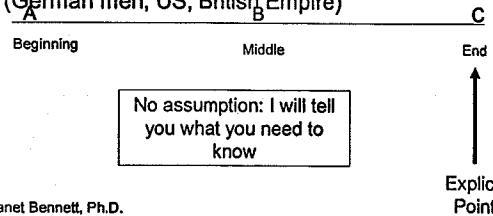
- Casual
 - Language between friends characterized by a 400-800 word vocabulary. Word choice is general, not specific; conversation depends on non-verbal assists; sentence syntax often incomplete
- Formal
 - Standard sentence syntax and word choice of work and school. Has complete sentences and specific word choice

- Frozen
 - Language that always stays the same; specific prayers. Mantras, mottos, vows
- Consultive
 - Formal register when used in conversation; discourse pattern not quite as direct as formal register
- Intimate
 - Language between lovers

Cross Cultural Communication: Linear

Less than 5% of the world communicates this way

(German men, US, British Empire)

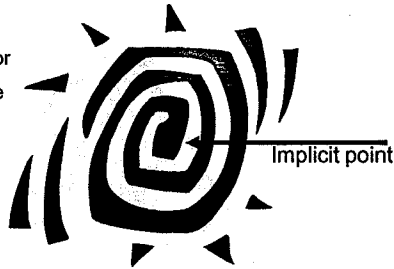


Janet Bennett, Ph.D.

Adaptation—Communication Styles

Janet Bennett, Ph.D.

- Story
- Metaphor
- Example
- High context



You are clever enough to get the point

Janet Bennett, Ph.D.

Communication Styles and Assumptions

Linear:

Disrespectful
Rude
Simplistic
Superficial
Disconnected
Uncaring
Arrogant
Know it all
Cold
Impatient

Circular

Inefficient
No focus
Low intelligence
Scattered
Have no point
Manipulative
Deceptive
Hiding behind words
Rambling
Time waster

Janet Bennett, Ph.D.

Communication Style Benefits

Linear

Emergent
Speed
Efficient
Analysis
Clarity
Direction

Circular

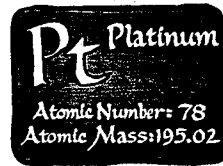
Creative
Relationship building
Decision making
Equality
Thoughtful
Calm

Alternative Ways of Knowing

Janet Bennett, Ph.D.

The Golden Rule

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you



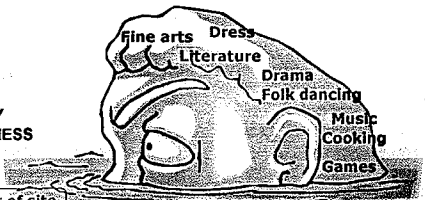
The Platinum Rule:

Do unto others as they would have you do unto them

Dr. Tony Alessandra

The Nature of Culture

PRIMARY AWARENESS



9/10 out of site

PRIMARY OUT OF AWARENESS

Notions of modesty, conception of beauty, child-raising, cosmology, relationship to animals, patterns of behavior, definitions of kin, courtship, conceptions of justice, incentives to work, leadership, tempo of work, decision making, cleanliness, theory of disease, problem solving, mobility, roles, status, age, occupation, insanity, friendship, time, cooperation, competition, body language, visual perception, social interaction, emotions, logic, validity, facial expression, physical space.... more, more, more

Hidden Rules of Culture

Ruby Payne, Ph.D.

	Poverty	Middle	Wealth
Money	Used, spent	Managed	Converted, invested
Social Emphasis	Social inclusion of the people we like	Self governance and self sufficiency	Social exclusion
Food	Do you have enough? Quantity important	Do you like it? Quality important	How does it look? Presentation is important
Time	Present; decisions made for the moment based on feelings or survival	Future; decisions made against future ramifications Predictability	Traditions and the past; decisions made on basis of traditions and decorum
Education	Valued as abstract—not reality, facts	Crucial for success and making money	Necessary making and maintaining connections

Hidden Rules of Culture

Ruby Payne, Ph.D.

	Poverty	Middle	Wealth
Destiny	Belief in fate; cannot do much to mitigate chance	Belief in choice; can change future w/good choices now	Nobles Oblige—character, high moral principles maintain tradition and connections
Language	Casual register; language is about survival	Formal register; language is about negotiation	Formal register; language is about connection
World view	Sees in terms of local setting	National setting	International setting
Driving Forces	Survival, relationships, entertainment	Work and achievement	Financial, political, social connections

Risk/Protective Factors and Asset Building

- Risk Factors
 - Community
 - Economic Deprivation (poverty)
 - School
 - Low commitment to school
 - Family
 - Family History of the problem Behavior
 - Individual
 - Early initiation of the problem behavior
- Problem Behaviors
 - Substance abuse
 - Delinquency
 - School Drop Out
 - Teen Pregnancy
 - Violence
 - Depression

David Hawkins and Richard Catalano

Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Risk Factors	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Community						
Availability of Drugs	✓				✓	
Availability of Firearms		✓			✓	
Community Laws and Norms Favorable Toward Drug Use, Firearms, and Crime	✓	✓			✓	
Media Portrayals of Violence					✓	
Transitions and Mobility	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Low Neighborhood Attachment and Community Disorganization	✓	✓			✓	
Extreme Economic Deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Risk Factors	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Family						
Family History of the Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family Management Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family Conflict	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Favorable Parental Attitudes and Involvement in the Problem Behavior	✓	✓			✓	

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Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Risk Factors	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
School						
Academic Failure Beginning in Late Elementary School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lack of Commitment to School	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

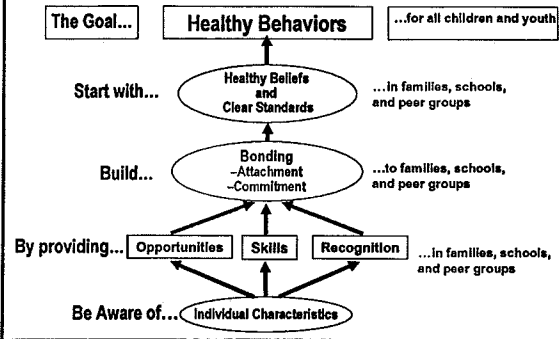
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Risk Factors for Adolescent Problem Behaviors

Risk Factors	Substance Abuse	Delinquency	Teen Pregnancy	School Drop-Out	Violence	Depression & Anxiety
Individual/Peer						
Early and Persistent Antisocial Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rebelliousness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Friends Who Engage in the Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Favorable Attitudes Toward the Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Initiation of the Problem Behavior	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Constitutional Factors	✓	✓				✓

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The Social Development Strategy



Stereotypes

- Laziness
 - Poor working adults spend more time working per week than wealthier counterparts
 - 2002 data from Economic Policy Institute
- Don't value education
 - Low income parents hold the same attitudes as wealthy parents
 - Compton=Lilly, 2003; Lareau & Horvat- 1999; Leichter. 1978; Varenne & McDermott, 1986

Stereotypes

- Substance Abuse
 - Alcohol abuse far more prevalent among wealthy than poor
 - Galea, Ahern, Tracy, & Vlahov, 2007
 - Drug use equally distributed across poor, middle class, and wealthy communities
 - Saxe, Kadushin, Tighe, Rindskopf, & Beveridge, 2001

Stereotypes

- Crime and Violence
 - Poor people don't commit more crime than wealthy people==they only commit more visible crime
 - "white collar crime" results in much greater economic (and life) losses than so-called "violent crime."
- Paul C. Gorski
Beyond the "Culture of Poverty " Myth: Creating Equitable Schools

Counseling/Teaching Impact

- Isolation and lack of family/friend support
- Limited time
- Limited understanding of rules
- Limited understanding of completion times
- Confidence and self esteem
- Easily exploited
- Lure of substance abuse
- Lure of illegal activity

Counseling

- Make sure content relevant
- Be clear about what family values
 - Suspend judgment
- Provide skill development
- Consider the difference between rehabilitation and habilitation
- Recognize hostility as defense mechanism
 - Trust issues
- Awareness of office, classroom decor

Shift in Thinking

- Understanding
 - Cultures and forces of power and privilege
 - Distribution of wealth in education
 - Middle class systems
- Advocate for poor students (families)
 - Keep from being placed in non academic pathways
 - Talented and gifted programs
 - Culturally appropriate testing