CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR IN YOUNG CHILDREN

OPENING THE CULTURE DOOR

A workshop Presented by Barbara Kaiser
What is culture?

a: “The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon man’s capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

b: The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group

c: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a company or corporation”

Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary

Culture

Culture is a vital part of a person’s self-concept

Everyone has the need and the right to be proud of their cultural heritage.

Children begin to construct their identity from:

- understanding their own culture
- responding to how others see and relate to them.

Culture is an integral part of everyone’s identity

- Children naturally develop the characteristics that their own culture values
  - Emotional display and affect
  - Moral development
  - Gender roles
  - Cognitive abilities
  - Language

- Not being recognized can actually harm a person by putting his/her self-concept at risk which can result in challenging behavior.
Challenging behavior is any behavior that:

- Interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play
- Is harmful to the child, other children, or adults
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure

Timid and withdrawn behaviors also qualify as challenging.

Examining your attitude

- What behaviors push your buttons?
- How do these behaviors make you feel?
- Why is your attitude so important?
- Everyone has different buttons
  - Past experiences with children
  - Training experiences
  - Level of support for dealing with challenging behaviors
  - Culturally based beliefs

Biological Risk Factors

- GENES
- TEMPERAMENT
- ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER (ADD)
- COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY AND BIRTH
  - Stress
  - Pre-maturity
  - Substance abuse during pregnancy
  - Malnutrition
- DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS
  - Language delays
  - Sensory integration problems
  - Executive functions
- GENDER

Types of temperament

- Easy
- Difficult
- Slow to warm up

“Goodness of fit”
Environmental Risk Factors

- FAMILY FACTORS AND PARENTING STYLE
- POVERTY AND THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS SURROUNDING IT
- EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE
- VIOLENT MEDIA
- CULTURAL DISSONANCE
- SCHOOL

The Melting Pot

A place where racial amalgamation and social and cultural assimilation are going on.

Assimilation

The process whereby individuals or groups of differing ethnic heritage are absorbed into the dominant culture of a society.

The Salad Bowl

Everyone combined in the same container, but each maintains their own identity and flavor.

Ogbu's theory

- Voluntary Minorities
  - Believe that they will have more freedom, opportunity and a better standard of living
  - Willing to learn customs of the dominant culture
- Involuntary minorities
  - Slavery, conquest, colonization
  - Define themselves in opposition to the attitudes, beliefs and preferences of the dominant culture.
- Refugees
  - Fear being persecuted for reasons of:
    - race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion,
  - Owing to such fear is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country
Cultures change

- When they come in contact with other cultures;
- Across generations;
- Children’s experiences in schools and communities.

**Low Context Culture**
- European American
- Western Europe

**High Context Culture**
- African American
- Native American
- Asian
- Latino

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LOW CONTEXT</strong></th>
<th><strong>HIGH CONTEXT</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majority U.S., Canada, Europe</td>
<td>70% of the world</td>
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<tr>
<td>individual orientation</td>
<td>group orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>African/Native Americans, Asian, Latino – Dominant world culture</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on individual development and functioning independently</th>
<th>Focus on interdependence and the child as a member of a group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping oneself</td>
<td>Helping others and being helped</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking about oneself – qualities and strengths</td>
<td>Being modest about one’s qualities and strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using words to communicate</td>
<td>Using observation to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing out</td>
<td>Fitting in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal property</td>
<td>- Shared property</td>
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**Individual Orientation**
- Learning about personal property
- Asking permission is expected

**Group Orientation**
- Learning about public property
- Sharing is assumed
**Individualistic Culture**
- Implicit Commands
  - Indirect statements to ask children what they want them to do
- Deductive style of inquiry
  - Emphasize detail
  - Arrange facts in a linear, logical order
  - Move from the specific to the general
  - Build a whole from the sum of its parts.
- De-contextualized learning
  - Focus on abstract ideas and concepts,
  - Isolate problems and attributes
  - Emphasize words and facts
  - Expect students to explain their work

**Collectivist cultures**
- Explicit Commands
  - Direct statements to tell children what they want them to do
- Inductive reasoning
  - Focusing first on the big picture
  - Moving from the general to the specific
  - Children learn to focus on the whole situation
- Context is key
  - Students connect what’s happening to their own experience by telling stories, playing with words, and drawing complex analogies

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**Circles of Comfort**

- Threat
  - Uncomfortable
  - Comfortable
  - Uninvolved

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**Comparing Cultures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye contact</th>
<th>Honesty, attention, trustworthiness</th>
<th>Aggressive, disrespectful, or impolite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional display</td>
<td>Open, spontaneous</td>
<td>Restrained, polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laugh or smile</td>
<td>Happy or amused</td>
<td>Confused, embarrassed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal space</td>
<td>An arm’s length</td>
<td>Like to stand close when conversing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touching</td>
<td>Frequent, an important means of communication</td>
<td>Avoid physical contact</td>
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**The culture of childcare/school**

- Values
- Rules and regulations
- Means of communication
- Evaluation
- Social structure
## The Culture of the Children

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<tr>
<td>Teachers expect students to work independently and compete for rewards</td>
<td>Children help one another learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn from books and other materials</td>
<td>Learn through experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When called on, students respond one at a time</td>
<td>Children may be reluctant to speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show they're paying attention, children sit still and maintain eye contact</td>
<td>Children are expected not to share their views but to watch and listen</td>
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### European American Culture

- Teachers instruct by asking questions to which they already know the answer.
- Students show their intelligence by supplying the correct answer.
- Teachers use implicit commands often in the form of a question.

### African American Culture

- Students find such questions puzzling.
- Adults ask questions to challenge them or to find out new information.
- Children demonstrate their wit and intellect by responding spontaneously and creatively.
- Accustomed to direct, explicit commands
- A child may not realize that the teacher isn't asking them a question or offering them a true choice and that there are consequences if they don't comply

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### Children of Color

- get less instructional attention
- are called on less frequently
- are encouraged to develop intellectual thinking less often
- are criticized more and praised less
- receive fewer direct responses to their questions and comments
- are reprimanded more often and disciplined more severely (p. 63)

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### Teachers expectations

#### Individual Orientation
- Objects, like toys and books, have a meaning of their own.
- Communicate using language to control children's behavior
- Encouraged to formulate and share views with others
- Individual achievement, self expression, and personal choice are emphasized
- Children encouraged to make their own decisions

#### Group Orientation
- The value of toys, books, etc. is to encourage social relations
- Communicate by modeling how to carry out a task.
- Not expected to verbalize what they are learning
- Encouraged to help others, learn by listening and watching
- Self is based upon affiliation with the group

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Geneva Gay, Culturally Responsive Teaching
People use things when they need them, and no one needs to ask permission.

If a child's negative self-image is very strong, he will try to get others to treat him negatively -- because in his own eyes he couldn't possibly be worthy of positive attention.

**Cultural dissonance**

- Feel incompetent
- Feel confused
- Don't understand the rules
- Do not feel accepted, respected, or valued

Is it possible for children to learn the skills necessary to succeed in the future and at the same time to honor and value their cultural heritage?

How will you go about balancing these two goals in your classroom?
Bridging the gap

Teachers can be part of the solution or part of the problem

It is the teacher’s role to provide an environment that includes everyone and is conducive to learning.

Cross Cultural Competence

“The ability to think, feel and act in ways that acknowledge, respect and build on ethnic, socio-cultural, and linguistic diversity”

Lynch and Hanson, 1993

The most powerful tool that you have is your relationship with the children.

A key way to improve interactions with children is to strengthen relationships with their families.
“Parents are a powerful, usually under-utilized source of knowledge about youngsters....We too often dismiss their insights as subjective and overly involved. In fact, the insights of the parents - urgent, invested, passionate, immediate - are exactly what we need.”

William Ayers

Get to know all your parents as soon as possible before there is a problem

Connecting with all families is important, but it is especially important where challenging behavior is concerned.

Parent involvement varies

- Actively involved in every activity
- It’s your problem - see a clear separation between home and daycare
- May not have the resources - time, energy, or money
- Parents’ own experience at school/daycare and their attitude toward authority
- Have heard this so many times from people who really have not helped them in the past
- Consider you the cause of their child’s problems.
- They feel incompetent, helpless and alienated
- Not appropriate to discuss family dynamics or personal problems with a teacher

Prevention is the best intervention

Creating opportunities for ALL children to succeed.

- Changing the physical environment
- Changing the program
- Changing the social context
  - Changing your approach with the children
  - Utilizing preventative pro-social skills curricula
The physical environment

The environment that surrounds people is an element of social structure.

The organization of the physical space may contain potent messages for some children.

The program

- Does your program recognize the influence of culture on cognition?
- Does your program reflect different learning styles?
- Does your program meet the needs of all the children?
- Does your program reflect the children’s abilities and interests?

The social context

The social context creates the overall tone of the group.

- Develop a social spirit that reflects the needs, cultures and developmental level of the children.
- Create a context that makes EVERY child feel good about coming to school.
- Focus on teaching children what To Do!