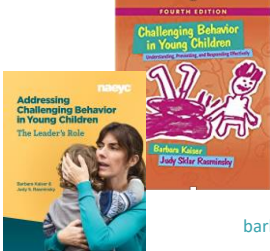


Culture and Children’s Challenging Behavior



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Learning outcomes

- Become aware of how culture shapes our identity and provides us with ground rules for interpreting and acting in the world.
- Understand how even unconscious attitudes guide our interactions with children, our expectations, and our appreciation of children’s skills, abilities, and behavior
- Explore the importance of cross-cultural competence



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**“People don’t care what you know.
Until they know that you care.”**

Theodore Roosevelt



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How does your culture influence your ability to form a positive relationship with children and their families?

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“Culture has an influence on the beliefs and behaviors of everyone”

- A child’s culture is the lens through which they see and understand the world
- Your culture influences how you see and understand children
- Your culture influences your teaching style and expectations



Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs
Serving Children Ages Birth to Five

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What do I mean by challenging behavior?

Makes it impossible to achieve our goals & interferes with learning opportunities

Not a diagnostic term
There may be no diagnosis
Need to survive period before diagnosis

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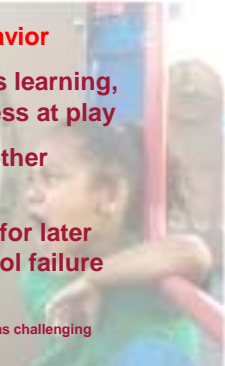
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Why is this so important?

Because challenging behavior

- 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Timid and withdrawn behaviors also qualify as challenging
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What behavior do you find challenging?



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Personal and cultural beliefs shape attitudes and responses to challenging behaviors

Could your button pushers be because of a cultural disconnect?

- How does your culture influence your teaching style and expectations?
- There may be a disconnect between what is expected at home and at childcare/pre-school



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Understanding your culture and how it influences your expectations



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Understanding yourself

The importance of self reflection

Important questions to ask yourself

- How has my childhood influenced my expectations about children's behavior?



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How has your upbringing influenced your thinking about children's behavior?

- As a child, how were you expected to behave at home?
- What were the adult-child relationships like in your family?
- What behavior was expected in your school/childcare?



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What does the word CULTURE mean to you?



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What is culture?

a: "The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that that depends upon a person'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



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Culture is the way you think, act and interact



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Culture is absorbed

Overt Culture

- Language
- Religion
- Philosophy
- Customs
- Family practices

Covert Culture

- Behavior
- Perceptions
- Social learning

“Culture is passed from generation to generation”

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The Iceberg Concept of Culture
Like an iceberg, nine-tenths of culture is below the surface.

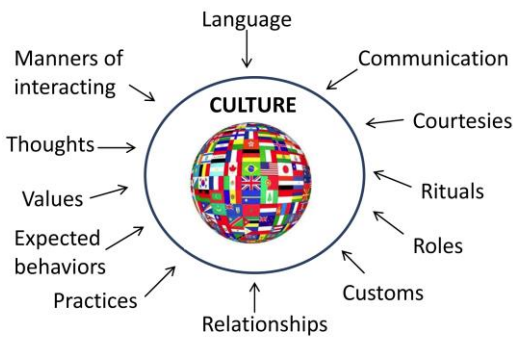
SURFACE CULTURE Most Easily Seen
Emotional Level: Low
Food, dress, music, visual arts, drama, crafts, dance, literature, language, celebrations, games

SHALLOW CULTURE
Unspoken Rules
Emotional Level: High
Courtesy, contextual conversational patterns, concept of time, personal space, rules of conduct, facial expressions, nonverbal communication, body language, touching, eye contact, patterns of handling emotions, notions of modesty, concept of beauty, courtship practices, relationships to animals, notions of leadership, tempo of work, concepts of food, ideals of child rearing, theory of illness, attitudes toward elders, concept of cleanliness, notions of adolescence, patterns of group decision-making, definition of insanity, preferences for competition or cooperation, tolerance of physical pain, concept of "self," concept of past and future, definition of obscenity, attitudes toward dependents, problem-solving roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship...

DEEP CULTURE
Unconscious Rules
Emotional Level: Intense

Hollie, S. (2018). Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning

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Rings of Culture



The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning (2017)

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Communication Style Checklist

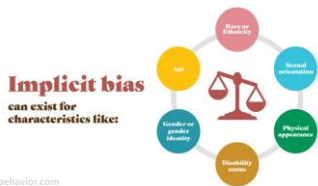
Taking your turn to speak		Never	Treatment of Emotion		Notes/Me
Timing: I speak when	Active Speaker takes breath Listener takes breath Speaker finishes Listener moves Always asks Asks if that speaker has finished		Openness to discuss feelings	Open.....Hesitant	
Vocal Characteristics		Notes/Me	Level of Expression	Open.....Closed	
Tone	Paternal.....Casual		Context of Communication		
Rate	Rapid.....Slow		Apologies	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Non-Verbal Characteristics		Notes/Me	Requests	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Eye Contact	Hold gaze.....Look away		Praise	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Facial Expression	Smile.....Serious		Disagreements	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Gestures	Describe		Feedback	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Personal Distance	Little.....Lots		Humor and Joking	Frequency Quantity Timing	Purpose Content Style
Touch	Describe		Notes/Me		
Posture and Body Language	Describe		Nature of Topics Discussed		
Diets style and Accents	Describe		Personal Professional Community Other		
Kind of topics discussed			Level of self-disclosure		
Level of self-disclosure	Open.....Closed		Openness to new ideas		
Openness to new ideas	Very.....Cautious				

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Implicit Bias

“The automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways.”

Influences how a child’s behavior is perceived and how it is addressed



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Gilliam, W. et al. 2016

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Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

- Pervasive - everyone possesses them
- Implicit and explicit biases are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other
- Do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own ingroup
- Implicit biases are malleable - can be gradually unlearned

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Children from minority cultures especially those who are poor and live in urban areas

- 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 disciplined more severely



Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching*

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Gender bias

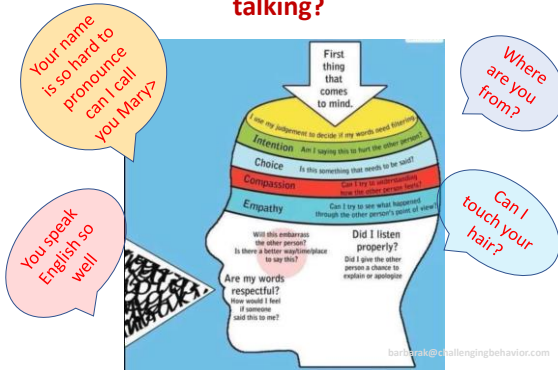
- A disproportionate number of boys compared to girls are suspended or expelled from early childhood and elementary school programs
- More boys than girls
 - are identified with developmental delays or special needs, including ADHD and specific learning disabilities
 - struggle with behavioral issues in our programs—often resulting in the use of punitive discipline methods

There is a mismatch between how most young boys develop, grow, and learn, and the kinds of expectations, outcomes, activities, and discipline approaches used in programs during the early years

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What filters do you use before you start talking?



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Understanding how children's culture influences their behavior



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Why do you think children behave inappropriately?

Challenging behavior occurs: When the demands and expectations placed upon a child outstrip their skills to respond appropriately

AND/OR

When the child does not know what you expect or is unaware that their behavior is inappropriate



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Time to Reflect

Why do some children come to depend on these behaviors while others discover more effective strategies to help them meet their needs?



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Five horizontal lines for reflection.

BIOLOGICAL RISK FACTORS

- Genes
Temperament
Complications of pregnancy and birth
Substance abuse during pregnancy
Neurological problems
Emotional and behavioral disorders
Gender

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS

- Family factors and parenting style
Poverty and the social conditions surrounding it
Cultural dissonance
Peers
Trauma
Childcare/School



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Five horizontal lines for reflection.

Historical Trauma

"A constellation of characteristics associated with massive cumulative group trauma across generations." (NAEYC Draft Position Paper, 2018)

- Colonization
Genocide
Slavery
Sexual exploitation
Forced relocation/incarceration based on race or ethnicity
COVID

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Five horizontal lines for reflection.



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(Historical) trauma and behavior

- Children with the abnormal cortisol patterns:
- Are at high risk for aggressive and challenging behavior
 - Have trouble sitting still, paying attention, concentrating, and following rules and directions
 - Find it hard to:
 - control their impulses, emotions, and behavior
 - communicate their needs and desires in words
 - understand others' feelings
 - form satisfying relationships
 - Tend to lash out at the sign of any threat, whether it's real or perceived

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Environmental Risk Factors

- Family factors and parenting style
 - Young , single mother
 - Maternal depression
 - History of aggressive, antisocial or criminal behavior
- Poverty and the social conditions surrounding it
 - Less chance of creating a secure attachment
 - Stress
- Peers
- Trauma
- **Cultural dissonance**
- Childcare/School



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Cultural dissonance

- Not being recognized
- Feeling confused
- Not understanding the rules
- Not feeling accepted, respected, or valued
- Not able to communicate in childcare/school language

Results in challenging behavior

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Culture influences the way children:



- Learn
- Cope
- Solve problems
- Communicate

(Gay, Geneva 2010. Culturally Responsive Teaching)

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A Father's Plea

I would like to introduce you to my son, Wind-Wolf. He is probably what you would consider a typical Indian kid. He was born and raised on the reservation.... And like so many Indian children his age, he is shy and quiet in the classroom. He is 5 years old, in kindergarten, and I can't understand why you have already labeled him a "slow learner"... He is not culturally "disadvantaged," but he is culturally "different." If you ask him how many months there are in a year, he will probably tell you 13. He will respond this way not because he doesn't know how to count properly, but because he has been taught by our traditional people that there are 13 full moons in a year. He can probably count more than 40 different kinds of birds, tell you and his peers what kind of bird each is and where it lives, the seasons in which it appears, and how it is used in a sacred ceremony. I want my child to succeed in school and in life.... I want him to be proud of his rich heritage and culture, and I would like him to develop the necessary capabilities to adapt to, and succeed in, both cultures. But I need your help. What you say and what you do in the classroom, what you teach and how you teach it, and what you don't say and don't teach will have a significant effect on the potential success or failure of my child. My son, Wind-Wolf, is not an empty glass coming into your class to be filled. He is a full basket coming into a different environment and society with something special to share. Please let him share his knowledge, heritage, and culture with you and his peers.

Robert Lake (1990). Reprinted with permission of the author

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Stranger in a strange land

- When children find themselves in a strange environment they are likely to feel confused, isolated, alienated, conflicted, and less competent
- When what a child learned so far in their home culture doesn't apply
- When the program, your teaching style and discipline may not recognize or support their culture
- When teachers do not notice or appreciate the talents, skills, and abilities they developed in their home community

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- How did you feel when you traveled to another country — or even to a different area —
- How did you feel in those strange surroundings especially if you did not speak the language?

- Excited
- Frightened
- Anxious
- Confused
- Lonely



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How do you think children feel when they first enter your classroom?



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Are cultures really so different?



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LOW CONTEXT Majority U.S., Europe Individual orientation European American/Western Europe	HIGH CONTEXT 70% of the world Group orientation African/Native Americans, Asian, Latino
Emphasize words and facts Implicit Commands Indirect statements <u>ask</u> children to do what they want Focus on functioning independently Helping oneself Standing out Personal property Talking about oneself – Deductive style of inquiry Emphasize detail	Context is key Explicit Command Direct statements <u>tell</u> children what they want them to do Focus on interdependence and the child as a member of a group Helping others and being helped Fitting in Shared property Being modest about oneself – Inductive reasoning Focus first on the big picture

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What are your 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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Are you aware of the cultural and/or behavioral expectations of the child at home?

Children naturally develop the characteristics that their own culture values:

- Emotional display and affect
- Moral development
- Gender roles
- Cognitive abilities
- Language



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Important questions to ask yourself

- **Does your program:**
 - Recognize the influence of culture on cognition?
 - Reflect different learning styles?
 - Meet the needs of all the children?
 - Reflect the children's interests and abilities?
- **Does the social climate of your room:**
 - Reflect the needs, cultures and developmental level of the children?
 - Create a context that encourages ALL children to feel good about themselves?
 - Focus on teaching children what To Do!

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So what can you do to help children feel as though they belong and reduce the need for challenging behavior?

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Look at your program and activities

- Do the children feel honored and recognized?
- Are the activities and learning materials influenced by the culture of the children in your group
- Are the children represented in:
 - The routines
 - The rituals
 - The stories
 - The staff
 - Choice of language



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Create a welcoming and equitable learning community

- Build on children’s prior knowledge
- Have the same high expectations for children from every family
- Pay attention to each child’s unique approach to learning, knowledge, and skills
- Filter curriculum content and teaching strategies through the children’s cultural frames of reference
- Read books that represent the backgrounds, environments, home language, and routines, of the children in your group
- Recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths
- Invite family and community members into the classroom to share their knowledge and skills

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Pay attention to economic class issues

Each child's unique approach to learning, knowledge, and skills, is shaped by their specific life experiences

- Be mindful of families' concerns about clothing
- Use sensory materials that are not food
- Make a decision not to focus on children's new possessions during circle and sharing times.

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Looking at behavior through a cultural lens

Behavior	Interpretation	Reframing	Building	Creating Opportunities
Sitting close to other children				
Hugging other children				
Watching other children				
Speaking too loudly				
Talking out of turn				

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Have you ever experienced an incident that you thought was a child being difficult, but it may have actually been a cultural disconnect?

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Louis refuses to put on his coat by himself

- Is he trying to get your attention?
- Maybe he doesn't want to go outside?
- Is he too immature to be in your group of four-year-olds?
- Is there too much chaos?

OR
 Could this be a cultural conflict?



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How would you respond?

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"Families are the primary context for children's development and learning"



NAEYC's position statement [Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education](#)



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Adapt teaching strategies

- Find more time for small groups and one-on-one interactions
- Speak slowly, avoid using slang, simplify sentences, and repeat key words often
- Give children time to process what you've said and respond
- Add graphic organizers that add meaning to interactions
- Assign language buddies
- Group together children who speak the same language
- Provide a comfortable place where a child can spend time playing alone without the pressure of trying to understand or be understood
- Use lots of music and movement activities
- Make the effort to get to know the families

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The culture of school	Values in diverse cultures
De-contextualized learning: Emphasize words and facts	Context is key Connect what's happening to their own experience by telling stories and by observation
Teachers instruct by asking questions to which they already know the answer	Children find such questions puzzling Adults ask questions to challenge them or to find out new information
Children must be called on and respond one at a time	Children may not want to stand out from the group They join in and add their opinions They demonstrate their wit and intellect by responding spontaneously and creatively
To show they're paying attention, children sit still and maintain eye contact	Listeners join in and respond with gestures, movement, and words
Teachers often use Implicit Commands Indirect statements ask children to do what they want	Parents use Explicit Commands Direct statements tell children what they want them to do

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If the educational process were culturally centered, responsive, or contextualized for other ethnic groups, they too would experience far greater academic success in school



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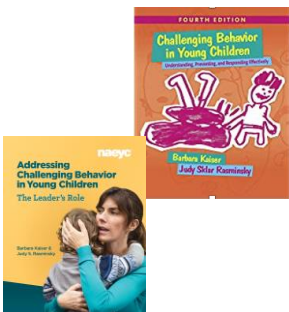
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We need to celebrate each child, where they come from and what they bring with them



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THANK YOU

Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Understanding, Preventing, and Responding Effectively
Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky
Email: barbarak@challengingbehavior.com

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