

Early Childhood Services and Supports in the Context of Cultural Community Psychology

Presented by

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Across the globe, early childhood services and supports are becoming more common. Why?

- 1. Parents require some form of daycare as they move into the more formal work situations;**
- 2. The general recognition that enriching early experiences can have lasting effects on children's developmental trajectories; and**
- 3. More aggressive attempts to provide for primary, secondary, and tertiary health care for children**



What are the connections with these issues and the need for an approach to their solutions based on a common view of cultural/community psychological models?



Connections involve:

- 1. Human diversity is seen in context;**
- 2. Context within diversity is cultural (O'Donnell, 2005)**
- 3. Cultural community psychology gives us the frame and hence the tools to effect change in social situations:**
 - Understanding and creating shared meaning
 - Development of intersubjectivity
 - Co-construction of activity settings (Rogoff; Roberts)



Applying these issues to real world examples.

Three examples:

- 1. Navajo early intervention program development and conceptualizations of health**
- 2. Native Hawaiian conceptualizations of early childhood and development of educational settings for young children.**
- 3. Learning opportunity in talk at the University of Qwa-Qwa**



What do the dead have to do with the living?

- **Communication with ancestors vs. cut off from the spirit world**



Navajo early intervention program: Experiences with Cree compared with that of Sam.

Cree

- **Child with multiple birth defects lives with grandmother on reservation.**
- **Health education and social services within western framework are available for medical, social, and physical therapy interventions.**
- *Problem from Grandmother's perspective:* **In simple terms, disability is seen as a reflection of disharmony in the spiritual world.**
- *Goal from Grandmother's perspective:* **Regain harmony with spiritual world.**
- *Solution from Grandmother's perspective:* **Conduct traditional Navajo ceremonies to regain harmony within family and within the individual.**

(continued...)



Cree (continued)...

- ***Goal for Service System perspective:*** Help Cree to gain developmentally and physically as much as possible; help grandmother in caretaking for Cree.
- ***Solution from Service System perspective:*** Provide home, hospital, and center-based therapeutic interventions to correct medical and physical anomalies; training for grandmother in treatments so she can do them with Cree.
- ***Conflict:*** Grandmother “uncooperative, resistant, and obstructionist by not allowing therapies and medical interventions to occur.” Service agencies uncooperative with grandmother because they do things to Cree (therapeutic interventions) that make her cry.
- **Community cultural psychology principles as a way to proceed.**
 - ✓ Development of intersubjectivity.
 - ✓ Development of joint goals.
 - ✓ Agree to “allow” both western and traditional treatments with understanding of the contribution of each to the goal of family well-being.

(continued...)



Sam


- **Sam born with diagnosis of Down syndrome into a large, very religious, highly educated, middle-class upwardly mobile family with grandmother who has Ph.D. in Child and Family Development. Sam is seen as a gift from God to the family.**
- *Problem from family's perspective:* **Sam will greatly benefit physically from intensive physical and language therapies and the earlier they are started the better.**
- *Problem from agency's perspective:* **Sam will greatly benefit physically from intensive physical and language therapies and the earlier they are started the better.**
- *Goal from family's perspective:* **Help Sam as much as possible to have “normal” social, educational, and physical skills and experiences over the course of his lifetime.**
- *Goal from agency's perspective:* **Help Sam as much as possible to have “normal” social, educational, and physical skills and experiences over the course of his lifetime.**

(continued...)



Sam (*continued*)...

- ***Conflict:*** Parents make everything into therapy-cracker story.
- Agency wants Sam to develop a a more “appropriate” pace, does not share family’s optimism for Sam’s long-term outcome.
- ***Solution from family perspective:*** Don’t tell therapists everything.
- ***Solution from therapists’ perspectives:*** Help family see Sam as complete and able to learn some skills but not others but that does not mean he will not try.
- **Community cultural psychology principles as a way to proceed.**
 - ✓ Development of intersubjectivity.
 - ✓ Development of joint goals.
 - ✓ Agree to “allow” both western and traditional treatments with understanding of the contribution of each to the goal of family well-being.



What do we take from all of these with respect to the contribution of cultural community psychology to services and supports for families?

- 1. Indigenous systems are constructed in response to enduring cultural and ecological constraints.**
- 2. They are sufficiently forceful so that they are not easily altered without serious consequences to family well-being.**
- 3. Public health systems will be most helpful to families when the services they provide honor, respect, and support indigenous models of belief and interaction.**
- 4. To do otherwise creates conflict and demands further accommodations from families already experiencing high levels of stress.**
- 5. The goal of such programs should be to fit into the indigenous system and require as few accommodations as possible, consistent with the mutually agreed-upon goals of family and child well-being.**