Applying the Knowledge of Effective Practices for African American Children, Youth and their Families: Implications for Preventive, Early and Intensive Intervention Strategies

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Discussant: Regina Hicks, Ph.D.

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Where Does Child Welfare Fit?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Culture</th>
<th>Child Welfare</th>
<th>Africentrism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual more important than the group</td>
<td>Child focused</td>
<td>Collective identity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules predominate over relationship</td>
<td>Rule and procedural</td>
<td>Highest value is relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationality/evidence</td>
<td>Legalistic</td>
<td>Spirituality/affect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific roles</td>
<td>Judge, case worker, each parent, child, CASA</td>
<td>Blurred boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linear time</td>
<td>Set schedule</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
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</tbody>
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Africentrism and Kinship Care: A Study of Implementation and Meaning

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NTU Therapeutic Approach

- NTU - essence, spirit, unity
- Basic Principles –
  - Harmony
  - Balance
  - Interconnectedness
  - Authenticity
- Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles of Kwanzaa)
  - Umoja – Unity
  - Kujichagulia – Self-Determination
  - Ujima – Collective Work and Responsibility
  - Ujamaa – Cooperative Economics
  - Nia – Purpose
  - Kuumba – Creativity
  - Imani – Faith

Fundamental Question:
Does the use of Africentric Practice Make a difference for African Americans?

Africentric Translation?

- What does it look like?
- To service providers?
- How is it implemented?
- To service recipients?
Findings In The Study Of Family Preservation And Kinship Care Programs Of ABC Agency

- **How is Africentrism translated into practice?**
  - Facilitated by intentional organizational culture building, but impeded by American societal pressures and influences
- **What is the meaning to families?**
  - To the extent that what they received was Africentric, it meant “hope” and affirmation of “capacity” and “worth.”
- **What is the meaning to service providers?**
  - Lifestyle
  - Intervention approach
  - No meaning, just part of the job

Translation Through Organizational Culture Building

Culture: institution of practices that are transmitted from generation to generation using symbols, rituals, artifacts, language, values that will guide the way that people behave. (Bohannan, 1995)

- **Beliefs**: people are good, strengths oriented
- **Values**: importance of relationships, harmony, authenticity
- **Rituals and practices**: Crossing-over ceremonies, Kwanzaa, agency prayer
- **Language**: NTU based terminology (harmony, alignment) and African terms (NTU, Ngia)
- **Artifacts**: African, African American, African Diaspora – paintings, posters, statuettes, masks in public spaces, meeting rooms and some private offices
- **Transmission over generations**: Training, certification, supervision, rituals
- **Guide people’s behavior**: Engage in strong personal relationships, demonstrate caring with clients, use NTU language to explain work

Impact Of Impeding Factors On Translation Process

Facilitating Factors

- Africentric Values

Impeding Factors

- American Context

Modified Africentric Practice [Symbol]

Meaning To Service Recipients

- "Meaning" from the perspective of the client’s definition of his/her issue of concern.
- Absence of overt, tangible symbols of Africentrism to trigger perception and interpretation
- Presence of certain Africentric processes which they valued, specifically, Authentic, Affirming Relationship
  - “Hope”
  - Capacity
  - Worth

Question:

Did the modified Africentric practice make a difference to these families?

- Issue of Concern
  - Engagement = YES
  - Intervention = YES
  - Participation = YES

Culture Specific Element

- Culture Specific Intervention = NO
- Culture Specific Outcome

Africentric Practice?

Outcomes and Satisfaction

- YES
- YES
- YES

New Questions

- **How does an organization implement values based practice?**
  - Africentrism is “how” as well as “what”
  - Compare to implementation research on evidence-based practice
- **Must a practitioner “be” it to “do” it?**
  - Importance of the individual practitioner
- **How much does symbolization mean?**
  - Impact of intangibles in contrast to concrete, visible symbols
Recommendations For Practice

- Ensure match between actual need, theory of change, and intervention chosen
- Reinforce the importance of relationship
- Intensify focus on the person of the practitioner
- Create organizational cultures that exemplify the values of values-based practices

Do You Have “Be It” To “Do It”?

“People do not assimilate new ways of doing things unless they make emotional space in their current paradigms. So unless they can figure out how it’s relevant to them, they don’t do it with their clients.” (H. G.)