

Cultural Competence: Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services to People of African Descent

Nathalie Mizelle, Ph.D., CRC

East Carolina University

North Carolina

March 13, 2009



Demography

- 2nd largest group of color in the US.
- 34.6 million people of African descent come from diverse cultures including Africa, the Caribbean, Central Europe, South America.
- African-Americans are 12.3% of the population.

Demography

- The majority of Blacks in America trace their ancestry to the slave trade.
- Slavery lasted four centuries throughout Europe, the Americas, and the Caribbean nearly 12 million people were taken out of Africa.
- By 1860 close to 4 million slaves in ***Virginia**, *GA, AL, MS, TX*(cotton states), *LA, TN*, and *AK*.

Demographic trends

- 55% of Blacks live South
- 19% in Midwest
- 17.6% in the Northeast
- 9% West
- Washington, DC highest percentage
- MS, LA, SC, GA, MD, AL, NC, VA, DE
- Black females outnumber Black males

Social, Psychological and Physical Health Issues

- 22.9% poverty rate compared with 11.6% for the nation at large (US census bureau, 2002).
- More likely to be exposed to violence (implications for mental illness) such as depression and PTSD.
- Stigmatizing attitudes exist regarding mental health care.

Social psychology...

- Blacks fear mental health treatment was 2.5 times greater than the proportion of Whites(US Dept. of Health & Human Services, 2005).
- Other research found that Blacks were less likely than Whites to be properly diagnosed when suffering from affective disorders, such as depression. The tendency of clinicians was to diagnosed with schizophrenia.

...Health Issues

- Diabetes at a higher rate 3x's
- Heart Disease is 40% higher
- Prostate cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Infant mortality

Cultural Orientation and Values

Myers(1991) states

“*Afrocentricity* refers to a worldview that believes reality is both spiritual and material at once..with the highest value on positive interpersonal relationships between men/women; self knowledge is assumed to be the basis of all knowledge, and one knows through symbolic imagery and rhythm.”

The Collective

- *“I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am”*
- Extended family
 - Collateral relations are valued over highly individualistic styles
- Education as a means of self-help and a strong work ethic are often taught to children at an early age

The Collective

- Communication patterns are not limited to verbal dialogue or standard English.
 - Sense of humor
 - Storytelling
- Most Black people depend on nonverbal modes of communication.
- How something is said rather than what is actually verbally spoken.

The Collective (cont.)

- Body movement, postures, gestures and facial expressions represent dominant patterns of communication within the African-American community.
- Giving people status as a function of age and position.

The Collective (cont.)

- Present time orientation
 - Church, parties, and other events
 - Varies by individual differences and acculturation levels
- Value is also placed on the use of proverbs (e.g. *“Everybody ain’t gone”*) and spiritual wisdom (“God don’t make no mistakes”) to not only cope but to resist well and to thrive.

Other traditions

- Oral traditions
- Reliance on proverbial wisdom
- Spirituality
- Firm child rearing practices
- Education as a means of self-help
- Collateral interpersonal relations
- Formal communication styles with elders and authority figures

Other traditions

- Nonverbal modes of communication
- Extended family based on blood and strong ties
- Unity
- Self-determination
- Collective work and responsibility
- Creativity and faith
- Fluid time orientation

Guidelines

- Be genuine in verbal and nonverbal communications.
- Engage in Advocacy
 - Probe for bias that the client may experience or perceive to be related to his/her problem.

Guidelines

- Utilize nonpsychological methods
 - Encourage spirituality
- Have language flexibility
 - Should understand but not have any negative reaction to its use
- Practice culturally informed consent
- because of mistrust; counselors should explain roles, client roles, techniques, etc.

TRIOS Model

(Jones, 2003)

- Time
- Rhythm
- Improvisation
- Orality
- Spirituality

TRIOS Model

- Time-saved or wasted or invested
- Rhythm-reoccurring pattern of behavior within specified time frames
 - Racism often caused disharmonious connections between internal and external states

TRIOS Model (Cont)

- Improv-language-relationships and action.
- Orality-traditions of vocality, drumming, storytelling, praise singing, and naming parts of African and African history
 - Hip Hop
- Spirit-Divine Intervention, higher power in daily life.

Issues to Address in VR

- **Communication**
- **Interaction**
- **Impediments**
- **Risk Factors**

Thank You

**Thank you to the
TACE Center: Region IV
for the opportunity to provide this
webinar training to the southeast
region.**

Presenter's Contacts

Nathalie Mizelle, Ph.D., CRC

E-mail: mizellen@ecu.edu

TACE Center: Region IV

Toll-free: (866) 518-7750 [voice/tty]

Fax: (404) 541-9002

Web: TACEsoutheast.org

My TACE Portal: TACEsoutheast.org/myportal

Email: tacesoutheast@law.syr.edu

Education Credits

Participants may be eligible for CEU and CRCC credits.

- **CEU Credit (.3)**

- Participants **MUST** attend both sessions in this two part series: March 04 and March 18.
- For individual Session, CEU credit will not be issued.
- Site Coordinators must distribute the CEU form to participants seeking CEU credit on the day of the webinar.

- **CRCC Credit (1.5 per session)**

- By March 20, 2009, participants must score 80% or better on a online Post Test and submit an online CRCC Request Form via the MyTACE Portal.
- Focus CRCC Code 008: Psychosocial & Cultural Issues in Counseling.

My TACE Portal: TACEsoutheast.org/myportal

Disclaimer

*This presentation was developed by the **TACE Center: Region IV ©2009** with funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) under the priority of Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Projects (TACE) – Grant #H264A080021. However, the contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy of the RSA and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government [34 CFR 75.620 (b)].*

Copyright information

This work is the property of the TACE Center: Region IV.

Permission is granted for this material to be shared for non-commercial, educational purposes, provided that this copyright statement appears on the reproduced materials and notice is given that the copying is by permission of the authors. To disseminate otherwise or to republish requires written permission from the authors.