Cultural Issues in the Practice of Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Mary Blake Huer
Gloria Soto

ASHA in Miami, 2006

Course Objectives

• Understanding the cultural underpinnings of our service delivery models
• Service delivery model review (overview of traditional choices)
• Examination of the impact of culture on the development of language and communication
• Challenges to assessment
• Issues when representing vocabulary
• A practical model for choosing AAC strategies
• Supporting parent participation through culturally appropriate advocacy styles
• Issues regarding the impact of AAC use on Latino/Hispanic families
• Questions and answers

Understanding the cultural underpinnings of our service delivery models

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Understanding the cultural underpinnings of our service delivery models

- Education and social policies reflect the core values of prevailing/dominant culture.
- Culture denotes the shared implicit and explicit rules, behaviors and traditions that express the beliefs, values and goals of a community.
- AAC services are delivered through cultural institutions: e.g., SPED, health systems.

IDEA as a cultural product

- Six principles of law:
  - Zero reject
  - Nondiscriminatory assessment
  - Individualized and appropriate education
  - Least Restrictive Environment
  - Due process
  - Parental participation

  All these principles reveal several core values: Individualism, Equity and Choice

Individualism

- The individual comes first: person-centered planning
- The purpose of intervention is to provide clients with skills that would make them independent, self-reliant and productive adults.
- Due process: all citizens have rights that are protected under the law: the full implementation of the law depends on parents (personal responsibility, right to protest)
Choice

• Parents have the right to choose from the range of programmatic options.

• Clients have the right to choose: e.g., choice making, vocational and living arrangements options.

Equity

• Non discriminatory practices
  – Fair assessment
  – Zero reject
  – Parents as equal partners with professionals in the decision making process of their child’s education.

Contrasting Cultural Traditions

• Alternative concepts of self (e.g., familism)
• Differing perceptions of disability
• Principle of socially ascribed roles and responsibilities (e.g. personalism, respect and status)
Service delivery model review
(overview of traditional choices)

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Service Delivery Models

- There are many different models
- The model depends on the types of needs and reflects the SLP’s core values
- An overview of models
- Consider 'why' you select one versus another?

Examination of the impact of culture on the development of language and communication

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Acquisition of Culture

• In the beginning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Systems constructed by the community</th>
<th>Hunting and Gathering Society</th>
<th>Agricultural (pastoral) Community</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent, individualistic, ego-centric, unique, and private</td>
<td>Produce offspring who are:</td>
<td>Produce offspring who are:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdependent, sociocentric, relational, altruistic, collectivistic, and fundamentally connected with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible behaviors</td>
<td>Personal distinctiveness, separateness, assertive, competitive, self-assured, efficient, self-sufficient, direct, seeking achievement and self-reliant</td>
<td>Encompassing social relationships, subordinating individual interests to the group, attunitive, respectful, dependent, cooperative, self-controlled, dutiful, self-sacrificing, conforming, cooperative, conscientious and compliant</td>
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</tbody>
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Challenges to assessment

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Discussion on Non Speech Test

Issues when representing vocabulary

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Research Studies


A practical model for choosing AAC strategies

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Personal Planning Protocol for Identifying Issues, Knowledge, Skills, Access, and Learning Style(s) of Teacher Educators Infusing AT into Education Environments.

Huer, 2005
Understanding culture at the deepest level

Being Mindful...

**Culture: An iceberg metaphor**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fashions, Trends</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Clothing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal-Nonverbal</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbols</td>
<td>Gestures</td>
<td>Actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Good/Bad</td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
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<td>Beliefs</td>
<td>Fair/Unfair</td>
<td>Police Action</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>Mormon</td>
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<td>Traditions</td>
<td>Ceremonies</td>
<td>Rituals</td>
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<td>Universal</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Respect</td>
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<td>Human Needs</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Power</td>
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Supporting parent participation through culturally appropriate advocacy styles

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Supporting Parent participation through Culturally Appropriate Advocacy Styles

- Make explicit your beliefs regarding family responsibility
- Contact the family and explore their beliefs
- Make explicit and acknowledge cultural differences and expectations
- Collaborative develop a plan that incorporates the family’s strengths, values and expectations.
- Formal vs. informal meetings

Communicating with Families (Harry, 1992; Rosado, 1994)

- Do not misjudge parent’s motivations when they do something you can’t understand. Ask them.
- Requirements of ritualistic respect may call for the use of titles and different communication style depending on age (problems with egalitarian approach):
  - Establish personalized, individual contact with parents. To be informed implies personalized, open-ended and reciprocal (not necessarily factual) communication;
  - Avoid the use of technical jargon and written communication;
  - Use a tone of absolute and genuine respect for the client;
  - Recognize that issues of survival make take priority over educational clinical concerns;
  - Seek and respond to needs regarding scheduling, transportation, child care and other logistical issues.
Issues regarding the impact of AAC use on Latino/Hispanic families

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Issues regarding AAC use on Latino/Hispanic families

• Language
• Assessment
• Intervention

Ultimate Goal of AAC Intervention is Social Participation

1. Providing means to communicate in various communities of which our client is a member.
2. Providing opportunities to communicate in those communities.
3. Having partners with whom to communicate in those communities.
Providing a culturally appropriate means to communicate:

1. Language sample of client and family
2. Review symbols with family
3. Bilingual/bicultural systems for different settings.

Providing opportunities to communicate by:

- Use of meaningful nonverbal communication used at home.
- Respect participation/interaction norms of family and culture.
- Embed cultural communication in system (i.e. songs, story telling etc.)

Having partners with whom to communicate: AAC system that allows to participate in both cultures.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home:</th>
<th>School:</th>
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<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>L1 +L2</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social purpose</th>
<th>Social + academic purpose</th>
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Questions and Answers

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