Social Class and Education

Presentation by the RCO Diversity Committee
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• Definition of Class and Classism
• Overview of Poverty
• Cultural Values of Social Classes
Please note:

This PowerPoint talks about groups in terms of generalizations. It’s important to remember that not all of these characteristics pertain to every individual in each group, but that it is an overview of general attributes that many members of each group possess. 😊
Simulation Exercises

For the following slides, consider these situations from the standpoints of:

- Poverty- earning $22,113 per year (about 425.00 per week for a family of 4).

- Middle class- earning 60,000 per year (about $1150 per week for a family of 4).

- Upper class- earning 180,000 per year (about $3,460 per week for a family of 4).
After a trip to the dentist for your kids which just cost you $200, you find out your youngest child has a cavity and your oldest child needs braces. Neither of your children have dental insurance. The cavity filling will cost $300 and the braces will be monthly costs of $800 over the next six months. Do you:

- Take care of both situations and pay $1,200 today
- Only pay $500 for the dentist visit and cavity filling, and tell your oldest child he might be able to get braces next year
- Only pay for the $200 visit and hope your youngest child can go two weeks with some pain until you get another paycheck in the mail.
The kids have their last day of school coming up on Friday and you need to finalize daycare so you can continue to go to work. Do you:

- Pay $500 ($250 for each child) for your kids to begin attending KinderCare, which is a 15 minute drive from your home
- Pay your next door neighbor $750 to begin watching your kids
- Let your 6 and 8 year old take care of themselves at home
After having recent car troubles, you find out from the mechanic that you have a broken axel and it will cost $800 to fix. You’d rather not pay $800 today, but it’s Monday and you need to be able to get to work for the rest of week. Also keep in mind if you need to take your kids anywhere. Do you:

- Pay the $800 to have your car fixed
- Purchase a $100 monthly bus pass to get you by for the time being and know you cannot drive your kids anywhere
- Ask the mechanic if he/she would like to go on a date and hope things go well so you might have a new mechanically inclined significant other.
Definitions of Class

Social Class is…

• a broad group in society having common economic, cultural, or political status.”

• Classism:
  – Pervasive and persistent inequalities of income, wealth, status, and social power
  – (like sexism or racism) constitutes a form of oppression that is structural, maintained by practices that are played out at the individual, institutional, and cultural levels and reflect “the average,” a norm, or “business as usual.”
Social Classes

• **Upper Class:**
  – Roughly 5% of the population - Make more than $157,000 per year.

• **Middle Class:**
  – Large and diverse group in the United States.
  – Although some members earn less than the members of the working class, *middle class workers have more job security and opportunity for promotion.*

• **Working Class:**
  – Defined by education, occupation, self-definition, and lifestyle.
  – Many are not familiar with elite culture or middle-class values.
  – Economic prospects differ from white-collar neighbors in that they have *shorter career ladders and more economic uncertainty.*
Social Class-Poverty

• Each year the U.S. government sets an official poverty level or poverty line which is the minimum amount of money a family needs to have a decent standard of living.
  – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

• Poverty level adjusts for family size.
# 2010 HHS Poverty Guidelines


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons in Family</th>
<th>Poverty Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$10,830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>22,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>25,790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>29,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>33,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>37,010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For families with more than 8 persons, add $3,740 for each additional person.
Definition of Poverty

- Poverty is: the extent to which an individual does without resources. (It's not all about the money!)
  - Financial
  - Emotional-ability to choose and control emotional reactions
  - Mental- skills and abilities
  - Spiritual- belief in something bigger than oneself
  - Physical- health and physical ability
  - Support Systems-friends, family, community that support an individual
  - Relationships and Role Models- positive influences in an individual's life
  - Knowledge of “hidden rules” in class-understanding of the “culture” of class.

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
Important Points about Poverty

- Poverty is relative—existing only in relationship to known quantities or expectations.

- It occurs in all races and in all countries.

- Individuals bring with them the hidden rules and norms of class that they learned from childhood with which they were raised.
  - Even with dramatic change in income, patterns of thought, social interactions, cognitive strategies will remain.

- Most schools and businesses operate from a middle class standpoint in terms of their norms and hidden rules.

- Two things that can help people move out of poverty:
  - Relationships
  - Education

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
Situational vs. Generational Poverty

• **Situational poverty:**
  – A shorter period that an individual experiences poverty, generally caused by life events such as death, divorce, loss of job, illness, etc.

• **Generational poverty:**
  – A family that has lived in poverty for 2 generations or longer.
  – People living in generational poverty are more likely to share cultural values with others living in poverty.

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
## Hidden Rules Among Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Values in Class</th>
<th>Poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>To be used, spent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Key question, did you have enough? Quantity important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Present most important. Decisions made for the moment based on feelings or survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>Believes in fate. Cannot do much to mitigate chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World View</td>
<td>Sees world in terms of local setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Forces</td>
<td>Survival, relationships, entertainment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Hidden Rules” of Social Classes

• Surviving in Poverty:
  – I know how to physically fight and defend myself.
  – I know how to move in half a day
  – I know where free medical clinics are
  – I can get by without a car

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
Common Behaviors in Generational Poverty

• Will work hard if they like you.
• Frequently are polarized thinkers
• Impulsive behavior- will get mad and quit, emphasis on the current feeling, not the long term outcomes.
• Operate out of a casual register of language
• Common need for time off due to family emergencies
• Often need emotional warmth from superiors (bosses/teachers)
• Frequently disorganized
• Don’t do assignments/only do part of an assignment.

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Values in class</th>
<th>Middle Class (Most businesses and institutions operate with these values)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>To be managed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Key question: “Did you like it?” Quality important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Future is most important. Decisions made against future ramifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Crucial for climbing the success ladder and making money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>Believes in choice. Can change future with good choices now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World View</td>
<td>Sees world in terms of national setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Forces</td>
<td>Work, achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Hidden Rules” of Social Classes

• Surviving in Middle Class:

  – I know how to order in a nice restaurant
  – I talk to my children about going to college
  – I know how to get a library card
  – I know how to get a good interest rate on a new car loan.

(Payne, R.K., 1996)
### Hidden Rules Among Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural values in class</th>
<th>Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>To be conserved, invested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Key question: “Was it presented well?” Presentation important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Traditions and history most important, decisions made partially on basis of tradition and decorum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Necessary for making and maintaining connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destiny</td>
<td>Noblesse Oblige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World View</td>
<td>Sees world in terms of international view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving Forces</td>
<td>Financial, political, social connections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Hidden Rules” of Social Classes

• Surviving in Wealth
  – I have two residences that are staffed and maintained.
  – I can enroll my children in preferred private schools.
  – I know how to host parties that “key” people will attend.
  – I support or buy the work of a particular artist.

(Payne, R.K., 1996)