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Abstract

Cultural influences are among the forces affecting people's willingness and ability to accept assistance from other people. Such forces complicate matters when help recipients are in culturally vulnerable positions, such as while experiencing homelessness within US society. This study synthesized existing research relevant to this situation in order to propose and justify a particular interpersonal communication approach to providing help across cultural and power barriers. Such attitude- and skill-guidelines should increase people's likelihood of accepting assistance offered via such communication practices while in the vulnerable, one-down power position associated with experiencing homelessness in US society.

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When trying to help people who are experiencing homelessness, it is difficult to come across in a positive manner with everything that is said. This is because someone who is not experiencing homelessness does not know what this feeling is like mentally, physically, or socially. During conversation, words can be misinterpreted due to the differences in experiences. Because of this, a barrier of pride and autonomy can be developed by the person experiencing homelessness, which could complicate accepting help.

A factor the pride barrier creates is interpreting help as a handout that threatens the recipient's autonomy or control over their own life, which in today's world is widely seen as weakness. When this happens, the more people offer help, the more a person who is experiencing homelessness feels looked down upon by society, and feels that their autonomy is being attacked. In order to serve burgeoning homeless populations where they exist, outreaches programs and organizations need to develop and train staff members in a communication approach that frames vulnerable people in ways that respect without belittling them, to increase their willingness to accept the help being offered to change their situation. With the effect that the social hierarchy has on people who are experiencing homelessness at this point in time, no one will be able to get off the streets alone. The issue that this brings is very little people who are experiencing homelessness are willing to accept help due to the way that they hierarchy has developed into a rich man's world (Muller, 2017, P. 10-11).

With America being the multi-cultural country that it is, it is difficult to connect and make all happy through communication. Because of this outreach programs and organizations that are designed to help people, are having a difficult time attracting their target market; for the

sake of this study, the target market being those who are experiencing homelessness. The way that society sees and treats the homeless population, is a leading cause of why people have such a difficult time when rebuilding their life. As of now there is a barrier of pride that is causing the homeless to not take advantage of these resources. I pose that the outreach programs and organizations should start approaching homeless on cultural level. Reason being, by having trained staff members participate in personal interaction and intercultural based conversations with people who are experiencing homelessness, better opportunity will be created to break through this barrier.

When working with individuals who are homeless it is important to be cautious in communication. By relating to individuals on an intercultural axis, it creates a feeling of social equality. The reason that this is imperative is because, as shown from the barrier of pride, we can attempt to develop a personal relationship.

Once a personal relationship is established, the helper can then make a person feel as if they want spend time with them as opposed to the person who is experiencing homelessness feeling that the helper is only there to offer them help. The intercultural relationship would establish a feeling of both parties helping one another.

In order to understand how different cultures view and accept help from others, there were three main themes that occurred when conducting researching on what is already known. The first theme that occurred was in intercultural communication competence. This theme was defined as, a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that lead to communicating effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures. The second theme was supportive communication and how to effectively complete this task. This theme asked the question: what do we know about communication intercultural social support? The third theme theme that came

about revolved around the self-determination theory. The reason that self-determination theory became so important to this study, is due to one's culture values telling them to be more dependent or independent.

<div align="center">Project Purpose and Justification</div>

The reason for this report is to develop a set of guidelines for outreach programs and organizations to follow that will better draw people who are experiencing homelessness to attend and receive the help being offered them. Research shows how we develop our assumptions about how we impact the environment (Carpenter, 2011, p. 634). What scholarly literature is telling us today is that the best way to communicate with people from multiple cultures is through one widespread understanding of cultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, p. 253). However, this framework of communication is not getting the job done when it comes to interacting with the homeless population. Relating to individuals is the best form of communication, i.e. we must interact and communicate with individuals as opposed to populations.

This paper shows findings of what is known about communicating through intercultural values and society is going about doing so. The overall outcome of this research report is to better understand ways to communicate to people who are experiencing homelessness by relating on an individual and cultural level to develop a better relationship between helper and help receiver.

<div align="center">**Literature Review**</div>

In order to understand how different cultures view and accept help from others, there were three main themes that occurred when researching, what is already known. The first theme that occurred was in intercultural communication competence. This theme was defined as, a range of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills that lead to communicating effectively and

appropriately with people from other cultures. The second theme was supportive communication and how to effectively complete this task. This theme asked the question: what do we know about communication intercultural social support? The third theme theme that came about revolved around the self-determination theory. The reason that self-determination theory became so important to this study, is because one's culture values telling them to be more dependent or independent.

Intercultural Communication Competence

When searching for the understanding of intercultural communication competence, it is important to understand that many different people from many different cultures, define this term differently. Because of this, organizations such as schools, nonprofits, help organizations/outreaches, and business, have developed a generic definition that satisfies the majority. However, the majority does not include the entire targeted population. In order to communicate with all cultures involved, one must understand the definition of intercultural communication competence.

When conducting research about intercultural communication competence, Darla Deardorff (YEAR?) selected nine different definitions of intercultural communication from different scholarly literature and provided them to the administrators who partook in her study. From her data collected she then then rated them on a scale of 1 – 4, 4 being the most relevant. The highest ranked understanding of intercultural communication competence was found from Michael Byram's literature, Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence, which stated, knowing the people around you and knowing yourself; skills to learn and use, finding value in others, beliefs, and behaviors, and making yourself important. Language competence has a large effect (Byram, 1997, p. 34).

The second highest rated understanding was found form Richard Lambert's literature, *Educational Exchange and Global Competence*, he stated that five different components were involved world knowledge, recognizing foreign languages, understanding what different cultures empathize for, accepting people from different cultures, and being able to include all cultures in one setting. (Lambert, 1994, as cited in Deardorff, 2004, p. 230). However, in Deardorff's conclusion, she found that most of the participants leaned towards a general and more broad definition that consisted of three common factors, which were recognizing and showing importance to cultural differences, practicing new cultures, and being able to maintain self-culture. These three components create awareness within personal and foreign culture (Deardorff, 2006, p 247). Deardorff's findings are relevant because, although applied into a classroom environment, she provides research that shows a generic communication framework that works for most people within a group of people who all have different cultural backgrounds and values working towards the same goal.

However, when looking to apply intercultural communication competence to many different people in one-on-one situations, or for this instance people who are experiencing homelessness, we must look at role negotiation. The SAGE Handbook of interpersonal communication stated that role negotiation allows for personalization to a specific task that the individual is able to specialize in (Schein, 1968 as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 545). Hess (1933, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 546) compared the role of negotiation as personalization because it involves modifying people's jobs while also being cooperative with the expectations of the work environment and group norms.

Rather than using one generic communication framework that works for most people, this research project is looking to find if there is a better framework of communication that would

work best and effectively relate to different cultures at the same time. Once we understand how different cultures view assistance from others, we can begin to build better ways of communication based off of different intercultural values, rather than continuously trying to help people in ways that some cultures do not agree with or accept.

Social Support Communication

The second theme found when studying cultural views on accepting help was social support communication and how to effectively complete this task. When learning more about social support, it is imperative to keep in mind that there are many different aspects of this theme that can be used to develop this form of communication: such as the development of the relationship, the ability that two people have to get into contact with each other, the effect that someone has on another's interpersonal behavior, how people are related, positional resources, along with commonalities and differences (Wellman and Wortley, 2013, p. 560).

However, Brant Burleson stated that social support is not a secret tool or an outcome that one can interpret. It is essentially developed from character through communication. When using a communication lens, social support studies supportive communication i.e. the verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate offering help or seeking help (Burleson, 2010, p. 322).

One of the aspects that create social support is *'supportive recipient reactions and supportive provider responses'.* research shows that observing individual's reactions and adjusting to these reactions create the best way of communication. Erina MacGeorge, Bo Feng, and Brant Burleson claims that, through the give-and-take framework, help receivers develop cognition and respond positively to the helper's support, which is shown from a change in behavior. Through verbal and nonverbal cues that the receiver is showing, the help provider will

be able to interpret how the receiver is acknowledging their support (MacGeorge, Feng, Burleson, 2010, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 340).

Another key aspect of supportive communication is support seeking, also known as support activation. Support seeking is done when someone notices a struggle or when an individual is showing signs of depression and offers help without being asked. Research shows, a help provider can take advantage of a situation when he or she notices and individual who is blatantly in need of help (Bolger et as., 2000). Although, in most instances support-giving behaviors do not become applicable without individuals who express that they are in need of help (Cutrona, Suhr, & MacFarlane, 1990).

Self-determination Theory

When researching to understand how different cultures view and accept help from others, self-determination theory, also known as SDT, was commonly found and became the third focused theme. Self-determination theory claims that people are motivated by a number of different factors, experiences, and consequences. In order for someone to make a change in behavior, he or she must become motivated to do so. SDT shares a lot of lot of similarities and commonalities with social supportive communication. However, the self-determination theory helped further understand how and why people do and do not accept help.

In order to further understand Self-Determination theory, Jennifer fletcher collected qualitative data from college students. This data was based off of physical activity and what motivated an induvial to be or to not be active. In Fletcher's collection of research, I learned that the genetic codes one inherits can evolve through generations to support a physically active lifestyle (Booth, Chakravarthy, Gordon, & Spangenburg, 2002, p. 1 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 490); however, if the parents of a child are more inactive than active, these supportive lifestyle

genes will not be passed down. The way that this became interesting to me was by thinking of accepting help as a genetic code that was passed on by a parent. This thought brought me to the question of, could accepting help have nothing to do with culture, and everything to do with how someone grew up? By continuing to read and study Fletchers research, I learned that SDT is developed through three intuitive needs or characteristics which were competence (Harter, 1978; White, 1963 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491), autonomy (deCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491), and relatedness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Reis, 1994, as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). When an individual has fulfilled all three of these characteristics, levels of well-ness and motivation are both heightened.

Competence, defined as having an understanding and or knowledge, looks into one's capability to practice a certain behavior successfully. The more confidence a person has within themselves to perform this behavior, the more motivate the individual will become to make permeant behavioral changes (Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). How this information relates to my research is by showing how to communicate and inspire positive behaviors. Knowing that every individual is different and experiences situations differently, Ulrich Schnyder stated that there are many different ways of creating self-competence for people. An example of this comes from the experience of an elderly man who was involuntarily hospitalized and then referred to a war treatment center for survivors. After a number of years and numerous of different therapies had failed to help the man get his life back on track, a therapist who spoke his language and had similar cultural background and values gave him one last suggestion. The doctor recommended the man to write a book and draw about his life experience. By doing this the man was able to experience his emotions of anger, sadness, shame, and helplessness. While writing the book and drawling the situations that he lived through the man was able to accept the difficulties that life

handed him. The man became proud of himself once more and never looked back to the depressing state that he had fallen into. (Schnyder, 2016, p. 4)

The second intuitive need of SDT is autonomy. This characteristic focuses on the concerns with feelings of using ones will power in order to maintain a certain behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). Fletcher stated that when ones behavioral changes are due to self-determination, or autonomy, the individuals motivation level will grow (Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). This is a very important characteristic to STD because without it, no matter how much help one receives, he or she will constantly lose progress and eventually fall back to where they started. This is important to the study because developing ones will power once they have started to receive help is a key aspect of making sure that the individual does not relapse into their old habits.

The third need that develops SDT is relatedness. This characteristic looks at the feelings of belonging and being able to relate a certain situation with others who are experiencing similar situations (Ryan & Deci, 2000 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). When individuals feel that a change in behavior or a life changing decision is being encouraged by others, then their motivation will be heightened (Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). The way this research plays into accepting help is by showing that if one is motivated by a number of people experiencing similar situations, then that individual will subconsciously become more motivated to make self-changes to better their behavior.

Training Needs Based on Literature

Creating a safe place – Cultural competence

In order to create what is known as a safe place one must first look further into intercultural communication competence or ICC. When conducting more research, we learn that

there are three stages of ICC, first being cognitive, second being affective, and finally being aware of behavioral attributes (Bennett, 2009; Spitzberg, 1991 as cited in Baker, 2016, p. 13). Which were then further interpreted as, intercultural awareness, sensitivity, and adroitness (Chen, 2010). learning these three attributes and applying them to interactions and relationships is important because it develops a new lens of viewing people's situations and cultural views. When approaching someone who is experiencing homelessness with an attitude of certainty in comprehending their situation, they tend to have a more difficult time relating to the person who they are offering help to. This is why it is important to enter a situation with a Learner mindset, which ICC helps develop.

The first attribute of ICC is by understanding and applying the cognitive component. This attribute creates the ability for individuals who are in conversations to interpret and fully understand what one is trying to say through verbal and nonverbal cues. For many, this task could be difficult the first few conversations with a new culture. However, through help from someone who is familiar with the language, these cues are not difficult to pick up on (Baker, 2016, p. 15). Once a staff member has developed the knowledge of these simplistic verbal and nonverbal cues, starting and directing conversations will become much more efficient.

The second step attribute of ICC is by understanding and applying effectiveness, or sensitivity (Bennett, 2009; Spitzberg, 1991, Chen, 2010, as cited in Baker, 2016, p. 13). When learning to apply this attribute it is important to be observant to the host-culture members. Reason being, by understanding the new set of cultural norms and values, the helper will be able to appreciate and empathize in respectful and responsive ways that are accepted by the host-culture (Baker, 2016, p. 15). It is essential for staff members to obtain this stage of ICC due to the way one can relate through these different factors.

The third and final attribute of ICC is understanding and being aware of behavioral attributes (Bennett, 2009; Spitzberg, 1991 as cited in Baker, 2016, p. 13). This is important because it is all about how to act appropriately in the host-culture (Baker, 2016, p. 15). This factor of ICC was further explained by Young Yun Kim stating "Through the use of culturally sanctioned communication patterns, people perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, as socially 'normal' or 'healthy' individuals" (Kim, 2001, p. 49).

Establishing common ground – Social support

After establishing a personal intercultural relationship through the help of intercultural communication competence, help providers can start to apply social support through the learned set of cultural values and norms. The quality of a helpers' social supportive comforting messages will be influenced by the aspects of the helper's ability and motivation. Sometimes the helper's emotions can get in the way of social support i.e. comforting supportive messages. (Burleson & Planalp, 2000, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 341). For example, if me as the helper were to have anxiety or depression, these different emotions can create an interference causing a negative or ineffective messaging process; this is why it is important to develop a positive mindset.

Someone who is out trying to extend social support would find more success if they establish characteristics that would help their motivation. These two characteristics include: Emotional empathy (Tamborini, Salomonson & Bahk,1993, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 341), and self-efficacy (MacGeorge, Clark & Gillihan, 2002, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 341).

The importance of emotional empathy comes into play when attempting to understand someone's circumstances and or what caused them to be placed into the situation that they are in. By being able to sympathies for and or with an individual, helpers' will tend to experience the

feelings that the receiver has lived through (Pagani, 2017, p. 42). This will allow the helper to have a better idea for what kind of social support the receiver needs.

Secondly, when conducting research to further understand why self-efficacy is important to providing or offering support to those in need, we must understand that the term means that one has the full ability to change a behavior in order to manufacture an outcome (Guan & So, 2016, p. 590). An example of this would be seen when applying intercultural communication competence, where by changing one's set of culture values in order to better relate to someone, he or she is applying self-efficacy.

Having the ability to deliver a quality social supportive message comes from the helpers' positive emotional stability along with strong motivation to make a difference. Although, as stated in the literature review, the helper must not be forceful and willing to adjust his or her approaches of support due to the verbal and nonverbal communication cues that the receiver is exploiting (MacGeorge, Feng, Burleson, 2010, as cited in Knapp, 2011, p. 340).

Accomplishing tasks – Self-Determination

Self-determination theory creates an assumption that individuals have a vital tendency toward psychosocial growth, which pushes them to find challenges, to discover new views and to physically internalize and change cultural exercises (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 3, as cites in Goldman, Goodboy & Weber, 2017, p. 170). There are a number of different factors that create self-determination, but the outcome of having a high level of self-determination is an individual who has intrinsic motivation and is able to develop change in order to better a situation. In order to help people who are experiencing homelessness, the helper must put the receiver into situations where he or she get opportunities to develop self-determination.

By helping an individual heighten their self-determination level, there are three factors we must help the person develop. The first being competence, which refers to the confidence in one's ability to maintain a certain behavior. An example of how to help someone develop their self-confidence is by finding a rather simple task for him or her to accomplish. As stated in the literature review, an example of this was the man writing a book that allowed him to get past his emotional issues.

The second factor is autonomy. This characteristic focuses on the concerns of using ones will power in order to maintain a certain behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000 as cited in Fletcher, 2016, p. 491). A way to help improve an individual's autonomy level is by empowering them. For example, if someone with high autonomy levels were to ask someone with low autonomy levels for help with an important task. This action would ultimately enforce the individual with low autonomy to grow due to the dependency place upon him or her by the individual with high autonomy (Nadler, 2014, p. 60).

The third and final factor of self-determination theory is relatedness. Focusing on the emotional feelings of belongingness, relatedness is the ability to find common ground in a situation with others and develop a relationship to better each other's outcomes. The best way to help someone with this factor is to help individuals meet others who are experiencing similar situations. In doing so, the two will be able to build a relationship while holding each other accountable to certain behavioral changes. In turn this will cause both people to develop self-motivation.

Application

This research is designed to help outreach programs and organizations develop and critique their communication skills with people who are experiencing homelessness through the

use of multi intercultural competence lenses. The overall outcome of this paper is to show that by communicating intercultural and focusing upon the three main themes found in the literature review, staff members will be able to relate and create better relationships with people who are experiencing homelessness who are seeking help but do not know how to accept it.

Conclusion

This study explicitly focuses on how to better help outreach programs and organizations whose main goal is to help the homeless population return back to society. Therefore, those who are unable to work or have no desire of returning back to the work force are not addressed under this framework of intercultural communication.

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APPENDIX 1: Intercultural Communication Guide

Key Understanding

This intercultural communication guide is designed to help train the members and employees of outreach groups and organizations. By using this guide, the helper will be able to better communicate and relate to people who are experiencing homelessness, through communication tactics designed to welcome more personal interaction and relationship. In order to build a personal relationship, the helper must first be attentive to learning about the cultural values of the receiver. This is known as developing intercultural communication competence, or ICC. Intercultural communication competence is the ability to connect to multiple cultural backgrounds through a guideline of communication.

Throughout the relationship-building stage it is important that the helper approaches the individual experiencing homelessness with a learning mindset, as opposed to a teaching mindset. It is important to not offer help too early in the relationship, because a level of trust must first be developed. Due to the way that help is seen through autonomy and pride, those experiencing homelessness will be more receptive to help from people with whom they feel a personal understanding and relationship. By integrating these three steps into a plan of action, the help provider will likely develop greater ICC, which in turn should create a more respectful, productive, and welcome framework for communication and service.

Step one in developing ICC is understanding and applying three learning components.

a) **Be observant of how a person talks (verbal cues)**

This refers to noting and adapting to a person's level of vocabulary. If the helper is applying upper social class terminology, then the receiver is likely to feel less competent in the relationship, and thus less receptive to interacting and help.

b) **Be observant of the nonverbal style a person uses (hand gestures, use of space, eye contact, touch, etc.)**

By learning the receiver's set of nonverbal cues, the helper will be better able to determine how the receiver is responding to the support and help that is being offered to them.

c) **Slowly incorporate these verbal and nonverbal cues**

Mirror the receiver's communication style to the degree that suits your own style. It is important for the helper to not cast away their own repertoire of cultural verbal and nonverbal cues; however, it is even more important that the helper is not overpowering the receivers' cultural set of attributes. In order to be accepted into interactions and relationships, the helper must slowly adapt to and incorporate the other's verbal and nonverbal cues as normal throughout conversation.

Step two of obtaining ICC is understanding and applying effectiveness, or sensitivity.

a) **Listen to and learn about the receiver's experiences**

By listening and learning about the receivers past experiences, the helper will understand the level at which they should empathize with a certain situation. Doing so also signals trust.

Step three of obtaining ICC is application.

a) **Using ICC to develop a personal relationship**

It is important for a helper to always communicate through the cultural norms that the receiver values in order to develop a personal relationship. By understanding the previous two steps, the helper will be abler to effectively communicate with individuals who are experiencing homelessness, and their services may be more welcomed by receivers

Once a staff member has completed training on all three steps of intercultural communication competence, he or she will be able to effectively communicate with people who are experiencing homelessness through the learner mindset lens that ICC develops. Through the first step of ICC, the cognitive component, the helper will be seen as someone who is subconsciously becoming a part of the new culture. By observing the learned positive or negative verbal and nonverbal cues that the receiver is showing during conversation, the helper must guide the conversation in a direction that would allow the personal relationship to grow. Through the second step of ICC, effectiveness, or also known as sensitivity, the helper will have a better understanding of the situations and the emotions that a person experiencing homelessness has and is still going through mentally, physically, and socially. Through the third step of ICC, the application step, the help provider will be able to use the previous steps to his or her advantage in order to develop the personal relationship needed to help those who are experiencing homelessness. By communicating through the intercultural communication competence learner lens, the helper will be able to build personal relationships with individuals on an intercultural level, which, in turn, will make the receiver more receptive to accepting help. Once all three steps of ICC are developed within the personal relationship, it is at this point that the staff member needs to push for helping the individual who is experiencing homelessness.