

Optimizing Your Public Service Skills Through Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness

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Fall 2008

Funding for this project was made possible through a grant from the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES).

Learning Objectives

- Upon completion of this program you will be able to:
 - Identify common prejudices and why they exist.
 - Recognize how prejudices lead to barriers in service to others.
 - Describe common barriers to customer service and ways they can be overcome.
 - Apply a relationship building formula to improve the service to people of various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

What do oranges have to do with my job?....



Layers upon Layers

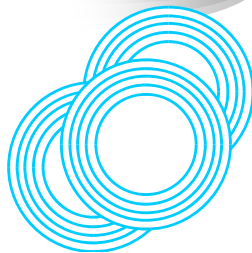
- Before you are an employee, you are:
 - A partner, a parent, a person.
 - You have fears, hopes and dreams.
- So ask yourself, how does the employee and the “personal” mix to make the “optimal court employee”?
- Ask and honestly answer the following...

What do the customers “see” when they see me?

- A systemic representative.
 - This is usually the first impression of customers accessing services.
- A pilot.
 - This is an opportunity and a choice for each employee.

“It’s all Personal”

- Reflect on your close circle of friends and your support network.
 - What does your support network “look like”?
 - Where do they work?
 - What are their interests?
 - How would you define them: middle class, upper class, lower class?
 - Very diverse, not diverse, why or why not?



Is my office a mirror or a wall?

- Reflect on what your office “looks like”:
 - Do the staff reflect the population it serves?
 - Are you and your coworkers aware of the cultural and socio-economic diversity of the community in which you work?

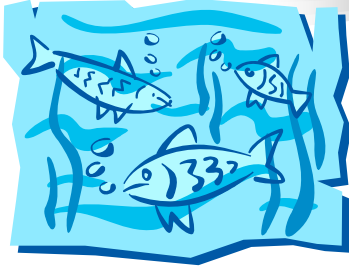
It’s all personal, cont’d.

- Everything you believe or disbelieve; embrace or reject regarding cultural competency, tolerance and empathy is weighed against your experience as a child, your parents’ practices and what your social environment reinforces daily.
- Your beliefs are shared and reinforced daily by your spouse/significant other, coworkers and close friends.
- Unless someone in your close circle challenges your beliefs and thoughts about diversity, “class-ism,” and other cultures, you may never see a need to change those views.

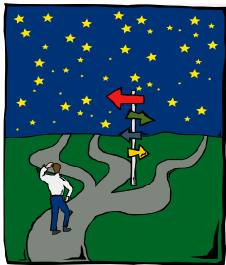
So why do we need this training?

- Public Service = Service toward others in need.
- These lessons aren’t learned at one training. Diversity awareness must be continually faced and challenged to achieve true understanding and respect for others that may challenge us or who are complex. It is a commitment to change and that commitment takes work to master.
- Simply put: The Golden Rule.

Do fish know they're wet?



This is a journey for everyone...



- Because to truly "see" the community you serve, you must first "see" your client.
- Because to truly do this work, we must be aware of our own biases and prejudices .
- Because to truly grow, we must face our fears

Someone's got to do it, why not you?

Who are your customers?

- Truth or dare time: Let's take a look at the customers we serve and challenge our feelings toward them..

What do I see when I see the customer?

- Illegal alien?
- A person who can't speak English?
- Poor, uneducated?
- Unable to identify?



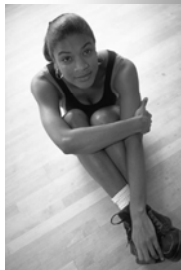
What do I see when I see the customer?

- Cunning or manipulative?
- Threatening?
- Guilty?
- Can't speak English?



What do I see when I see the customer?

- Poor?
- Uneducated?
- Sexually active?
- Welfare recipient?



What do I see when I see the customer?



- Statistic?
- Angry?
- Unreachable?
- Volatile?
- Unfortunate?
- Case number?

Reflect on the path that led them to us...

- Heartbreak
- Inconsistency
- Fear
- Abuse (drugs/sexual)
- Poverty
- Poor choices
- Environment



The world that cultivated them..

- Family
- Friends
- Media
- Perspective on life



Tag! You're it! You have less than five minutes to connect.. Now what????

- How do you connect?
- How do you reach them?
- How do you cross the barrier?
- How do you avoid becoming a part of the barrier?
- How do you make a lasting difference?

Mind Play.....

- A clerk arrives to work on Monday morning...
- An elderly woman is awakened at 3 a.m. by the police...
- Reflect on the emotions of both the clerk and the family. Share your thoughts about the scenario.

What you see, isn't always what you get...

- The only way to overcome this type of judging is to be willing to face the "man in the mirror". Address any misconceptions, or negative ideas that may prevent the clerk from assisting the client fairly. In addition, it requires the clerk to refuse to use their past experiences and personal experience as a measuring tool with the customer.
- Although there are behaviors that could be changed to improve the situation, this does not necessarily constitute a NEGATIVE situation or point toward "fault". Remember POSITIVITY can be hidden in the strangest places, sometimes you just have to LOOK.

Reflection time!

Think about a time/incident while working that was challenging for you or caused you frustration.

- What did the customer need?
- How was the customer responding/interacting?
- How were you responding/interacting?
- What was the conflict?

We Serve Three Types of Customers:

- **Internal:** Judges, prosecutors, attorneys, clerks, police officers, etc. They are treated with the most respect and efficiency; respect may or may not be reciprocated.
- **Parties involved in legal cases:** These individuals may be volatile, impatient, and displace their anger .
- **Family members and loved ones of parties involved in legal cases:** These people are often frustrated, intimidated by the process, emotionally charged, and defensive.

Serving the Customer:

- Regardless of the reason, all customers come to us to **meet a need**.
- Expect to be **treated with dignity**.
- **Look to us as experts** who will help them navigate through unfamiliar terrain.

So what is the key making this work?

- Recognize the most common mistakes.
- Learn and avoid barriers.
- Recognize and challenge your biases.
- Be true to your core values.

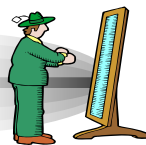
The most common mistake...

- Assuming.
 - “Since I’m (insert: race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social/economic status, etc), I’m the best candidate to assist this person/family/customer.
 - This error leads to an “arrogance” that can impede the trust building process necessary for the court employee to connect with the customer and help them feel they are receiving access to justice.



The 2nd most common mistake...

- Denial.
 - Not admitting that you have biases and fears of other ethnic groups, cultural orientations, or religions that differ from yours.
 - Not admitting that in your core circle of friends or family you have observed or participated in biased conversations.
 - Ignoring opportunities for change.



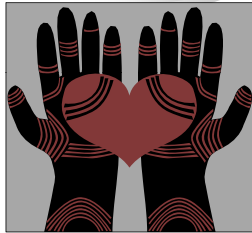
The 3RD most common mistake...

- Looking and not seeing.
- Listening and not hearing.
- Assuming and not asking.



The 4th most common mistake...

- Forgetting your core values.
- Not serving others.
- Not functioning from a place of respect.



How do we gain a better understanding?

- We search, seek, grasp and demand to increase our understanding of other cultures and become aware of our own prejudices, fears, and ignorance regarding other cultures....Let's begin with increasing our understanding of cultural barriers.



Why is there such a barrier between cultures?

- Barriers are our way of protecting ourselves from what we fear and lack knowledge of.
- Barriers “hide” behind myths and perceptions.
- Barriers are brought to the “human relationship” by both the customer and the clerk.



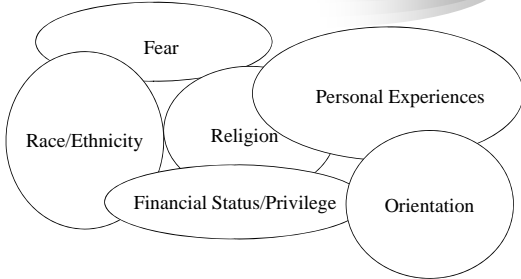
The myths and perceptions...

- This lack of explanation, which leads to a lack of understanding by the “outsider”, leaves the viewer/outsider to come to their own conclusions. These “conclusions” or taboos (as they are classified) are often based on prejudices, or other critical judgments of the particular culture’s norms.

The myths and perceptions...

- These opposite view points ultimately lead to an “us and them” mentality by both groups. “I know what is good for you” and “you don’t know us” are thoughts that are birthed from these clashes.
- Prevents both parties from “seeing” the other person as a person.
- Barriers arise from this “stalemate” of perceptions, myths, and prejudices.

Barriers come in all shapes and sizes.



Where Barriers Come From...

- The idea that barriers are simply methods to keep “outsiders out” by a particular group is not entirely true.
- Barriers are tools of both the “compartmentalized culture” and the culture who is “compartmentalizing”.



Where Barriers Come From... cont'd

- By recognizing the barriers, the clerk is equipped with both the knowledge and awareness to deal adequately with the “wall” and then avoid the potential trap of defensively reacting toward the client, and thereby **adding** bricks to the “wall” instead of removing them.

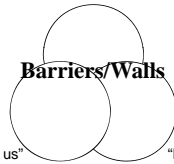


Active Participants...

- Reacting defensively toward a customer can be displayed in a number of different ways, which adds to the cycle of barriers:
 - Prejudice thoughts/comments (with friends/coworkers/family members).
 - Compartmentalizing (they, them, those people).
 - Lack of compassion.
 - Thinking your race/religion/orientation qualifies you.
 - Unwillingness to provide all the services a customer is entitled to.
 - Refusal to work with a particular customer because of "internal" fears and ideals.
 - Condescending speech/mannerisms.

My contribution to the problem

"I know what is good for you"



"You don't know us"

"Myths/Prejudices"

Barriers have a name...

- Let's take a close look at some of the more popular barriers a clerk would encounter and some of the more practical ways to deal with those barriers.



Barriers have a name... cont'd

- Cultural /Socioeconomic Judging:
 “Don’t use your standards to measure me.”
 – This is a barrier within a barrier. This ideation is strongly based in the “us and them” perception. This is the most popular barrier a person in this field will encounter when the customer is in the minority and/or powerless (status, financially). It is extremely defensive, and a positive connection may not occur.

Dealing with Cultural/Socioeconomic Judging

- The main focus of the clerk should be to get the customer to view them as another person and not a “them/they”. The customer must see the connections between the two cultures to develop the experience into a positive outcome. This is often the one barrier that tends to come from both the clerk and the customer. This dualism of prejudiced ideas or ideas grounded in biases often leads to a strained and negative relationship between both parties. This outlook on both parties will either aid in breaking down barriers or add “bricks” to existing barriers.

Barriers have a name... cont'd

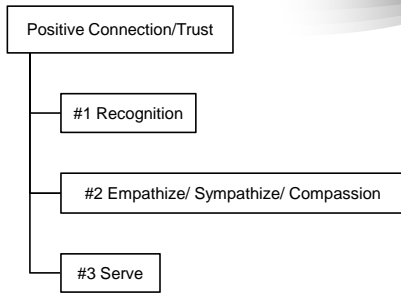
- “What you SEE isn’t always what you get”:
 This is a unique barrier in that it is usually a barrier that affects **only** the employee. By applying our moral values to customers we “qualify” what is functional and normal. This creates a barrier that complicates any existing issues that may be present, and equal to services.



How can we make the connection?

- Our ultimate goal is to make a positive connection and provide unbiased service to the customer. This must be done with empathy, compassion and patience. The clerk must remember that the customer may not ever fully connect with the clerk, and that's all right. But what is the formula to accomplish this goal of trust?

The Formula



Recognition

- **Recognition** is important because each customer, no matter what their circumstances, has some positive attributes. You may have to dig deep to find them, but they are there. The customer is aware of their short-comings, they don't need you to point them out, or treat them poorly. This will also help alleviate a potentially volatile situation.

Empathizing

- ***Empathizing is Sharing.*** Do this only if you are able to share in the experience, hurt or pain of another person.
 - Definition: [n] understanding and entering into another's feelings.

Sympathizing

- ***Sympathizing*** is a universal human response to pain, discomfort, sorrow and suffering. Do this when appropriate, but avoid pity, it is useless and not affective in assisting those in need.
 - Definition: [v] be understanding of; You don't need an explanation to understand
 - [v] to feel or express sympathy or compassion
 - [v] understand the sentiments of.

Compassion

- ***Compassion*** is an ACTION emotion. You are compelled to assist or help. This always follows the first two emotions.
 - Definition: [n] the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it.
 - [n] a deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering.

Serve

- **Serve.** This should be key in the clerk intentions. This is an opportunity to serve the customer and an opportunity to make a difference and possibly changing the way the customer views the organization/system the clerk represents. The goal should be equal, efficient, unbiased service to each and every court user.



Over-Over-View



- There are layers to every person.
- Our biases create and perpetuate the barriers we experience in our workplace and are indicative of every culture and society.
- Judging begets judging. Become aware of your “quiet prejudices.” Challenge yourself by asking: What do I think this about this particular group? Can I offer this customer assistance despite my inner most feelings?
- Barriers can be broken down, with empathy, sympathy, and compassion.
- Every customer deserves to be treated with dignity, and respect.
- All “no-one” can serve “every-anyone”.

Q and A Time!



The Michigan Judicial Institute Presents: 2008 Local Court Employee Training



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Ms. Misty Larthridge, MA, LLPC is the Director of the Domestic and Sexual Assault programs at the YWCA in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She has worked for over 13 years developing curricula and lectures for families in crisis. Ms. Larthridge independently consults with and trains public and private organizations on cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness in the workplace. In recent years she has facilitated diversity awareness training sessions for the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals (MADCP). She has a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in counseling, both from Spring Arbor University.

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Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this training session you will be able to:

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2. Recognize how prejudices lead to barriers in service to others.
3. Describe common barriers to customer service and ways they can be overcome.
4. Apply a relationship building formula to improve the service to people of various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.



Reflection

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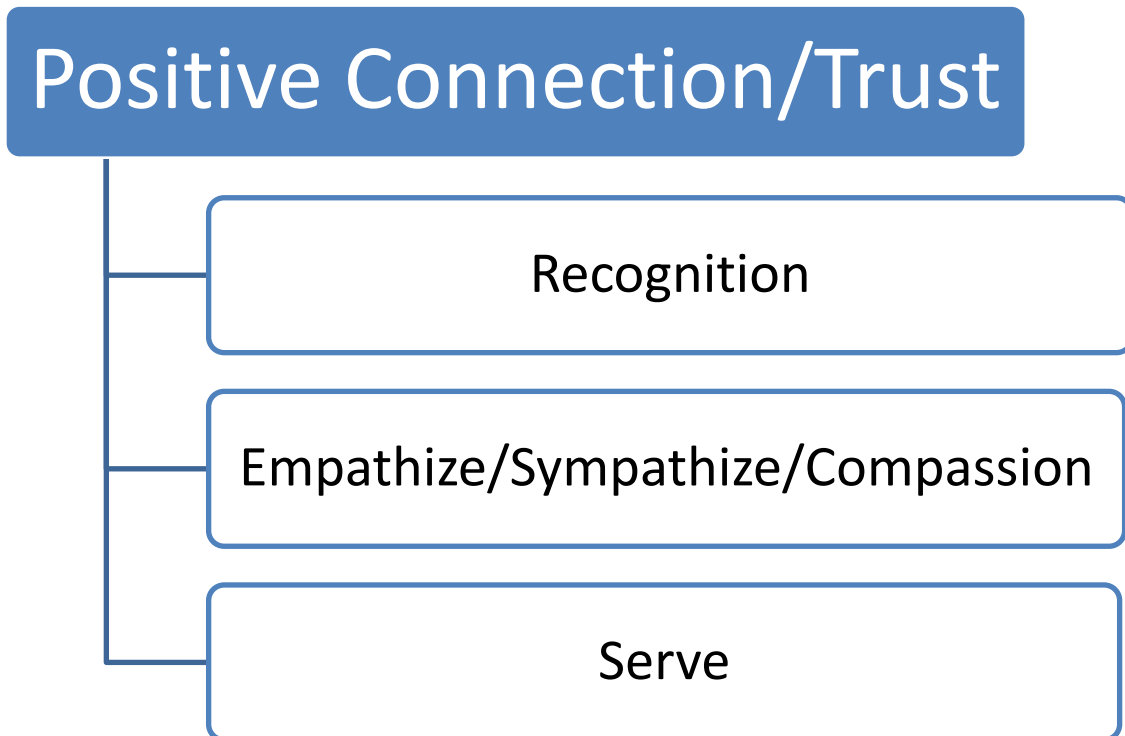


We serve three types of customers:

1. Internal: Judges, prosecutors, attorneys, clerks, police officers, etc.
2. Parties involved in legal cases.
3. Family members and loved ones of parties involved in legal cases.



The Formula:





To make a positive connection and build trust you must:

1. Recognize

2. Empathize

2. Sympathize

2. Show Compassion

3. Serve



Michigan Judicial Institute
Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity Awareness Participant Guide

Suggested Reading List and Additional Resources



Suggested Reading List 2008

The following list of suggested readings are intended to challenge and enlighten the reader on their personal beliefs about racism and the steps necessary to eliminate racism.

Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice By Paul Kivel

"Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity by Beverly Daniel Tatum

Privilege, Power, and Difference by Allan G Johnson

A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki

Harvest of Empire : A History of Latinos in America by Juan Gonzalez

Growing Up Latino by Ilan Stavans

Growing Up Native American by Bill Adler (Author), Ines Hernandez (Author)

Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940 (North American Indian Prose Award) by Brenda J. Child

Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools by Ward Churchill (Author)

Angry Black White Boy or, The Miscegenation of Macon Detornay (A Novel), by Adam Mansbach



Suggested Reading List 2008

Racial Healing (The Institutes For the Healing of Racism) by Reginald Newkirk and Nathan Rutstein

Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome Dr. Joy DeGruy Leary

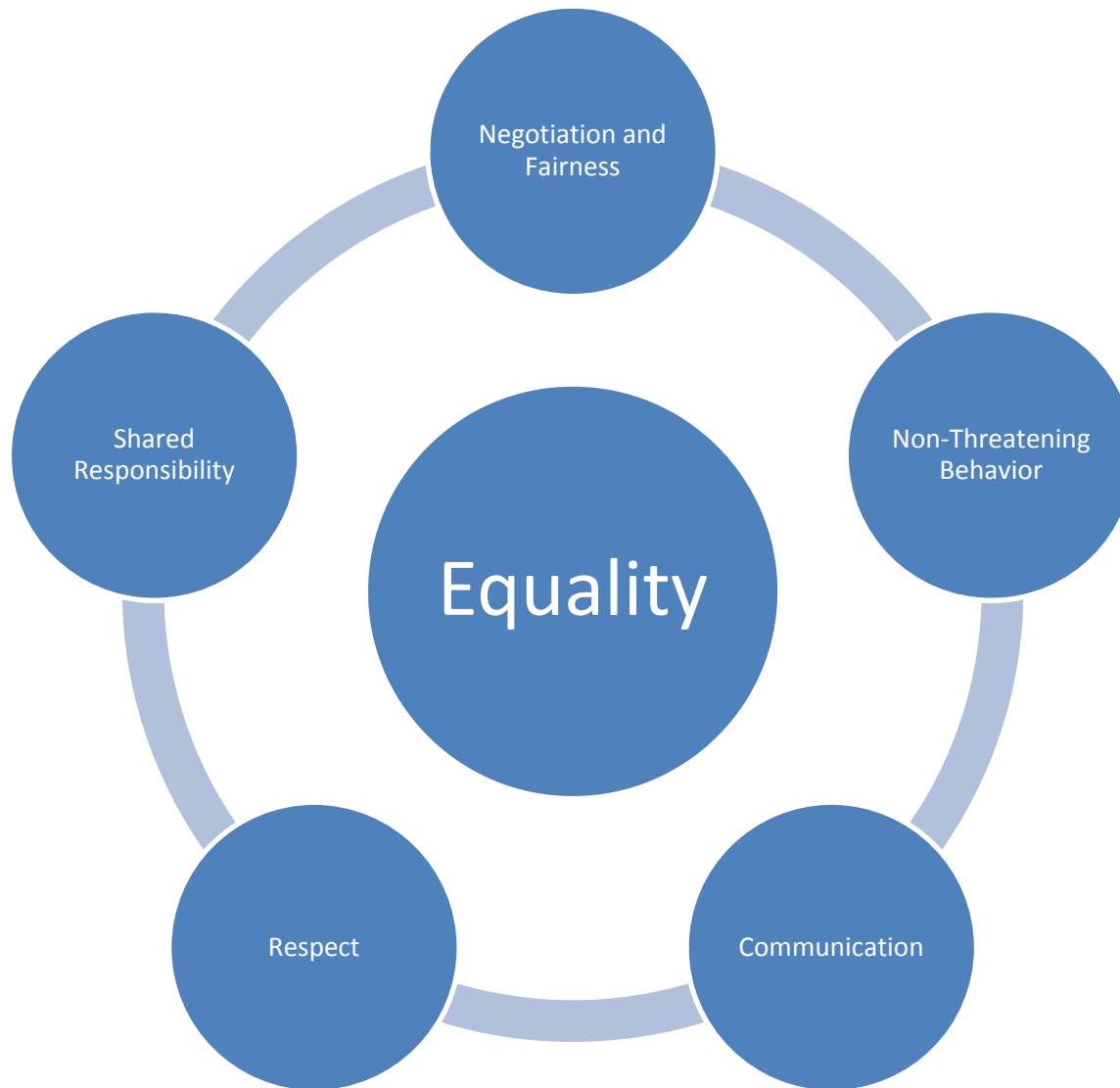
White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son by Tim Wise (anything authored by him)

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack by Peggy McIntosh (anything authored by her)

100 Years of Lynchings by Ralph Ginzburg

Young, Black, and Male in America: An Endangered Species by Ann F. Brunswick, Michael E. Connor, Richard Dembo, Jewelle Taylor Gibbs, Tom E. Larson, Rodney J. Reed, Barbara Solomon. 378

This chart illustrates the many dynamics that contribute to healthy working relationships.



Negotiation and Fairness

- Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict.
- Accepting change.
- Being willing to compromise.

Non-Threatening Behavior

- Talking and acting in a way that all parties feel safe and comfortable.

Communication

- Admitting when you are wrong.
- Accepting responsibility for your behavior.
- Respectfully communicating openly and truthfully.

Respect

- Respecting others' feelings, beliefs, and opinions.
- Valuing differences.
- Listening non-judgmentally to experiences, opinions, and beliefs.

Shared Responsibility

- Mutually agreeing on a shared distribution of work.
- Making decisions as a team.