

Ignatian Mentoring Program 2004-2005

By Dr. Debora L. Couch-Kuchey

As a graduate of Xavier University, it has become apparent to me that Xavier offered more than just a college degree. In my undergraduate studies, having no experience in other universities, I was not yet aware of exactly what else I received from my undergraduate education. It was not until I received my master's degree from a state university and my doctorate from yet another state university, that I realized Xavier had given me much more than the credentials necessary to receive and maintain my teaching license. Xavier had taught me the mission of Jesuit theologians, the mission of service, the mission of compassion for others and instilled in me the value of a life of service and the value of being a lifelong learner. Nineteen years later, when I returned to Xavier University as an assistant professor, I wanted to assure that I more fully understood the wholeness of a Xavier University Education to assure that I incorporate the necessary components into my courses that bring to life Xavier's Mission of Service. "Xavier's mission is to serve society by forming students intellectually, morally, and spiritually, with rigor and compassion, towards lives of solidarity, service and success," (Graham, Michael J., (2004-2006) Xavier University Catalog). Hence, my pursuit began with my involvement in Xavier University's Ignatian Mentoring Program.

What is my purpose as a Xavier faculty member?

What is Xavier? Xavier is a private Jesuit Catholic Institution offering "a quality education that enables students to put personal academic goals in the context of the diverse achievements of civilization and the vast potential of the human person," (Xavier University Catalog, p. 15). As previously stated Xavier's mission is as follows, "Xavier's mission is to serve society by forming students intellectually, morally, and spiritually, with rigor and compassion, towards lives of solidarity, service and success."

What is Jesuit Education? Jesuit education:

- Seeks to develop intellectual skills for both a full life in the human community and service in the Kingdom of God;
- Critical attention given to the underlying philosophical and theological implications of issues;
- A world view that is oriented to responsible action and recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural and human values;
- An understanding and communication of moral and religious values through personal concern and lived witness, as well as by precept and instruction;
- A sense of the whole person – body, mind and spirit;
- Ultimate goal is the integration of the intellectual dimension of learning and the spiritual experience of the student, along with the development of a strong system of personal moral values; (*Xavier University Catalog*)

As a faculty member of the Education Department of Xavier University, I then looked at the mission of Xavier's Education Department. The mission of Xavier's Education Department is as follows:

- To educate, in the Jesuit tradition, students from varied background to be critical thinkers and ethical professionals in education who effectively contribute to and serve a world of many cultures and diverse communities. (*Xavier University Education Department Mission Statement*)

What is Xavier University's student population?

- **Statistics**
 - Approximately 10% attended Jesuit high schools
 - Approximately 67% are Catholic
 - Approximately 3% ranked #1 in their high school class
 - Approximately 75% have at least one parent with a college education
 - Approximately 85% Caucasian
- **Top Feeder High Schools**
 - Saint Xavier HS, Cincinnati, OH
 - Saint Ignatius HS, Cleveland, OH
 - McNicholas HS, Cincinnati, OH
 - Brebeuf HS, Indianapolis, IN
 - Saint Xavier HS, Louisville, KY
 - Ursuline Academy, Cincinnati, OH
 - Lexington Catholic HS, Lexington, KY
 - Gonzaga Prep HS, Washington, D.C.

(*Xavier University Freshman Class Profile 2004-2005, www.xu.edu*)

C. Wright Mills, stated that “the one deep experience that distinguishes the social rich from the merely rich and those below is the schooling, and with it, all the associations, the sense and sensibility to which this education routine leads throughout their lives.” “As a selection and training place of the upper classes, both old and new, the private school is a unifying influence, a force for the nationalization of the upper classes.” (As Cited in Payne, Ruby, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, (p. 58)). Since the majority of Xavier's population attended private schools, it appeared that a need existed to enable pre-service early childhood teachers to understand diverse populations in order for Education Graduates to better understand the children, families and cultures of the students they may serve in their future classrooms.

Fulfilling Xavier's Mission In the Student Teaching Seminars

Having a more complete understanding of Xavier University, I proceeded to look at the following courses to more fully incorporate the Jesuit and Ignatian Identity into these courses. *EDEC 451 Student Teaching Seminar: Current Issues In Early Childhood Education*. This seminar addresses pertinent issues to teacher certification, professional development and career preparation for the early childhood teacher. (Junior/Seniors) & *EDEC 456 Student Teaching Seminar: Cohort*. This seminar style course addresses pertinent issues related to the day to day student teaching experience, professional conduct, teacher licensure and career preparation. Emphasis on the National Association

for the Education of Young Children Standards, Pathwise and Praxis criteria. (Graduate Students)

Upon great reflection I decided the mission driven teaching component to be added to the student teaching seminar would deal with the work of Dr. Ruby Payne. Twenty of her books, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, were purchased and placed on reserve in McDonald Memorial Library. This book helps pre-service teachers “understand the hidden rules of the economic classes and spreads the message that, despite the obstacles poverty can create in all types of interaction, there are specific strategies for overcoming them.” Payne, 1996.

The Jesuit tradition focuses on the total educational mission of forming students intellectually, morally and spiritually, with rigor and compassion, towards lives of solidarity and service. Through reflection, I believed that the work of Dr. Payne encompasses this mission in the realm of educators. Dr. Payne forces one to come to terms with their own stereo-types and prejudices of the population of the differing economical classes. She challenges one to put these prejudices and stereo-types aside, and open their minds to discovering the hidden rules of the economical classes in the United States. It is through coming to terms with these hidden rules, through developing an understanding of why people of different classes behave in different ways, as well as understanding the driving force behind such behaviors, that teachers can begin to help students escape the boundaries of their socio-economic class, while still appreciating their heritage and culture.

Not only did the pre-service teachers read the before mentioned book of Dr. Payne, but they were also be required to attend a workshop provided through the funding of this program. Ms. Martha Pennington Menefee, a trained consultant of Dr. Ruby Payne, presented “*Understanding Poverty: Putting Theory into Practice.*” The pre-service teachers were required to write a summary and analysis of the book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, as well as a reflective analysis of the Ms. Menefee’s workshop on March 12th. The reflective analysis connected the workshop to the book and to implications for the classroom. Throughout the semester, class scenarios were given and group discussions of these scenarios were held to further develop the students’ awareness of working with children of poverty to enable the children to overcome the obstacles poverty can create in their lives. The following quote was referred to and repeated often: “*No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship,*” Dr. James Comer (Ruby Payne; *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* P. 18).

The objectives for the *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* were as follows:

- Xavier pre-service teachers will be able to
 - Analyze the eight resources of their students;
 - Explain language registers, discourse patterns, and story structure of students from poverty;
 - Give examples of hidden rules among classes;
 - Identify discipline interventions that are effective for children of poverty;

- Explain mediation and cognitive structures of students of the various classes;
- Explain how economic realities affect the patterns of living.

The poverty statistics as given in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* were carefully analyzed as to their implication in early childhood education. The statistics are as follows:

- 6.8 million poor families in US in 2001;
- Regardless of race or ethnicity, poor children are much more likely than non-poor children to suffer developmental delay and damage, to drop out of high school, and to give birth during the teen years;
- Poverty-prone children are more likely to live in single-parent families;
- Poor inner-city youths are seven more times likely to be victims of child abuse or neglect than are children of high social economic status;
- Poverty is caused by interrelated factors: parent employment status and earnings, family structure, and parent education;
- Children under the age of 6 are particularly vulnerable to poverty;
- Children living in families with a female householder and no husband experienced a poverty rate of more than five times the rate for children in married-couple families.
- The US child poverty rate is two to three times higher than most other major Western Industrialized Nations;
- The number of white children in poverty out number the number of minority children in poverty, but the percentage of children in poverty in most minority groups is higher, (*Payne, Ruby, p. 11 - 13*).

The following key points as given in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* were discussed along with the implications of these points in teaching young children.

- Poverty is relative;
- Poverty occurs in all races and in all countries;
- Economic class is a continuous line, not a clear-cut distinction;
- Generational poverty and situational poverty are different;
- An individual brings with him/her the hidden rules of the class in which he or she was raised;
- Schools and businesses operate from middle-class norms and use the hidden rules of middle class;
- For our students to be successful, we must understand their hidden rules and teach them the rules that will make them successful at school and at work;
- We can neither excuse students nor scold them for not knowing; as educators we must teach them and provide support, insistence, and expectations;
- To move from poverty to middle class or middle class to wealth, an individual must give up relationships for achievement (at least for some period of time);
- Two things that help one move out of poverty are education and relationships;

- Four reasons one leaves poverty are: It's too painful to stay, a vision or a goal, a key relationship, or a special talent or skill, (*Payne, Ruby, p. 10-11*).

Dr. Ruby Payne strongly urges educators to take inventory of the student's eight resources. These resources are seen as necessary in order for the child to move out of poverty. Pre-service teachers were encouraged to take an inventory of these resources in the students they were currently servicing during the student teaching semester. The eight resources as given in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* follow.

- Financial: Having the money to purchase good and services
- Emotional: Being able to choose and control emotional responses particularly to negative situations, without engaging in self-destructive behavior
- Mental: Having the mental abilities and acquired skills (reading, writing, computing) to deal with daily life
- Spiritual: Believing in divine purpose and guidance
- Physical: Having physical health and mobility
- Support Systems: Having friends, family, and backup resources available to access in times of need
- Relationships/Role Models: Having frequent access to adults who are appropriate and who are nurturing to the child and who do not engage in self-destructive behavior
- Knowledge of Hidden Rules: Knowing the unspoken cues and habits of a group.

Pre-service teachers were then presented with the registers of language as given in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, along with the implications for the school setting.

- Frozen: Language that is always the same (Lord's Prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, etc.)
- Formal: The standard sentence syntax and word choice of work and school with complete sentences and specific word choice
- Consultative: Formal register when used in conversation; discourse pattern not quite as direct as formal register
- Casual: Language between friends
 - Characterized by 400-800 word vocabulary; Word choice general, not specific, sentence syntax often incomplete;
- Intimate: Language between lovers or twins; often the language of sexual harassment, (*Payne, Ruby p. 49 – 50*).

What does the register of language mean in the school setting?

- Formal registry needs to be directly taught
- Casual register needs to be recognized as the primary discourse for many students
- Discourse patterns need to be directly taught
- Discipline that occurs when a student uses the inappropriate register should be a time for instruction in the appropriate register

- Students need to be told how much the formal register affects their ability to get a well-paying job.

(Payne, Ruby p. 49 – 50).

Pre-service teachers were encouraged to become aware of the Hidden Rules among Social Classes as given in *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*.

	POVERTY	MIDDLE CLASS	WEALTH
POSSESSIONS	People	Things	One of a kind objects, legacies, pedigrees
MONEY	To be spent	To be managed	To be invested
PERSONALITY	Is for entertainment	Is for acquisition and stability. Achievement is highly valued	Is for connections. Financial, political, social connections are highly valued
SOCIAL EMPHASIS	Social inclusion of people they like	Emphasis is on self-governance and self-sufficiency	Emphasis is on social exclusion
FOOD	Quantity important	Quality important	Presentation important
CLOTHING	Valued for individual style and expression of personality	Valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class; label important	Valued for its artistic sense and expression, designer important
TIME	Present most important; decisions made for the moment based on feelings of survival	Future most important; decisions made against future ramifications	Traditions and history most important; decisions made on the basis of tradition and decorum
EDUCATION	Valued and revered as abstract but not as reality	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections
DESTINY	Believes in fate	Believes in choice	Noblesse oblige

	POVERTY	MIDDLE CLASS	WEALTH
LANGUAGE	Casual register, used to survive	Formal register, used for negotiation	Formal register, about networking
FAMILY STRUCTURE	Matriarchal	Patriarchal	Depends on who has money
WORLD VIEW	In terms of local setting	In terms of national setting	In terms of international setting
LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE	Based upon whether individual is liked	Based largely on achievement	Related to social standing and connections
DRIVING FORCE	Survival, relationships, and entertainment	Work, achievement	Financial, political, social connections

Once a teacher understands these hidden rules of among social classes, he/she will be better able to create meaningful relationships with children of poverty. In *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Dr. Ruby Payne offers suggestions for building such relationships.

- Appreciation of humor and entertainment provided by the child
- Acceptance of what the child cannot say about a person or situation
- Respect for the demands and priorities of relationships
- Using the adult voice
- Assisting with goal setting
- Identifying options related to available resources
- Understanding the importance of personal freedom, speech and individual personality.

Dr. Payne also offers a warning against behaviors that hinder the development of such relationships.

- Put-downs or sarcasm about the humor or the individual child
- Insistence and demands for full explanation about a person or situation
- Insistence on the middle-class view of relationships
- Using the parent voice
- Telling the individual his/her goals
- Making judgments on the value and availability of resources
- Assigning pejorative character traits to the individual

Lastly, Dr. Payne offers suggestions for teachers to build the emotional resources of children of poverty. According to Dr. Payne, in order to do so, a teacher must understand the following:

- Emotional Intelligence: The ability to respond emotionally to a situation from choice without doing harm to yourself or others
- Emotional Blackmail: When fear, guilt, or obligation is used to manipulate you into a behavior
- Resiliency: The ability to move out of dysfunctional and damaging situation
- Emotional Coaching: The approach that helps develop emotional intelligence
- Coping Strategies: Specific things a person can say or do with students to help them develop resilient characteristics and deal with situations
- Use of Stories: To teach concepts and behaviors.

After reading and reflecting upon Dr. Payne's work, 81 students were given an opportunity to attend a professional development "*Understanding Poverty: Putting Theory into Practice,*" on February 12th, 2005 at the Cintas Center Xavier University. The professional development was presented by Martha Menefee, principal Holly Hill Elementary, West Clermont School District. Ms. Menefee Discussed how she as a principal implemented the work of Ruby Payne into Holly Hill Elementary School and the impact that the changes have had on the school.

Following the professional development seminar the students wrote a book review of A Framework for Understanding Poverty, connecting the work of Ruby Payne to developmentally appropriate practices, theory and theorists in Early Childhood Education. Students speculated how they would use the information in this book in their future classrooms. (Case studies were used to broaden and deepen understanding of the major components of the book.). Students were also required to write a reflection of the seminar. They wrote a brief summary of the experience and their reaction to Mrs. Menefee's presentation. Students compared their interpretation of A Framework for Understanding Poverty and Mrs. Menefee's implementation plan.

The book reviews demonstrated a new found knowledge and respect for children of poverty as well as an appreciation for the suggestions offered to better prepare these pre-service teachers to deal with children who came from a different social class than they. Some samples of responses to the work of Ruby Payne follow:

"Overall this book allows you to walk in someone else's shoes for a few pages and helps you realize why Johnny or Susie couldn't do their reading list for march because they just had enough money to get to the grocery store, etc. It makes you learn not to get upset or criticize but recognize their efforts and make adaptations" Kelly Cooper

"After reading this book I was able to look at his (a student's) situation differently and better understand the strains on not only him but his family as well. I had a new understanding of their lack of resources and the pre-formed opinion that was given to be before I had the chance to fully discover the child on my own." Courtney Miller

"Ruby Payne's book was an eye-opener to me. Not just to me the future educator but on a very personal level as well. According to Payne, "two things that help one move

out of poverty are education and relationships” (11). Luckily I had educated parents and strong relationships to get me to where I am at today.” Heather Rabe

“Relationships are something that is built over time; they normally do not form overnight. Understanding of how others use their available resources helps us to form a solid and trusting line of communication. This line cannot be built on “outside judgments,” it must be built on respectful understanding. This can only happen if we allow ourselves to come out of the shell of our own class and look with open eyes and mind to the resources of other classes. Until this occurs Hamilton warns there will always be a breakdown in communication which results in strained at best relationships. As I stated before, becoming more accepting of the lives of others helps to open the lines to caring, meaningful and vital relationships. Both Payne and Hamilton stress that this is where the real learning occurs.” Katie Slusher

Suggestions for 2005-2006 Semesters

It is suggested that the courses continue to develop an understanding of the economical and ethnical diversity of children in the early childhood classroom in order to ensure the Xavier Pre-service teachers ability to fulfill the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct’s Responsibility to respect the dignity of each child in relation to the child’s family and its culture, language, customs, and beliefs.

Suggested Readings include:

A Framework for Understanding Poverty, Ruby Payne

Through Ebony Eyes: What Teachers Need to Know but are Afraid to Ask About African American Students, Gail Thompson

It is suggested that we continue to evaluate material to enable pre-service teachers to develop an awareness of the diverse cultures, language, customs, values and beliefs of the children in their prospective classrooms.

It is also suggested that future funding be pursued to contract Ruby Payne trainers to present on site workshops.

I hope to pursue future funding to receive the necessary training to become a Ruby Payne presenter.

Special Thanks to My Ignatian Mentoring Group

Dr. Ginger McKenzie

Mrs. Cecile Walsh

References

Payne, Ruby (1996). A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc.

Thompson, Gail (2004). Through Ebony Eyes: What Teachers Need to Know but are Afraid to Ask About African American Students. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.

Xavier University (2004-2006) Xavier University Catalog. Cincinnati, OH: Office of Registrar.