Adversity and Attribution: Looking Beyond Behavior

Cheryl Galloway-Benefield
Program Manager, Safe and Supportive Schools
Office of School Safety and Climate
at·tri·bu·tion

noun

The action of regarding something as being caused by a person or thing.
Why = Human Nature

- Avoid danger
- Seek safety
- Navigate interactions
- Make sense of what’s happening
Why is what drives not only everything we do, but also our emotional reactions to everything that happens to us.

- Psychology Today
Why Industries

• Risk management
• Law Enforcement
• Medicine

• Biggest?
Kylie Jenner Surfaces with First Full-On Baby Bump Pic and Video

KYLIE JENNER
FIRST FULL-ON BABY BUMP PIC AND VIDEO

1/25/2018 3:00 AM PST

Dating IRL??
Michael E. Jordan & Lupita Nyong'o Respond To Dating Rumors After That Elevator Kiss!

CLICK FOR DETAILS

Presenting the 2019 Critics' Choice Awards Winners: Lady Gaga, Regina King, and More!

These Photos of John Legend's Star-Studded 40th Birthday Party Left Us Shaken, Not Stirred

It's Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's First Outing This Year, Not That We Were Counting

Meghan Markle Just Revealed Her Due Date, and It's So Soon!
Understanding

We are constantly evaluating the behavior of others so that we know how to interact.
• **Attribution Theory:**

• The attempt to understand the behavior of others by attributing causation to feelings, beliefs, intentions, personality or situations.

• **Reactions** (consequences) are determined by the assignment of cause to the behavior more than by the behavior.
Your perceptions create your reality
We don’t see things as they are. We see them as we are.

- Anais Nin
How we **characterize behavior** in large part determines how we react to the behavior.

Decisions are more often **driven by our reactions than facts**.

* -Khal Simon
Behavior

a) the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others.

b) the way in which a person acts in response to a particular situation or stimulus.

c) the way in which a person externally reacts to his or her environment
Behavior

a) the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others.

b) the way in which a person reacts in response to a particular situation or stimulus.

c) the way in which a person externally reacts to his or her environment
Offering a holistic education to each and every child in our state.
Behavior

a) the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others.

b) the way in which a person reacts in response to a particular situation or stimulus.

c) the way in which a person externally reacts to his or her environment
Behavior

a) the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially toward others.

b) the way in which a person reacts in response to a particular situation or stimulus.

c) the way in which a person externally reacts to his or her environment
Situation
Stimulus
Environment
Everything we do, good or bad, is a behavior and every behavior has a cause.
Or....
What about our students?
Acting?

Reacting?

Does it matter?
Risk Factors

• Physical abuse
• Emotional abuse
• Sexual abuse
• Physical neglect
• Emotional neglect
• Parental mental illness
• Incarcerated relative
• Mother treated violently
• Household substance abuse
• Not being raised by both biological parents
Nadine Burke Harris: How childhood trauma affects health ... - TE...
https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhoodtrauma_a...
Got Your ACE Score?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/
10 Types of Childhood Trauma

- Five personal – physical abuse, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, and emotional neglect
- Five related to family members – alcohol/addiction, domestic violence, incarceration, mental illness, parental absence (divorce, death, abandonment)
- Each counts as one
- Physically abused + addicted mom + domestic violence = ACE score of 3
Subsequent to the ACE Study, other ACE surveys have expanded the types of ACEs to include:

- racism,
- gender discrimination,
- witnessing a sibling being abused,
- witnessing violence outside the home,
- witnessing a father being abused by a mother
- being bullied by a peer or adult
- involvement with the foster care system
- living in a war zone
- living in an unsafe neighborhood
- losing a family member to deportation
Risk Factors? Trauma? ACEs?

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Parental mental illness
- Incarcerated relative
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Not being raised by both biological parents
Does it matter what we call them?
at·tri·bu·tion

noun

The action of regarding something as being caused by a person or thing.
Label and Categorize
How many risk factors does it take to create a label?
Risk Factors? Trauma? ACEs?

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Parental mental illness
- Incarcerated relative
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Not being raised by both biological parents
Risk Factors

are

Adverse Childhood Experiences

that are

Traumatic
Individual Factors Can Be Associated With Multiple Outcomes

Though preventive interventions are often designed to produce a single outcome, both risk and protective factors can be associated with multiple outcomes. For example, negative life events are associated with substance use as well as anxiety, depression, and other behavioral health issues. Prevention efforts targeting a set of risk or protective factors have the potential to produce positive effects in multiple areas.
Risk and Protective Factors Are Correlated and Cumulative

Risk factors tend to be positively correlated with one another and negatively correlated to protective factors. In other words, people with some risk factors have a greater chance of experiencing even more risk factors, and they are less likely to have protective factors.
Our children are not doomed.
The presence of protective factors, particularly safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, can often mitigate the consequences of ACEs.
Protective Factor

“a characteristic at the biological, psychological, family, or community (including peers and culture) level that is associated with a lower likelihood of problem outcomes or that reduces the negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes.”

- youth.gov
Protective factors are attributes that serve as buffers.

- Children’s Trust Fund
Resiliency

- Medical Access
- Mental Health
- Family Support
- Positive Friends
- Mentors
- Healthy Activities
- Generosity
- Spirituality
Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention from Livingworks Education
Groundbreaking grant shown to mitigate impact of childhood trauma

Semple Elementary first-grade teacher Christina Carter read a story to her class about a child who faced stressful events every day, making it hard to focus at school. After the story, she gave her students a prompt — if Ms. Carter only knew. Some of the responses were eye-opening:
“If Ms. Carter only knew ... I get my sister ready in the morning and that’s why we are always late.”

“If Ms. Carter only knew ... I live with my grandparents because my mom and dad are both in jail.”

And the most heartbreaking one...

“If Ms. Carter only knew ... she is the only one who loves me.”

- Chandler, Adkins, and Finke
What is School Climate?
What does the survey data tell us?
The presence of protective factors, particularly safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, can often mitigate the consequences of ACEs.
BE WHO YOU NEEDED WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER.
Why was George suspended?

• would not share the trucks with the other students during center time and he hit two of his classmates

• slammed his classmate’s finger in the door on the way to the playground

• routinely refused to eat his lunch and threw it in the trash, refused to explain his actions
What do we see?

• Persistent disruptive behavior
• Willful disobedience
• Disrespect
• Aggressive behavior
What did we miss?

• Neglect
• Family history of mental illness
• Malnutrition
• Multiple ear infections
• Chronic, serious gastrointestinal condition
• Inconsistent medical care
What’s the impact?

• Authority figures
• Rules
• Compliance
• Development
• Language
LANGUAGE

- Language deals with meaning
- A child with a language deficit may have trouble communicating thoughts and feelings – **expressive language**.
- Or they may have trouble understanding the meaning of what’s being said – **receptive language**.

SPEECH

- A speech disorder indicates trouble **producing certain sounds** accurately.
- Examples include articulation disorders, fluency disorders, and voice disorders.
When children don’t have language, their behavior becomes their language.

Judge Peggy H. Walker
Douglas County Juvenile Court
Risk Factors

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Parental mental illness
- Incarcerated relative
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Not being raised by both biological parents
SIGNALS Webinars

Social-Emotional and Mental Health Development for Children and Teens

Webinar 1: Attribution Theory
Webinar 2: Misdiagnosis and Missed Opportunities
Webinar 3: Language, Emotional Regulation, and Behavior
Webinar 4: Language Acquisition
Webinar 5: Social Emotional Engagement

https://namiga.org/signalswebinars/
In Georgia, 1,501,680 people are struggling with hunger - and of them 503,370 are children.

1 in 7 people struggles with hunger.

1 in 5 children struggles with hunger.

People facing hunger in Georgia are estimated to report needing $749,671,000 more per year to meet their food needs.

The average cost of a meal in Georgia is $2.93. Data from Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap 2017 study. Learn more.
“When kids are hungry, they have an increased possibility for behavioral issues like hyperactivity, aggression or anxiety. Their moods can change. When they are feeling that physical hunger, it impacts their emotional and their mental well-being, causing them to act out in different ways.”

Pioneer and Herald Review. Sep 20, 2017
Behavior Barriers

- Hunger
- Lack of sleep
- Infection – sinus, tonsils, ears
- Cavities
- Glasses
- Chronic disease
- Worry
Fact → Story → Belief → Act

Fundamental Attribution Error

Where we get it WRONG!
Your perceptions create your reality
...when you find yourself having an abruptly negative reaction to something someone else has done, fire up your empathy muscles and ask yourself...why they did what they did.
Looking Beyond Behavior
"Every child deserves a champion: an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists they become the best they can possibly be."

- Rita Pierson, Educator
I want someone to look at me and say, “Because of you I didn’t give up.”
-Mahatma Gandhi
@gadoesafeschool

SafeSchoolsGeorgia
@GaDOESafeSchool

Promoting positive school climate through safe and supportive practices in Georgia schools.
Safe and Supportive Schools

• Cheryl Benefield: cbenefield@doe.k12.ga.us

• Jeff Hodges: jhodges@doe.k12.ga.us