

Keepers of the House

What can we learn?

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September 14, 2020

1. What is your reaction to the film?
2. What surprised you most about this film, and why?
3. What was your favorite story in the film? Why?

The positive messages of the stories.

- **Noticing** when something isn't right: the hospital room is too small, the visiting family lacks money, the mother is about to drop her baby.
- Offering encouragement (LVAD, the prisoner, Bob Marley) or a listening ear ("Just listen!")
- Offering advice (lactation)
- Being generous (the family that needed money or sharing the potluck dinner) or graciously receiving (the collard seeds).

Being valued or devalued at work

Hospital Trash: Cleaners Speak of Their Role in Disease Prevention

Messing K, Medical Anthropology Quarterly
1998; 12: 168-187.

- 10 educational sessions involving 225 cleaners in different parts of the province of Quebec, Canada
- Focus groups in 2 hospitals

- In all of the educational sessions, cleaners mentioned that they felt invisible to coworkers
- Not included in Christmas celebrations or birthday parties
- When a patient died, nobody recognized the role or feelings of the cleaners
- Not consulted: furniture was chosen without regard to ease of cleaning



- In several establishments, the cleaners were forbidden to talk to the patients.
- One woman described her embarrassment when, with no warning, her supervisor announced over the speaker system that no patients were to talk to her because “it interferes with her work.”

Being Valued and Devalued at Work

Dutton J, Debebe G, Wrzesniewski A

Qualitative Organizational Research 2016; pp.9-51.

The meaning of our work and the worth we feel in doing that work depends on a series of daily interactions with others

Research process

- Two focus groups of hospital cleaners
- Face to face interviews with 29 housekeepers, randomly selected

Being devalued or denied a sense of worth or substance

- Not recognizing a cleaner's presence
- Communicating disgust or disdain toward the cleaner
- Making a cleaner's job more difficult
- Communicating negative information to the cleaner

Not Recognizing a Cleaner's Presence

“The doctors have a tendency to look at us like we're not even there, like , you know, no recognition of what you are doing whatsoever.”

“They would see me every weekend and not say hello, just hello. Or they order out lunch a lot and they never ask me to order out lunch.

I don't think its a Black thing. I think its just because I'm an outsider.”

“And the doctors stand in the way. I mean, literally, stand in the way. ..You ask them to move, every day, the same doctors, every day. They just have no regard for whatever anyone else is doing in the hallway.”

Making a Cleaner's Job More Difficult

“I don't think the doctors and nurses value our jobs like they should... I've just sat there and watched doctors and nurses throw something on the floor and just you know, look at it, like *“She'll pick that up”*”

“Some of the feel like they're next to God. Say, for instance , I am cleaning their room or waxing. A doctor will walk right through there.”

Communicating Negative Information to the Cleaner

Interviewer: “How important is your relationship with the nurses in the performance of your job?”

Jetta: “ For me, its very important. There’s only one area where I have a problem. They don’t communicate to me. They call and they talk to my supervisor, which is very aggravating because they only get one side of the story.”

Valuing Interactions

- Recognizing a cleaner's presence
- Treating a cleaner as a group member
- Making the cleaner's job easier
- Communicating patient information to the cleaner

Recognizing a cleaner's presence

- Small actions of recognition and friendliness toward the cleaners were experienced as very positive, building a sense of mutuality with the other.

Treating a cleaner as a group member

- For example, being invited by nurses to participate in a potluck meal

Making the cleaner's job easier

- “I have some nurses who'll move equipment for me instead of looking at me like, ‘Oh, he's a housekeeper , he can move it himself.’ I feel that puts us on the same level, as far as they can respect my job just as well as I respect their job.”

- We learned that most cleaners take pride in effectively executing their vital work. Our most important insight is that felt worth on the job is tied importantly to what happens in social interactions with the full spectrum of individuals that one encounters while doing their jobs.

The meaning of our work and the worth we feel in doing that work depends on a series of daily interactions with others

Hospital housekeepers in the time of COVID

- Emotional support for patients especially important in absence of visitors
- The risk of infection

The other hospital workers on the front lines of the pandemic

Support staff must sometimes rewear contaminated gear and don't always feel comfortable advocating for themselves.

By Eli Cahan and Matt DeButts | Updated Apr 15, 2020, 6:23am EDT

- Published in *Vox*
- Risks to support staff are exacerbated by a lack of PPE, and safety information and poor communication between clinical and non-clinical support staff
- Support staff are putting their lives at risk without getting the praise that many doctors and nurses are receiving
- Overall support staff face a dilemma of staying home and risking the financial burdens of not working or going to work and risking getting infected and spreading to loved ones

I am an essential worker scared for my life every day with no extra pay or benefits for the risk | COMMENTARY

By ANNETTE BROWN

FOR THE BALTIMORE SUN | APR 30, 2020 | 11:30 AM



- Written by a hospital cleaner
- Highlights that cleaners fear contracting COVID-19, in addition to losing their jobs
- They view their work as essential to reducing the spread of the disease, yet receive not additional pay, benefits, or protection
- A call for essential pay and more PPE for cleaners

Brown A. I am an essential worker scared for my life every day with no extra pay or benefits for the risk | COMMENTARY. baltimoresun.com.

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0501-essential-workout-bailout-20200430-y2fdri2jcttmffjw3hplzy-story.html>. Published April 30, 2020. Accessed June 11, 2020.

Questions...

- Are there practical ways to improve our daily interactions with hospital housekeepers (and food workers and transport workers)?
- Are there practical ways to recognize the caring work of housekeepers and actually include them in our team?
- How must health systems change to honor and respect housekeepers, transport workers, and food delivery workers?

- A complete curriculum for the film will be published soon
- Other ideas for the use of the film in an educational environment?

Question...

- Other ideas for using the film in an educational environment?

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KEEPERS of the HOUSE

