

Becoming Informed about Cultural Communities & Practices

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Goals of the PITC Guide to Providing Culturally Sensitive Care

To help teachers

1. Better understand themselves and they are influenced by their own cultural beliefs
2. Better understand the children and families they serve
3. Learn a process for relating to cultural issues in a way that will help them become more effective teachers

Goals of the Cultural Communities Framework

- Provide a new way of thinking about culture & development
- Dispel some common assumptions about culture:
 - There are universal best practices and universal developmental goals that suit all children
 - Culture is equivalent to ethnic or linguistic groups

Cultural Nature of Development

- Child development is a cultural process
- Culture is a constellation of cultural practices (Rogoff)
- Ethnic/linguistic groups are heterogeneous in cultural practices (Garcia Coll)
- The context of child care is its self a cultural community that children, families, and teachers participate in (Howes)

Cultural Communities, Practices & Development in Early Childhood

- Culture is a constellation of cultural practices (Rogoff)

Cultural Communities Practices & Development in Early Childhood

- Constellation of cultural practices (Rogoff)
- Cultural Communities are groups of people who share a set of common yet evolving practices
- Cultural practices are common ways of doing things
- Cultural communities bring organization, goals and meaning to daily routines
- Individual routines and practices vary as you shift your lens to different activity settings

Cultural Communities, Practices & Development in Early Childhood

- **The Kaleidoscope:** The context of child care is its self a cultural community that children, families, and teachers participate in (Howes)

Cultural Practices of the Child Care Setting

Home Cultural Practices
Of the child & family

Home Cultural Practices
Of Teachers

Participation in multiple cultural communities



Heterogeneity within an ethnic/linguistic group

- Early Head Start Evaluation Study
- 100 Mexican heritage families eligible for Early Head Start services
- Four unique cultural communities defined by immigration experiences and caregiving practices
- Cultural communities that both resided within a geographic region as well as spanning borders.

Example of a cultural community crossing borders:

Family recently immigrated from another country. They continue to share social and economic resources with community members in their home country. The goals and practices of the cultural community in the home country continue to guide the daily practices of the members living in the new country in similar and new ways.

Understanding how Cultural Practices inform Infant/Toddler Care

Scenario: Josue is a 17 month old child whose family recently moved to the US and he and his family has been living with his aunt and her four children. Josue has been attending a local infant/toddler program for almost two months. His teachers report that naptime is difficult for Josue. Although he is very tired, he struggles to transition to his cot and often lies on the floor crying, disturbing the other children. Carla, the lead teacher, feels that after two months Josue should be able to make the transition to nap more easily.

A look at Cultural Practices around sleeping & caregiving

Carla visits Josue's family at home. She learns that Josue has slept with his mother since birth, a typical practice in Josue's heritage country. Co-sleeping reflects a goal of Josue's cultural community, to foster interdependence.

Contexts of care

- Siblings as caregivers
 - Siblings → Play & Entertainment care giving
 - Adults → Basic care: Feeding, changing, bathing
- Peer Groups: Same-age or mixed-age peers?
 - Same-age grouping of children is a rare practice around the world
 - Sibling relationships may be prioritized over same-age peers
 - Most child care centers are organized into same-age groups
- Children's involvement in mature activities
 - Are children included in adult activities?
 - Including "Practical Life" activities
- Community as caregiver
 - Relative and non-relative caregivers
 - Early care setting serves as a "community as caregiver" model

Becoming informed about cultural practices & communities of families

Invite families to share:

- Caregiving practices at home and/or from heritage country
- Developmental goals for their child
- Family structure and daily routines (who participates)
- Describe dinner time, bedtime and other key routines

Caregivers can:

- Allow for flexibility in care giving routines
- Develop routines that reflect the practices of home
- Ongoing critical thinking, reflection, and perspective taking

Cultural community of the infant/toddler setting


