Cultural Understanding in Infant Mental Health

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Goals for Session:

• To discuss the implications that culture has on parenting and how that may shape your work with families.

• To engage in self-reflection and discussion about what you bring to the families you work with, whose backgrounds may be different from your own.
What is Infant Mental Health?

"Infant mental health" is defined as the healthy social and emotional development of a child from birth to 3 years; and a growing field of research and practice devoted to the:

- Promotion of healthy social and emotional development;
- Prevention of mental health problems; and
- Treatment of the mental health problems of very young children in the context of their families.\(^2\)
What is culture?

Culture refers to meaning that is shared by a group of people. It consists of shared beliefs, attitudes, and values, as well as practices that bring to life shared meaning through daily interactions of people within the group.

Robert N. Emde
Did you know…

• U.S. Census Bureau, 2000: 31 million foreign-born in the U.S.

• 41% of residents in the City of Bellevue are foreign born
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>% of Births in King County</th>
<th>% of Children 0-3 Receiving EI Services in 2012*</th>
<th>Over or Under-represented Relative to Births</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/ Alaska Native</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Black/ African American</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<td>+3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple Race</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unknown Race</td>
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Data Source:
**Washington State Department of Early Learning, ESIT.
Eight Features of Culture

1. Involves shared meaning
2. Occurs in an ecology
3. Is transactional
4. Is experienced subjectively
5. Operates silently and with voices
6. Provides a view of reality and experience
7. Influences expressions of distress
8. Is mediated through the parenting relationship

Culture, Diagnostic, Assessment, and Identity: Defining Concepts
Robert N. Emde
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

Infant Mental Health Journal, Vol. 27 (6), 606-11 (2206)
Involves Shared Meaning
Occurs in an Ecology
Transactional
Experienced Subjectively
Operates Silently and with Voices
Provides a View of Reality and Experience
Influences Expressions of Distress
Mediated through the Parenting Relationship
Cultural Reflection
<table>
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<th>Sleeping</th>
<th>Feeding</th>
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<tr>
<th>Attachment</th>
<th>Other</th>
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Tell us what sleeping looks like in your family?
Feeding

Describe mealtimes in your home.
Attachment

“Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space.“

-Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969
Knowledge, beliefs, biases, and meanings:

We each must learn to recognize our own beliefs and knowledge. More to the point, we come to recognize that the other person’s sense of meaningfulness is equally as strongly embraced; our ability to be respectful of difference or sameness is terribly powerful; it leaves us to be curious and to understand.

-Donna R. Weston
Implications for Practice

- Must be aware of our own cultural lens and what we carry with us into our work with families.
- Important to take the families’ perspective on the child’s needs.
- Think about how families’ vision of what is important for their child’s well-being and development may or may not be in line with yours.
We hope...

You discover the WELCOME in you:

Wonder
Embrace
Learn
Curiosity/Courage
Openness
Meaning
Explore
References and Resources

- Spicer, P. Cultural Influences on Parenting. Zero to Three.

- attachmentacrosscultures.org
- Ethnomed.org
- Zerotothree.org
Thank you!