



Views of Varying Cultures on Students with Special Needs

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Introduction

- Different cultures view Special Education in different ways.
- The four cultures we researched were American middle class, Chinese American, Native American, and Latino.
- All four of these cultures are ethnic groups who live in the United States.

Cultural Differences

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

- The American middle class typically try to get their children all necessary services while encouraging support from others.
- They value education for their child.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- Chinese convey respect in the following ways:
 - head nodding
 - avoiding eye contact
 - withholding comments
 - not interrupting to clarify information
- Chinese usually advocate for their children by discussing options as a family in private, then they may choose the route that they believe will please the authority figure most.

NATIVE AMERICANS

- Most Native Americans believe in seeking harmony with others, respecting the elders and experts and living in a group.

LATINOS

- Latino cultures usually use code switching. This is when the parents shift from speaking English to communicate with those outside of the family to speaking Spanish to family members. This does not mean they can't read Spanish.
- In most Latino cultures, it is inappropriate to speak to the wife first when the husband is present, to use a harsh or authoritative voice, to sit slouched, or to tease during a meeting.

Beliefs

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

- Most Americans believe communication is key.
- American parents most often wish to be involved in their child's education, especially if the student has special needs.
- Teachers in America need to be accommodating by working with parents, other teachers and other related service providers.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- Chinese parents may not want to tell authority figures about disabilities because some see it as a betrayal of family trust and disgrace of family honor.
- Sharing personal problems with an authority figure is seen as a sign of disrespect in Chinese culture.
- "Saving face" is important in most Asian cultures; most families will withhold vital information to save face.

NATIVE AMERICANS

- Native Americans typically believe that all children have a specific purpose, including children with disabilities.

LATINOS

- Most Latino families are Roman Catholic, which means they may believe a supreme power will cure the disabled.
- Latinos often believe that a child is born with a disability because a family member is putting a mal ojo (evil eye) on another child or because an evil spirit is in the environment.

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Views of Disabilities

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

- The typical American middle class family is supportive of their students with special needs.
- They usually discuss disabilities and search for options to help their children to succeed academically.
- Sometimes parents seek support groups and further information about the disabilities.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- Many Chinese believe that children are born with disabilities because the mother didn't follow certain dietary restrictions or she violated certain cultural taboos.
- Chinese culture views the disability as an attribute of bad parenting.

NATIVE AMERICANS

- Some Native American tribes believe that the child with disabilities is a special messenger from the spiritual world.
- In most tribes, disabilities are treated with respect and acceptance.

LATINOS

- Latinos may view the disabilities as a curse put on a child that can only be healed in the hands of supreme powers.
- They often use natural healing that is more faith-related instead of relying on doctors and modern medicine.

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Education

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

- Americans aim to individualize each and every child's education, regardless of whether they have special needs.
- Every child learns and processes information differently, therefore schools should be shaped this way and geared towards individual children.

CHINESE AMERICANS

- Chinese usually desire for their disabled children to be educated in public settings.
- It can be extremely difficult to collaborate with the families because of their cultural views and beliefs.
- Establishing a very trusting relationship with these families early on is essential for the optimal placement of the child.

NATIVE AMERICANS

- Education is traditionally taught in the home.
- Children often get apprenticeships and learn a trade skill.
- Additionally, children are often taught basic communication skills.
- Children typically learn about topics such as plants and animals.
- Children can go to formal school, but often feel separated from other students.

LATINOS

- Many Latino parents are not aware of American rules and procedures in the school system.
- Most families move to the United States in hopes to ensure a positive education for their children.
- Many Latino parents feel intimidated when the schools attempt to collaborate with them.
- They do not challenge their disabled children to participate in social settings. This is left for the schools to develop.