**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 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.

**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.

**Contact Information**

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Frank Thornton
SunY Oneonta
Email: Frank.Thornton@oneonta.edu

**References**


**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.