



NOVEMBER 2004 SPOTLIGHT:

Child Development: Challenges Across Cultures

The development of children, from birth through the teen years, raises challenges for parents of all cultures and nationalities. For refugee parents, and for the child welfare professionals who provide services, the challenges are more complex. The development of refugee children can be further affected by nutritional, emotional, and physical factors that present additional considerations. This month, we spotlight resources to help child welfare and health professionals, as well as parents, understand the complexities and unique influences that affect child development.

Appraisals of Parenting, Parent-Child Interactions, Parenting Styles, and Children: An Annotated Bibliography, available through the Commonwealth Fund Web site, provides a listing of resources across cultures. The Commonwealth Fund provides other publications that address various aspects of child development, such as ***Early Child Development in Social Context: A Chartbook***. "Early childhood is a time of tremendous growth and development for children in every way: physical, social, emotional, and intellectual. Good quality early life experiences, including helping families meet children's needs, can enhance children's resiliency and promote optimal child development. When recognized early, problems in any of these areas can often be addressed effectively and their long-term negative consequences can often be minimized and sometimes eliminated altogether. Risks in the physical and social environment that may retard development can also be prevented or ameliorated when early identification and intervention occur. Health practitioners are among the only professionals who see children on a regular basis in the first three years of life. This familiarity places them in a unique position to advise and support parents and to recognize potential threats to healthy early development. This chartbook reviews more than 30 key indicators of development and health for children up to age 6, as well as social factors in families and communities that affect these outcomes. It also offers practical implications for practitioners and parents." (description from The Commonwealth Fund Web site)

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Approaches to Parent-Infant Interaction Intervention. Technical Report #13, available from ERIC and through the CLAS Early Childhood Research Institute Web site, provides a theoretical framework for understanding different approaches to interaction intervention and uses this framework as background for considering how various cultural factors might influence families' (and providers') views of these approaches. Most research in interaction intervention has been conducted without explicit attention to cultural diversity in the samples. Current knowledge is based largely on Caucasian samples of western European derivation, particularly from the United States. Developmental studies often have confounded diversity in culture with other sources of diversity, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational level. Differences between groups that may represent different cultural origins have often been interpreted as deficits in the non-Caucasian samples. Another interpretation of these differences is that culture may influence families' perceptions of many aspects of interaction intervention including the need for intervention, characteristics of good interactions, appropriateness of interaction as a focus for intervention, and acceptable approaches to providing intervention. Different approaches used in parent-infant interaction intervention between parents and their birth to 3-year-old children with disabilities are described, along with implications for working with individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The report includes extensive references, an annotated bibliography, and a list of available resources from the CLAS Web site.

Prod and Pry from Inside Out: Ethnography of an Anti-Bias Support-Supervision Group for Teachers of Young Children is an ethnography of the culture and processes of a group of three administrators and seven early childhood teachers from four child care centers who participated in a support-supervision group while implementing an anti-bias curriculum in their programs. Effects on members of group participation were analyzed based on questionnaires, journals of all participants and the facilitator, audiotaped group sessions, participant observation of the facilitator and an outside observer, and open-ended, in-depth interviews conducted by a third person. Data were categorized into three major themes: definitions of bias, group outcomes, and the facilitator's role. Subcategories were identified, including connections participants made between personal lives and professional behavior, awareness, and trust and discomfort. Primary attention in this paper is devoted to one of these subcategories-connections that participants made between personal lives and professional behavior.

Parenting curricula for immigrant and refugee groups are difficult to find. This month's featured search identifies two publications that address this area.

Parenting Teens for Cambodians: A Model Curriculum, available on the [BRYCS publications](#) page, is based on parenting classes that were part of a program for Cambodian teen girls providing tutoring, mentoring, job training and support groups. Having both parents and girls meeting during the same time period was helpful for the parents to learn more about their daughters' ideas and helpful to in testing the curriculum to see what elements worked best.

Parent Education Programs for Immigrant Families" In The Encyclopedia of Human Ecology identifies the characteristics of parent education programs that make them most effective for immigrant families. The recent growth in the number and diversity of immigrant and refugee families in the United States underlines the importance of culturally appropriate parenting programs to assist parents in meeting the challenges of living in a new culture. Many parent education programs and materials do not address the intergenerational, cross-cultural, and ecological dilemmas that daily confront immigrant parents and their children. Parent education developers need to incorporate emerging best practices into their offerings, including an understanding of: (1) the different contexts inhabited by immigrant families, such as their experiences of war, poverty, and immigration itself; (2) the social and economic conditions of families in their homelands and their adopted countries, their preferred family structure, and their culturally based child-rearing values; and (3) the day-to-day realities of parent-child interactions. In addition, programs need to be held at times and locations convenient for parents, offered in a language familiar to parents, conducted by facilitators who are parents themselves and known to the parents, and contain child-focused material that requires extended family involvement. Exemplary programs in the U.S. suggest that parents are willing to adopt bicultural parenting practices.