

Bernhard, J. K., & Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2000). The cultural context of infant- toddler care. In D. Cryer & T. Harms (Eds.), *Infants and toddlers in out-of-home care* (pp. 237-267). Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the key role of culture in the process of arriving at optimal practices. One's view of development is intimately connected with practice, and for trained caregivers, practice has been codified in textbooks and manuals that are generally based on a normative view of developmental appropriateness. Both development and recommended practices for encouraging it are often described as universals in these books and training programs. Our aim is to encourage those in the field of early childhood education to rethink their assumptions about what is appropriate care for infants and toddlers.

After the introductory definition and demographic sections, there is a brief literature review, in which a theoretical groundwork is set out. This chapter focuses its examples of cultural contextual approach on the particular issue of interdependence-independence. That issue has sufficient scope to provide serious discussions of a number of issues in infant-toddler care and to present possible recurrent conflicting values and perceptions among caregivers and families. Caregivers working with infants and toddlers are often faced directly with issues of interdependence-independence in respect to caregiving practices, for instance, in communication with families, in children's treatment of one another, and in children's cooperation with caregivers.