

Module 1. Global/Cultural

1.2 Culturally Sensitive Housing - Families Leaving Homelands and Traditions

Introduction

Forced to flee their homelands for a safer future, families and/or individuals often desire to preserve their culture and traditions in their new homes. However, at times, homes built in the United States do not support these traditions. Difficulties posed by the house plan threaten the cultural identities of these families and create stress in their lives. How can the built environment – culturally sensitive housing designs – support and foster diversity in ways of living and well-being?

This interior design project is to encourage research into the space planning and furniture arrangements needed to support change in living accommodations for a particular population in your community.

For more information on this topic and need, see the following journal article by Tasoulla, Hadjiyanni, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota.

Objectives: Upon completion of this unit the student will be able to:

1. research and analyze traditions within a culture that would support their home environment.
2. design interior spaces that support individuals/families who wish to continue traditional cultural practices.

Method

Design (re-design) the interior of a ranch style home (approximately 1800 square feet) that would enhance the family (or occupants) living, worship, eating/bathing, and functional needs for a specific culture in your community. Note: You can provide students with a free floor plan from the Internet or locate one from a builder in your area.

Modify only non-load bearing walls, doorways, and window placement in the selected plan. *Optional: add furniture as needed.*

Remain culturally sensitive to the juxtaposition of spaces, and furniture needs that would support traditions related to eating, entertaining and worship. Be aware of the placement and orientation of the front door.

AAFCS Assessment Domain:

AAFCS Interior Design Fundamentals. Factors Influencing Design: 3A Incorporate client needs, goals, and resources into interior design projects.

National Content Standards:

11.3.6, 11.4.2, 11.4.3, 11.4.4, 11.6.2, 11.6.4, 11.6.5, 11.9.0

Life Skills. Research, cultural sensitivity, writing skills, space planning + furniture arrangement skills, creativity.

Cognitive Skill Development.

Problem-solving, analysis, evaluation, synthesis, reasoning skills.

Time needed/Materials.

Three weeks (50 min. class periods).

Materials. Foam core, drafting materials, and rendering markers.

Tip: Use binder clips to mount plans on board. Reuse boards.

Glossary Words/Phrase

Culturally Sensitive Housing

Career Connections.

Residential Interior Design



Research traditions related to sleeping and eating habits. Be sensitive to their needs for storage, a place to worship, and number guests coming to their home.

If there is not a population in your community you wish to study, select some of the populations (and immigrants) moving into the U.S. For example, those from Mexico, India, and Croatia.

Optional: Teachers, if this is too complex for your students' learning at this time, take an existing floor plan (with furniture) and assign students to evaluate how they would change the plan given their research. Then ask them to notate on the plan using arrows and phrases to explain their recommended changes.

Discussion Topics

- What are the specific needs for this family (e.g. socially, spiritually, function)?
- How many people visit for a family dinner?
- What are their needs for privacy?
- Are there traditions that need to be supported?
- What views do they need outside?

Deliverables

- Written research of local/regional population.
 - Identify the homeland and/or culture. Suggestions for other inclusions: geographic map, daily living practices of the individual/family, cultural program identifying the usage and significance of the spaces/rooms in the home, daily and ceremonial traditions for personal hygiene, religious practices and preferences, and doorway opening locations.
- Client needs (e.g. program)
- Revised ranch-style floor plan (*or notated plan*)

Concluding Exercise

How is the space planning in the home different than the original design solution? Share and reflect on results.

Note: You could split this project into two parts. The first part would be to invite the student to design a home or a space plan for a given client. The second part would be to invite the students to design it for a different population. Then analyze the similarities and differences that would be made for the same plan.

References

- Hadjiyanni, T. (2002). *The making of a refugee—Children adopting refugee identity in Cyprus*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

- See attached journal article by Tasoulla HadjiYanni, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota titled “Aesthetics in displacement – Hmong, Somali and Mexican Home-making practices in Minnesota”, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.
- Local speakers who have lived outside the United States
- Personal interviews with community members.
- Google “culturally sensitive housing.” Also look at different cultural websites that indicate design of home life and living habits.

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