TEACHING IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY



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Teaching in a Diverse Society

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This text was compiled on 06/15/2026

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Licensing

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Acknowledgements

College of the Canyons would like to extend appreciation to the following people and organizations for allowing this textbook to be created:

California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

Chancellor Dianne G. Van Hook

Santa Clarita Community College District

College of the Canyons Distance Learning Office

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1: Introduction

This introduction was modified from the beginning of the publication *Family Partnerships and Culture*, by the California Department of Education and using the *Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education* position statement by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. These wise words frame the purpose of this book and the course it is being used for, which are just the beginning of a journey.

Even though most families utilize some form of out-of-home care, children under the age of five continue to spend most of their early lives in the family setting. Consequently, families continue to play an especially important role in shaping the course of children's early development. For this reason, families are an invaluable partner with early childhood programs.

Guided by cultural beliefs and principles, families select experiences, convey attitudes, and impart knowledge to their children to prepare them for adulthood. Accordingly, it is important for program staff to learn to collaborate effectively with families. To develop a partnership and to tap into the family as a primary resource, early childhood educators must reach out to, learn about, and develop strong partnerships with families. This process requires openness to learning and an effort to understand the individuality of each family and the diversity of the families from which the children come.

Culturally competent practices are essential in the early learning setting or environment in order to form authentic partnerships with families that promote children's development. Specific knowledge of the child's cultural or multicultural background and life at home can be the key to effective teaching and learning. This knowledge is a valuable tool for connecting what the child already knows and values to the new competencies that programs seek to nurture. To the extent that a program's policies and approaches are informed by, reflective of, and congruent with the child's experiences at home, children will find it easier to adapt to the requirements of the program and meet the program's expectations for achievement. Deeper knowledge of the children's family life will increase the likelihood that early childhood education programs will effectively meet children's needs and serve them successfully.

This is a complex yet worthwhile undertaking. Understanding the social conditions that children experience at home is complicated by the broad diversity of the children attending preschool programs. Many early childhood educators, by virtue of their personal backgrounds and training, may not have had the opportunity to gain the knowledge and experiences that would prepare them for working with culturally and linguistically diverse children. In light of this possible lack of knowledge and exposure, working closely with families can offer the opportunity to explore new ideas and approaches that improve the overall operation of the program. In turn, this will strengthen staff members' ability to work well with the children they will encounter in classrooms in the twenty-first century.

This is especially important because some children are not flourishing in early childhood programs as much as expected. For those children, early difficulties in adjusting to school set them on a track of low academic performance, which may have dire consequences for their lives as adults. Collaborating with families is an important first step in improving such outcomes. Attention to the family's culture and context increases the likelihood of an effective partnership with families that can make a world of difference for the child.

Deep knowledge of the family and its cultural context can provide early childhood educators with insights about the child's thinking and behavior that are useful in planning and day-to-day interactions. Moreover, publicly honoring and celebrating the family reinforces a positive identity for the child and promotes in children the idea that they are valued by staff.

Accomplishing these aims requires both an awareness of the diversity of the people around oneself and an understanding of oneself as a cultural being. The dual goals are to increase awareness of the state's diverse cultures and recognize how one's own culture shapes behaviors, attitudes, and responses to those who are different. Specifically, cultural competence includes learning about the family lives of children and developing a deep understanding of the family's culture. This, in turn, requires insight into the influence of one's culture in relating to persons who belong to a different cultural group.

It takes an ongoing effort to become sensitive to the differences that are part of the surrounding world. For early childhood educators, this means becoming aware that the children in their care come from a variety of cultures. This awareness must go beyond superficial stereotypes. Educators must be aware of the ethnicity and national heritage of the children they serve. Getting historical and background information from families can shed light on their context, attitudes, and values. This information can also shed light on similarities and historical conflicts among groups that are important to know. When confronted with this diversity, early childhood educators must counter the human tendency to regard favorably those who share the same cultural attitudes and

whose behavior aligns with one's cultural standards and, conversely, to view disapprovingly the conduct of groups with beliefs, values, and behavioral standards that differ from one's own.

The process of cultural self-reflection involves knowing one's identity and the cultural community where one developed and learned as a child. It likewise involves awareness of one's own cultural background, including examining how personal principles and beliefs may influence one's approach to working with children and their families. For example, staff members should identify and reflect deeply on their own culture-based assumptions about important aspects of life, such as morality, nutrition, gender roles, child care, parent–child relations, appropriate displays of emotion, intimacy, family loyalty, and discipline. Individual beliefs and values come from many sources, the most influential of which is the family. Assumptions formed over a lifetime and passed down over the generations shape individual views of the world and the judgments staff members make about what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate, and desirable or undesirable. These views are so deeply ingrained that they are taken for granted and can easily be perceived as being universal and absolutely true.

The goal of cultural learning is to counter the human tendency to make assumptions about people who are different from oneself. It should also open one to the possibility that beliefs different from one's own can offer legitimate ways to view and deal with life. When people identify their own cultural assumptions or faulty misconceptions, they may be less likely to criticize or devalue the practices of others. When early childhood educators examine the subjective and personal basis of their views of life and their practices, they will likely find it possible to broaden their worldview by approaching others with an open mind.

Finally, moving from reflection to action is important. Mastery of the information is not enough. Personal reflection on one's own culture and learning about other cultures are the first steps on the path toward effective engagement with diverse children and families. To be effective, educators must move along the continuum from theory to practice, from intellectual understanding to attitudinal shifts and behavioral change.

Understanding of family and culture does not come quickly, nor can it be gleaned from a single source. It involves dual processes: paying attention to the diversity of people around oneself and to self-reflection on one's own culture and family experiences. Applying knowledge to practice is difficult and defies simple formulae, prescriptions, or scripts. Increasing cultural awareness amounts to little without efforts to apply the knowledge gained toward making program policies and practices more culturally responsive. Indeed, this is the most important and, often, the most challenging step. It involves moving from a theoretical appreciation of cultural and familial differences to building relationships and implementing concrete practices that make the program more compatible with and responsive to the families served. It means that programs must approach families and establish meaningful relationships with them. To do this well, educators must develop an inclusive perspective, devise thoughtful strategies, and sustain implementation of those strategies over time.

Mastering this process involves building on cultural competence that includes authentic understanding and acceptance. It should also include cultural responsiveness characterized by action and application of the theory to program practices and policies and to interactions with families. Such a proactive stance is consistent with the universal design approach to pursue different pathways to make learning relevant to the diverse population of California's children (CDE 2011, 5). This process requires patience and persistence.[1]

Recommendations for Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education

The National Association for the Education of Young Children has a 24 page position statement on advancing equity in early childhood education. Here are some excerpts and summaries of their recommendations.

It is important for all those in early childhood education to:

1. Build their awareness and understanding of their own culture, personal beliefs, values, and biases.
2. Recognize the power and benefits of diversity and inclusivity.
3. Take responsibility for biased actions, even those that are unintentional, and actively work to repair the harm done.
4. Acknowledge and seek to understand structural inequities and their impact.
5. View a commitment to cultural responsiveness as an ongoing process.
6. Recognize that much of the theory and research in ECE is largely based on the normative perspective of White, middle-class children without disabilities in English-language schools.

"Recognizing that both institutional and interpersonal systems must change, [their] recommendations begin with…self-reflection, a willingness to respectfully listen to others' perspectives without interruption or defensiveness, and a commitment to continuous learning to improve practice. Members of groups that have historically enjoyed advantages must be willing to

> recognize the often unintended consequences of ignorance, action, and inaction and how they may contribute to perpetuating existing systems of privilege."[2]

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[2] National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2019). "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education. Available from https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/naeycadvancingequitypositionstatement.pdf

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Looking at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Examine the importance of diversity.
- Distinguish the difference between equity and equality.
- Explain what inclusion means.
- Discuss some ways programs should be inclusive.

2.1: Looking at Diversity, Equity and Inclusion- Diversity
2.2: Equity
2.3: Inclusion

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2.1: Looking at Diversity, Equity and Inclusion- Diversity

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Examine the importance of diversity.
- Distinguish the difference between equity and equality.
- Explain what inclusion means.
- Discuss some ways programs should be inclusive.

Diversity

Let's begin by defining diversity and exploring its significance to working with children. The concept of diversity means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.



Figure 1.1: Diversity in early childhood education. [3]

Diversity is a reality created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. It is extremely important to support and protect diversity, to value individuals and groups without prejudice, and foster a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic.

According to Queensborough Community College, "'Diversity' means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.
- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
- Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
- Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.

Diversity includes, therefore, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Finally, we acknowledge that

categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid, we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another". [4]

Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in the U.S. and California

There is a rich array of ethnic and social groups found in many early childhood programs in California. Much of this cultural diversity is due to high levels of immigration. Foreign-born persons represented 12 percent (32.5 million) of the U.S. population in 2002, with almost 50 percent of that group coming from Latin America, 25 percent from Asia, and 20 percent from Europe (Schmidley 2003). In 2010, of the more than 2.5 million children under the age of five living in California, about half of these children were Latino (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). It is important to note that Latinos may be of any race, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. White non-Latino children make up 30 percent of children under five in California, Asian-Pacific Islanders make up 10 percent, Black or African Americans make up 6 percent, and the remaining 4 percent represent a wide range of ethnic groups (Whitebook, Kipnis, and Bellm 2008). [5]

Significance of Diversity

A growing body of research shows that diversity in schools and communities can be a powerful lever leading to positive outcomes in school and in life. Racial and socioeconomic diversity benefits communities, schools, and children from all backgrounds. Today's students need to be prepared to succeed with a more diverse and more global workforce than ever before. Research has shown that more diverse organizations make better decisions with better results. The effects of socioeconomic diversity can be especially powerful for students from low-income families, who, historically, often have not had equal access to the resources they need to succeed. [6]



Figure 1.2: Diversity in schools, including ECE, is beneficial. [7]

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2.2: Equity

In education, the term equity refers to the principle of fairness. While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of equality, they do not mean the same thing. Equality generally means that everyone is considered the same, and everyone gets the same of everything. Equity means that everyone is considered equally important, but everyone gets what they *need*.

For example, when a teacher treats everyone strictly equally, they might great everyone at the door in exactly the same way. They smile, say hello to the mother and child, and ask the child to put his lunch box in their cubby. Most teachers, however, recognize that some parents and children might need more in the morning. Some children might need a hug. Some parents might need a few minutes to explain that they are concerned that their child didn't sleep well the night before. The teacher understands that every child is considered equally important, but they also understand that their needs are not equal -- some might need more than others.

In education, equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. [8] In other words, equity means making sure every student has the support they need to be successful.

Equity in education "requires putting systems in place to ensure that every child has an equal chance for success. That requires understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual students or by populations of students and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers. While this in itself may not ensure equal outcomes , we all should strive to ensure that every child has equal opportunity for success." [9] Unlike equity, equality ignores the fact that different people begin with different resources and barriers, and therefore will need more or less support as a result. [10]

Figure 1.3 is a simplified visual of difference between equality (giving everyone the same thing) and equity (giving each person what they need).

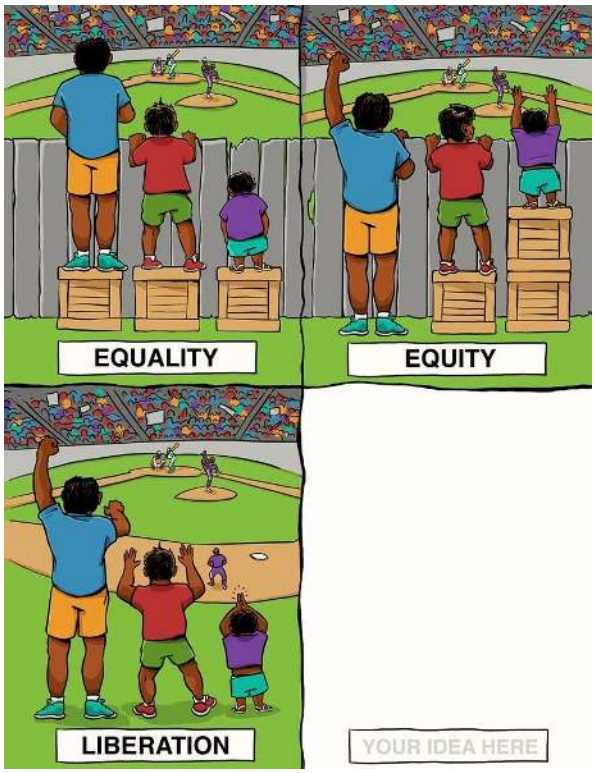


Figure 1.3: A simplified visual of equality versus equity. [11]

Other images have been created that show that equity isn't quite that simple and often what is creating the inequity is not characteristics of the person (such as height as shown in the image), but in the system. Systemic oppression and unearned privilege are addressed in later chapters of the book

Why Does Educational Equity Matter?

When we think of a fair and just society one of the defining characteristics is likely to be that all individuals have equal opportunity to realize their potential, irrespective of the circumstances into which they are born. Education plays a critical role in determining

whether or not individuals are given this opportunity. There are a range of reasons why good educational outcomes matter, from the individual; better health and longer life, to the societal; greater social cohesion, inclusion and trust; to the economic, productivity, economic growth, innovation, social wealth and reduced welfare costs. For a society or nation committed to 'creating a fair and egalitarian place in which opportunities exist for all', education is a key lever or vehicle through which this can occur. [12]



Figure 1.4: Making sure all children have equal opportunities is critical. [13]

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2.3: Inclusion

When we talk about inclusive early childhood education, we are talking about programs that are designed for children and families from a wide range of backgrounds. A program can serve a diverse community of families, but not be truly inclusive; you can have families from different backgrounds in your program, but do they feel welcome? Are you forcing them to adapt to a program that isn't designed for them or that doesn't take into consideration their social, cultural, and/or racial contexts? Designing an inclusive program translates to everything from physical space to how you interact with children and families. [14]

What is inclusion in the classroom and why is it important?

From the Drexel University School of Education:

"Inclusion in the classroom means that all children, no matter their racial, religious, or ethnic background, gender, learning style, or ability have equal access to educational opportunities in a learning environment where all students are equally safe, valued, and respected. Creating an inclusive classroom also means actively addressing and aiming to eliminate negative stereotypes and attitudes based on racial, ethnic, or religious background, gender, learning style, ability, or any other identifying characteristic. Students who may have experienced being seen as "other," are welcomed as valued participants in the classroom. Inclusion in the classroom is critically important because it fosters each child's sense of belonging, feeling of being seen and understood for who they are, and their inherent value as a human being. Inclusive classrooms empower children to grow and thrive as confident individuals, not just as students during their time in educational systems, but in life beyond school as citizens in their communities and in the world."

Inclusion as it Relates to Children with Disabilities

Inclusion in education often refers specifically to including children with physical, cognitive, behavior and learning disabilities in classrooms with their typically developing peers. Inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential. The defining features of inclusion that can be used to identify high quality early childhood programs and services are:

- Access - providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments
- Participation - even if environments and programs are designed to facilitate access, some children will need additional individualized accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning activities with peers and adults.
- Supports - an infrastructure of systems-level supports must be afforded to those providing inclusive services to children and families. [15]



Figure 1.5: All children need to be able to fully participate in the early childhood education environment. [16]

Children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high-quality early childhood programs and too many preschool children with disabilities are only offered the option of receiving special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities. [17]

	Think About It… Describe your understanding of how diversity, equity, and inclusion are related.

Chapter Summary

Early childhood programs serve a diverse array of children and families. Recognizing the value of this diversity and creating relationships with families that provide the context of their culture, will allow early childhood education programs to be inclusive in a variety of different ways and provide educational equity for the children for whom they provide care and education.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: The Relationship Between One’s Experience and the Development of Personal Bias

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define stereotype threat
- List characteristics of implicit bias
- Explain how people learn about and categorize others
- Describe how stereotypes develop and why they persist
- Discuss the effects of stereotypes
- Investigate ways to uncover the stereotypes that we hold and apply that to practices that will reduce discrimination with children and families

3.1: One's Experiences and the Development of Personal Bias

3.2: The Beginning of Bias

3.2.1: Microaggressions

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3.1: One's Experiences and the Development of Personal Bias



Think About It…

Preservation of one's own culture does not require contempt or disrespect for other cultures. –Cesar Chavez

What does this quote mean to you? How many times have you felt that you are on the defense with your culture, traditions , etc.? Why is it that you have experienced this? This chapter addresses how one's own experiences create personal bias.

It is important to note that everyone has personal biases. Being biased is often unconscious and occurs because of the messages we have been exposed to from a very young age. Working towards an awareness of those biases, affords us opportunities to reflect and not react when we are faced with our biases. It is often helpful to do this with someone we can be honest with and who can be honest with us.

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define what is meant by bias in all its forms
- Define stereotype threat
- List characteristics of implicit bias
- Explain how people learn about and categorize others
- Describe how stereotypes develop and why they persist
- Discuss the effects of stereotypes
- Investigate ways to uncover the stereotypes that we hold and apply that to practices that will reduce discrimination with children and families

What is bias?

In her book *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* Louise Derman-Sparks defines bias as:

"Any attitude, belief or feeling that justifies or results in unfair treatment of a person or a group of people because of their identity."

The American Psychological Association defines bias as "…an inclination or predisposition for or against something." Bias often results in unfair treatment, in either positive or negative ways. Consider the following forms of bias:

1. Explicit bias: attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) that we consciously or deliberately hold and express about a person or group. This kind of bias is outwardly and intentionally displayed through body language, facial expressions, speech, or other forms of communication. It is observed easily and oftentimes creates conflict between people.
2. Implicit bias: attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) about other people, ideas, issues, or institutions that occur outside of our conscious awareness and control, which affect our opinions and behavior. This kind of bias occurs automatically as the brain makes judgments based on past experiences, education and background. These judgments, if left unexamined, can cause friction with relationships.
3. Confirmation bias: our subconscious tendency to seek and interpret information and other evidence in ways that affirm our existing beliefs, ideas, expectations, and/or hypotheses. Therefore, confirmation bias is both affected by and feeds our implicit biases.

How Biases Are Formed

Let's take a look at how we form our biases. It is natural to have biases. We react to the messages we receive in our environment. Those messages often lie beneath the surface in our unconscious which makes it difficult to address as often we are unaware of them. This is often referred to as "implicit bias". They have an effect on how we make decisions in regards to our biases/stereotypes about race, class, sexual orientation, family structure, religion, etc.



Figure 3.1.1: Playing with multicultural hand puppets is an experience that can affect how children categorize ethnicity. [202]

Racialization

Race is often a source of discrimination and oppression in societies; as such, it can have a tremendous impact on childhood development. The United States is a very racialized society (divided by race), and children—especially children of color—often become aware of the dynamics of racism at a very young age. Children are taught the stereotypes that go along with their particular race(s), as well as the races of others, and these stereotypes can have a strong influence on their development. [203]

Stereotype Threat

Stereotypes and racialized expectations often contribute to stereotype threat , in which a child experiences anxiety or concern in a situation that has the potential to confirm a negative stereotype about his or her social group. For example, if a Black child is given the message that Black people are not as "smart" as white people, she may worry if she is not doing well in school because it will, she fears, confirm the negative stereotype. Importantly, stereotype threat has been shown to be something of a self-fulfilling prophecy—not because the negative stereotype is accurate, but because fear of fulfilling that stereotype can lead to additional anxiety, which in turn can reduce performance. For example, stereotype threat can lower the intellectual performance of Black students taking the SAT, due to the stereotype that they are less intelligent than other groups, which may cause them to feel additional pressure and anxiety.

Intersecting Identities

Our social categories, such as gender, race, or social class affect each other. The concept of intersectionality means that we cannot look these categories in isolation. [204] For example, the experience of growing up as a Black girl in the United States cannot be understood only in terms of being Black or of being female; instead, the ways in which these identities interact and frequently reinforce each other must be examined.

Race is also closely linked to class, and people of color are still statistically much more likely to lack access to basic resources and experience economic hardship. These resources include everything from proper nutrition and healthcare to good education systems and neighborhood parks. All of these societal factors intersect and interact to influence a child's development, so much so that a child from a middle-class white family has many more opportunities than a child from a lower-income family of color. [205]

Bias



Think About It…
How do you define bias? Take a moment to critically think about what biases you can surface at this moment. Write them down and after you have read the entire chapter, take a moment to reflect and add to what you wrote.

Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Key characteristics of implicit bias include:

- Implicit biases are pervasive. Everyone possesses them, even people with commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are related but distinct mental constructs. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that favor our own in-group, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our in-group.
- Implicit biases are malleable. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques. [206]

Now that we know these key terms, how, in terms of brain development and natural humanistic functioning, does implicit bias start?

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3.2: The Beginning of Bias



Figure 14.2: As this infant stares at his dad's face, he is learning about people. [207]

People are often very skilled at person perception—the process of learning about other people—and our brains are designed to help us judge others. Infants prefer to look at faces of people more than they do other visual patterns, and children quickly learn to identify people and their emotional expressions. As adults, we are able to identify and remember a potentially unlimited number of people as we navigate our social, and we form impressions of those others quickly and without much effort. Furthermore, our first impressions are, at least in some cases, remarkably accurate.

Learning about people is a lot like learning about any other object in our environment, with one major exception. With an object, there is no interaction: we learn about the characteristics of a car or a cell phone, for example, without any concern that the car or the phone is learning about us. It is a one-way process. With people, in contrast, there is a two-way social process: just as we are learning about another person, that person is learning about us, or potentially attempting to keep us from accurately perceiving him or her. For instance, research has found that when other people are looking directly at us, we process their features more fully and faster, and we remember them better than when the same people are not looking at us.

In the social dynamic with others, then, we have two goals: first, we need to learn about them, and second, we want them to learn about us (and, we hope, like and respect us). Our focus here is on the former process—how we make sense of other people. But remember that just as you are judging them, they are judging you.

We have seen that when people are asked to describe themselves, they generally do so in terms of their physical features ("I am really tall"), social category memberships ("I am a woman"), and traits ("I am friendly"). These characteristics well reflect the dimensions we use when we try to form impressions of others. [208]

We can also use nonverbal communication to interpret different scenarios, which in turn helps shape ourselves, both consciously and unconsciously.

Nonverbal Behavior

Nonverbal behavior is any type of communication that does not involve speaking, including facial expressions, body language, touching, voice patterns, and interpersonal distance. Nonverbal behaviors are used to reinforce spoken words (Hostetter, 2011) but also include such things as interpersonal distance (how far away from you the other person stands), tone of voice, eye gaze, and hand gestures and body positions (DePaulo et al., 2003). Nonverbal behavior affects how people interpret different scenarios, both consciously

The ability to decode nonverbal behavior is learned early, even before the development of language (Walker-Andrews, 2008). We tend to like people who have a pleasant tone of voice and open posture, who stand an appropriate distance away from us, and who look at and touch us for the "right" amount of time—not too much or too little. And, of course, behavior matters; people who walk faster are perceived as happier and more powerful than those who walk more slowly (Montepare & Zebrowitz-McArthur, 1988).

Although they may be pretty good at it in some cases, people are often not aware of their ability to make accurate judgments. Rule, Ambady, Adams, and Macrae (2008) found that even though the participants in their research were quite accurate in their

perceptions, they could not articulate how they made their judgments. They claimed that they were “just guessing” and could hardly believe that they were getting the judgments right. These results suggest that they were made without any conscious awareness on the part of the judgers. Furthermore, the participants’ judgments of their own accuracy were not generally correlated with their actual accurate judgments.

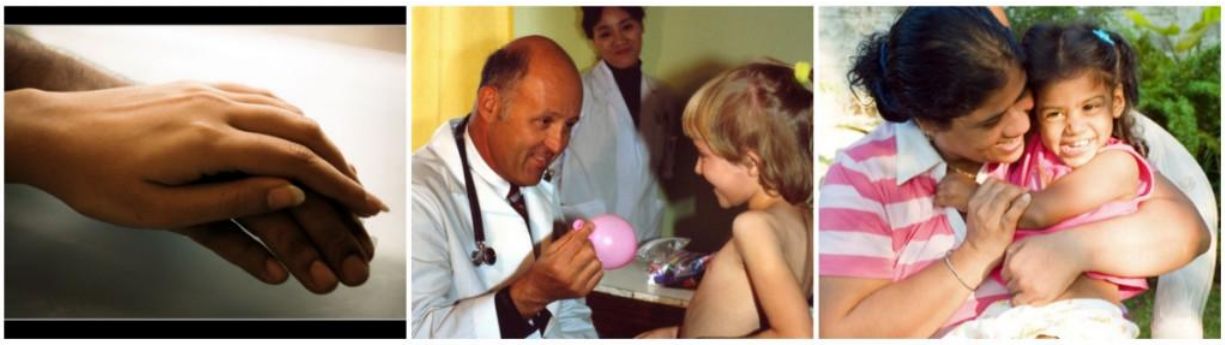


Figure 14.3 Nonverbal behaviors are an important form of communication—and they are particularly important in expressing our liking of, and caring for, others. [209]

The particular nonverbal behaviors that we use, as well as their meanings, are determined by social norms, and these norms may vary across cultures. For example, people who live in warm climates nearer the equator use more nonverbal communication (e.g., talking with their hands or showing strong facial expressions) and are more likely to touch each other during conversations than people who live in colder climates nearer Earth’s poles (Manstead, 1991; Pennebaker, Rime, & Blankenship, 1996). And the appropriate amount of personal space to keep between ourselves and others also varies across cultures. In some cultures—for instance, those of South American countries—it is appropriate to stand very close to another person while talking to him or her; in other cultures—for example, in the United States and Western Europe—more interpersonal space is the norm (Knapp & Hall, 2006). The appropriate amount of eye contact with others is also determined by culture. In some parts of Latin America, it is appropriate to lock eyes with another person, whereas in Japan, people more often try to avoid eye contact.

Social Categorization

Thinking about others in terms of their group memberships is known as social categorization—the natural cognitive process by which we place individuals into social group s. Social categorization occurs when we think of someone as a man (versus a woman), an old person (versus a young person), a Black person (versus an Asian or white person), and so on (Allport, 1954/1979). Just as we categorize objects into different types, so do we categorize people according to their social group memberships. Once we do so, we begin to respond to those people more as members of a social group than as individuals. [210]

Here is an example in which we see both social categorization and stereotyping in an adult setting:

Imagine for a moment that two college students, Farhad and Sarah, are talking at a table in the student union at your college or university. At this point, we would probably not consider them to be acting as group members, but rather as two individuals. Farhad is expressing his opinions, and Sarah is expressing hers. Imagine, however, that as the conversation continues, Sarah brings up an assignment that she is completing for her women’s studies class. It turns out that Farhad does not think there should be a women’s studies program at the college, and he tells Sarah so. He argues that if there is a women’s studies program, then there should be a men’s studies program too. Furthermore, he argues that women are getting too many breaks in job hiring and that qualified men are the targets of discrimination. Sarah feels quite the contrary—arguing that women have been the targets of sexism for many, many years and even now do not have the same access to high-paying jobs that men do.



Figure 14.4: Sarah and Farhad's conversation shows us how social categorization works. [211]

You can see that an interaction that began at individual level, as two individuals conversing, has now turned to the group level, in which Farhad has begun to consider himself as a man, and Sarah has begun to consider herself as a woman. In short, Sarah is now arguing her points not so much for herself as she is as a representative of one of her ingroups—namely, women—and Farhad is acting as a representative of one of his ingroups—namely, men. Sarah feels that her positions are correct, and she believes they are true not only for her but for women in general. And the same is true of Farhad. You can see that these social categorizations may create some potential for misperception, and perhaps even hostility. And Farhad and Sarah may even change their opinions about each other, forgetting that they really like each other as individuals, because they are now responding more as group members with opposing views.

Imagine now that while Farhad and Sarah are still talking, some students from another college, each wearing the hats and jackets of that school, show up in the student union. The presence of these outsiders might change the direction of social categorization entirely, leading both Farhad and Sarah to think of themselves as students at their own college. And this social categorization might lead them to become more aware of the positive characteristics of their college (the excellent rugby team, lovely campus, and intelligent students) in comparison with the characteristics of the other school. Now, rather than perceiving themselves as members of two different groups (men versus women), Farhad and Sarah might suddenly perceive themselves as members of the same social category (students at their college).

Perhaps this example will help you see the flexibility of social categorization. We sometimes think of our relationships with others at the individual level and sometimes at the group level. And which groups we use in social categorization can change over time and in different situations. You are more likely to categorize yourself as a member of your college or university when your rugby or football team has just won a really important game, or at your graduation ceremony, than you would on a normal evening out with your family. In these cases, your membership as a university student is simply more salient and important than it is every day, and you are more likely to categorize yourself accordingly.

Similar effects occur when we categorize other people. We tend to see people who belong to the same social group as more similar than they actually are, and we tend to judge people from different social groups as more different than they actually are.

Development of Stereotypes

O ur stereotypes and prejudices are learned through many different processes. This multiplicity of causes is unfortunate because it makes stereotypes and prejudices even more likely to form and harder to change. For one, we learn our stereotypes in part through our communications with families and peers (Aboud & Doyle, 1996) and from the behaviors we see portrayed in the media (Brown, 1995). Even five-year-old children have learned cultural norms about the appropriate activities and behaviors for boys and girls and also have developed stereotypes about age, race, and physical attractiveness (Bigler & Liben, 2006). And there is often good agreement about the stereotypes of social categories among the individuals within a given culture. In one study assessing stereotypes, Stephanie Madon and her colleagues (Madon et al., 2001) presented U.S. college students with a list of 84 trait terms and asked them to indicate for which groups each trait seemed appropriate (Figure 14.4, "Current Stereotypes Held by College Students") . The participants tended to agree about what traits were true of which groups, and this was true even for groups of which the respondents were likely to never have met a single member (Arabs and Russians). Even today, there is good agreement about the stereotypes of members of many social groups, including men and women and a variety of ethnic groups. [212]

Americans	%	Blacks	%	Italians	%
Materialistic	53.6	Musical	27.6	Loyal to family ties	62.7
Lazy	30.4	Pleasure loving	26	Tradition loving	47.5
Individualistic	28.6	Loud	20.7	Passionate	39
Pleasure loving	28	Aggressive	15.5	Religious	37.3
Industrious	23.2	Artistic	13.8	Quick tempered	35.6

Germans	%	Jews	%	Chinese	%
Intelligent	45.8	Very religious	52.5	Intelligent	60.3
Industrious	37.3	Intelligent	49.2	Loyal to family ties	41.4
Nationalistic	30.5	Tradition loving	32.2	Reserved	36.2
Scientifically minded	27.1	Shrewd	30.5	Industrious	32.8
Methodical	20.3	Loyal to family ties	28.8	Tradion loving	31

Figure 14.5: Current Stereotypes Held by College Students [213]

Once they become established, stereotypes (like any other cognitive representation) tend to persevere. We begin to respond to members of stereotyped categories as if we already knew what they were like. Yaacov Trope and Eric Thompson (1997) found that individuals addressed fewer questions to members of categories about which they had strong stereotypes (as if they already knew what these people were like) and that the questions they did ask were likely to confirm the stereotypes they already had.

In other cases, stereotypes are maintained because information that confirms our stereotypes is better remembered than information that disconfirms them. When we see members of social groups perform behaviors, we tend to better remember information that confirms our stereotypes than we remember information that disconfirms our stereotypes (Fyock & Stangor, 1994). If we believe that women are bad drivers and we see a woman driving poorly, then we tend to remember it, but when we see a woman who drives particularly well, we tend to forget it. This illusory correlation is another example of the general principle of assimilation—we tend to perceive the world in ways that make it fit our existing beliefs more easily than we change our beliefs to fit the reality around us.

And stereotypes become difficult to change because they are so important to us—they become an integral and important part of our everyday lives in our culture. Stereotypes are frequently expressed on TV, in movies, and in social media, and we learn a lot of our beliefs from these sources. Our friends also tend to hold beliefs similar to ours, and we talk about these beliefs when we get

together with them (Schaller & Conway, 1999). In short, stereotypes and prejudice are powerful largely because they are important social norms that are part of our culture (Guimond, 2000).

Because they are so highly cognitively accessible, and because they seem so “right,” our stereotypes easily influence our judgments of and responses to those we have categorized. The social psychologist John Bargh once described stereotypes as “cognitive monsters” because their activation was so powerful and because the activated beliefs had such insidious influences on social judgment (Bargh, 1999). Making things even more difficult, stereotypes are strongest for the people who are in most need of change—the people who are most prejudiced (Lepore & Brown, 1997).

Because stereotypes and prejudice often operate out of our awareness, and also because people are frequently unwilling to admit that they hold them, social psychologists have developed methods for assessing them indirectly. In the Research Focus box following, we will consider two of these approaches—the bogus pipeline procedure and the Implicit Association Test (IAT).

Research Focus: Measuring Stereotypes Indirectly

One difficulty in measuring stereotypes and prejudice is that people may not tell the truth about their beliefs. Most people do not want to admit—either to themselves or to others—that they hold stereotypes or that they are prejudiced toward some social groups. To get around this problem, social psychologists make use of a number of techniques that help them measure these beliefs more subtly and indirectly.

One indirect approach to assessing prejudice is called the bogus pipeline procedure (Jones & Sigall, 1971). In this procedure, the experimenter first convinces the participants that he or she has access to their "true" beliefs, for instance, by getting access to a questionnaire that they completed at a prior experimental session. Once the participants are convinced that the researcher is able to assess their "true" attitudes, it is expected that they will be more honest in answering the rest of the questions they are asked because they want to be sure that the researcher does not catch them lying. Interestingly, people express more prejudice when they are in the bogus pipeline than they do when they are asked the same questions more directly, which suggests that we may frequently mask our negative beliefs in public.

Other indirect measures of prejudice are also frequently used in social psychological research; for instance, assessing nonverbal behaviors such as speech errors or physical closeness. One common measure involves asking participants to take a seat on a chair near a person from a different racial or ethnic group and measuring how far away the person sits (Sechrist & Stangor, 2001; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). People who sit farther away are assumed to be more prejudiced toward the members of the group.

Because our stereotypes are activated spontaneously when we think about members of different social groups, it is possible to use reaction-time measures to assess this activation and thus to learn about people's stereotypes and prejudices. In these procedures, participants are asked to make a series of judgments about pictures or descriptions of social groups and then to answer questions as quickly as they can, but without making mistakes. The speed of these responses is used to determine an individual's stereotypes or prejudice.

The most popular reaction-time implicit measure of prejudice—the Implicit Association Test (IAT)—is frequently used to assess stereotypes and prejudice (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007). In the IAT, participants are asked to classify stimuli that they view on a computer screen into one of two categories by pressing one of two computer keys, one with their left hand and one with their right hand. Furthermore, the categories are arranged so that the responses to be answered with the left and right buttons either "fit with" (match) the stereotype or do not "fit with" (mismatch) the stereotype. For instance, in one version of the IAT, participants are shown pictures of men and women and are also shown words related to academic disciplines (e.g., History , French , or Linguistics for the Arts, or Chemistry , Physics , or Math for the Sciences). Then the participants categorize the photos ("Is this picture a picture of a man or a woman?") and answer questions about the disciplines ("Is this discipline a science ?) by pressing either the Yes button or the No button using either their left hand or their right hand.

When the responses are arranged on the screen in a way that matches a stereotype, such that the male category and the "science" category are on the same side of the screen (e.g., on the right side), participants can do the task very quickly and they make few mistakes. It's just easier, because the stereotypes are matched or associated with the pictures in a way that makes sense or is familiar. But when the images are arranged such that the female category and the "science" category are on the same side, whereas the men and the weak categories are on the other side, most participants make more errors and respond more slowly. The basic assumption is that if two concepts are associated or linked, they will be responded to more quickly if they are classified using the same, rather than different, keys.

Implicit association procedures such as the IAT show that even participants who claim that they are not prejudiced do seem to hold cultural stereotypes about social groups. Even Black people themselves respond more quickly to positive words that are associated with White rather than Black faces on the IAT, suggesting that they have subtle racial prejudice toward their own racial group.

Because they hold these beliefs, it is possible—although not guaranteed—that they may use them when responding to other people, creating a subtle and unconscious type of discrimination. Although the meaning of the IAT has been debated (Tetlock & Mitchell, 2008), research using implicit measures does suggest that—whether we know it or not, and even though we may try to control them when we can—our stereotypes and prejudices are easily activated when we see members of different social categories (Barden, Maddux, Petty, & Brewer, 2004). [214]



Think About It…

Do you hold implicit prejudices? Try the Implicit Association Test yourself, here: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

What did you discover? How did this make you feel?

Implicit Stereotypes

Over the last 30 years there has been growing research into the concept of implicit stereotypes. Particularly using the Implicit Associations Test, it has been demonstrated that experimental participants show a response bias in support of a stereotypical association, such as “young” and “good” (and “old” and “bad”) indicating evidence of an implicit age stereotype. This has been found even for people who consciously reject the use of such stereotypes, and seek to be fair in their judgement of other people. This finding has been interpreted as a “cognitive bias”, implying an implicit prejudice within the individual. But implicit stereotypical associations (like any other implicit associations) can develop through the ordinary working of “the predictive brain”. The predictive brain is assumed to develop associations through experience of their prevalence in the social world of the perceiver. If the predictive brain were to sample randomly or comprehensively then stereotypical associations would not be picked up if they did not represent the state of the world. However, people are born into culture, and communicate within social networks. Thus, the implicit stereotypical associations picked up by an individual do not reflect a cognitive bias but the associations prevalent within their culture—evidence of “culture in mind”. Therefore to understand implicit stereotypes, research should examine more closely the way associations are communicated within social networks rather than focusing exclusively on an implied cognitive bias of the individual. [215]

Effects of Stereotyping

Traditionally a stereotype has been defined as overgeneralized attributes associated with the members of a social group (such as the reserved English or the geeky engineer), with the implication that it applies to all group members (Hinton, 2000). A large body of research, particularly in the United States of America (USA), has focused on the (negative) stereotypes of women and Blacks, which are linked to prejudice and discrimination in society (Nelson, 2009 , Steele, 2010). Psychological researchers have sought to identify why certain people employed stereotypes and, in much of the twentieth century, they were viewed as due to a mental fallacy or misconception of a social group, an individual’s “biased” cognition, resulting from proposed factors such as “simplicity” of thought (Koenig and King, 1964) and arising from upbringing and social motivation (particularly “authoritarianism”, Adorno et al., 1950).

A considerable amount of effort has been made subsequently to persuade people to avoid stereotype use, by highlighting its inaccuracy and unfairness (for example, Brown, 1965). However, since the 1960s, cognitive researchers, such as Tajfel (1969) , have argued that stereotyping is a general feature of human social categorization. Despite this, it has been argued that individuals can consciously seek to avoid using negative stereotypes and maintain a non-prejudiced view of others (Devine, 1989 ; Schneider, 2004). Indeed, Fiske and Taylor (2013) claim that now only ten percent of the population (in Western democracies) employ overt stereotypes. Unfortunately, recent work, specifically using techniques such as the Implicit Associations Test (Greenwald et al., 1998), has shown that stereotypical associations can implicitly influence social judgement, even for people who consciously seek to avoid their use (Lai et al., 2016).

Although in some cases the stereotypes that are used to make judgments might actually be true of the individual being judged, in many other cases they are not. Stereotyping is problematic when the stereotypes we hold about a social group are inaccurate overall, and particularly when they do not apply to the individual who is being judged (Stangor, 1995). Stereotyping others is simply unfair. Even if many women are more emotional than are most men, not all are, and it is not right to judge any one woman as if she is.

In the end, stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies, such that our expectations about the group members make the stereotypes come true (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). Once we believe that men make better leaders than women, we tend to behave toward men in ways that make it easier for them to lead. And we behave toward women in ways that make it more difficult for them to lead. The result? Men find it easier to excel in leadership positions, whereas women have to work hard to overcome the false beliefs about their lack of leadership abilities (Phelan & Rudman, 2010). This is likely why female lawyers with masculine names are more likely to become judges (Coffey & McLaughlin, 2009) and masculine-looking applicants are more likely to be hired as leaders than feminine-looking applicants (von Stockhausen, Koeser, & Sczesny, 2013).

These self-fulfilling prophecies are ubiquitous—even teachers’ expectations about their students’ academic abilities can influence the students’ school performance (Jussim, Robustelli, & Cain, 2009).

Of course, you may think that you personally do not behave in these ways, and you may not. But research has found that stereotypes are often used out of our awareness, which makes it very difficult for us to correct them. Even when we think we are being completely fair, we may nevertheless be using our stereotypes to condone discrimination (Chen & Bargh, 1999). And when we are distracted or under time pressure, these tendencies become even more powerful (Stangor & Duan, 1991).

Furthermore, attempting to prevent our stereotype from coloring our reactions to others takes effort. We experience more negative affect (particularly anxiety) when we are with members of other groups than we do when we are with people from our own groups, and we need to use more cognitive resources to control our behavior because of our anxiety about revealing our stereotypes or prejudices (Butz & Plant, 2006; Richeson & Shelton, 2003). When we know that we need to control our expectations so that we do not unintentionally stereotype the other person, we may try to do so—but doing so takes effort and may frequently fail (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994). [216]



Think About It…
Think back to your results from the implicit bias assessment. If you discovered biases, what stereotypes might have fed into that?

We have seen that social categorization is a basic part of human nature and one that helps us to simplify our social worlds, to draw quick (if potentially inaccurate) conclusions about others, and to feel good about ourselves. In many cases, our preferences for ingroups may be relatively harmless—we may prefer to socialize with people who share our race or ethnicity for instance, but without particularly disliking the others. But categorizing others may also lead to prejudice and discrimination, and it may even do so without our awareness. Because prejudice and discrimination are so harmful to so many people, we must all work to get beyond them.

Discrimination influences the daily life of its victims in areas such as employment, income, financial opportunities, housing and educational opportunities, and medical care. Even with the same level of education and years of experience, ethnic minorities in Canada are 40% less likely to receive callbacks for an interview following a job application (Oreopolous, 2011). Blacks have higher mortality rates than Whites for eight of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States (Williams, 1999) and have less access to and receive poorer-quality health care, even controlling for other variables such as level of health insurance. Suicide rates among lesbians and gays are substantially higher than rates for the general population, and it has been argued that this is in part due to the negative outcomes of prejudice, including negative attitudes and resulting social isolation (Halpert, 2002). And in some rare cases, discrimination even takes the form of hate crimes such as gay bashing.

More commonly, members of minority groups also face a variety of small hassles, such as bad service in restaurants, being stared at, and being the target of jokes (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003). But even these everyday “minor” forms of discrimination can be problematic because they may produce anger and anxiety among stigmatized group members and may lead to stress and other psychological problems (Klonoff, Landrine, & Campbell, 2000; Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999). Stigmatized individuals who report experiencing more exposure to discrimination or other forms of unfair treatment also report more depression, anger, and anxiety and lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001).

Of course, most of us do try to keep our stereotypes and our prejudices out of mind, and we work hard to avoid discriminating (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). But even when we work to keep our negative beliefs under control, this does not mean that they easily disappear. [217]

Getting Past Stereotypes

Now that we are aware of how stereotypes form, both consciously and unconsciously, what do we do? How do we change it? How are we, as educators making it a better world for the students and families we have the privilege to work with?

We can and do get past stereotypes, although doing so may take some effort on our part (Blair, 2002). There are a number of techniques that we can use to try to improve our attitudes toward outgroups, and at least some of them have been found to be effective. Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, and Russin (2000) found that students who practiced responding in nonstereotypical ways to members of other groups became better able to avoid activating their negative stereotypes on future occasions. And a number of studies have found that we become less prejudiced when we are exposed to and think about group members who have particularly positive or nonstereotypical characteristics. For instance, Blair, Ma, and Lenton (2001) asked their participants to imagine a woman who was “strong” and found that doing so decreased stereotyping of women. Similarly, Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, and Wanke (1995) found that when White American students thought about positive Black role models—such as Oprah Winfrey and Michael Jordan—they became less prejudiced toward Blacks. [218]

Think About It…
Think about stereotypes you might have (see last Food for Thought feature). What is something you can do to begin moving past these?

Reducing Discrimination by Changing Social Norms

One variable that makes us less prejudiced is education. People who are more educated express fewer stereotypes and prejudice in general. This is true for students who enroll in courses that are related to stereotypes and prejudice, such as a course on gender and ethnic diversity (Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001), and is also true more generally—education reduces prejudice, regardless of what particular courses you take (Sidanius, Sinclair, & Pratto, 2006).



Figure 14.6: Education reduces prejudice. [219]

The effects of education on reducing prejudice are probably due in large part to the new social norms that people are introduced to in school. Social norms define what is appropriate and inappropriate, and we can effectively change stereotypes and prejudice by changing the relevant norms about them.

The influence of social norms is powerful, and long-lasting changes in beliefs about outgroups will occur only if they are supported by changes in social norms. Prejudice and discrimination thrive in environments in which they are perceived to be the norm, but they die when the existing social norms do not allow it. And because social norms are so important, the behavior of individuals can help create or reduce prejudice and discrimination. Discrimination, prejudice, and even hate crimes such as gay bashing will be more likely to continue if people do not respond to or confront them when they occur.

What this means is that if you believe that prejudice is wrong, you must confront it when you see it happening. Taking steps to reduce prejudice is everyone's duty—having a little courage can go a long way in this regard. [220]

Reducing Prejudice through Intergroup Contact

One of the reasons that people may hold stereotypes and prejudices is that they view the members of outgroups as different from them. We may become concerned that our interactions with people from different racial groups will be unpleasant, and these anxieties may lead us to avoid interacting with people from those groups (Mallett, Wilson, & Gilbert, 2008). What this suggests is that a good way to reduce prejudice is to help people create closer connections with members of different groups. People will be more favorable toward others when they learn to see those other people as more similar to them, as closer to the self, and to be more concerned about them.

The idea that intergroup contact will reduce prejudice, known as the contact hypothesis, is simple: If children from different ethnic groups play together in school, their attitudes toward each other should improve.



Figure 14.7: Going to school with diverse children can help increase children's concern for others and reduce prejudice. [221]

One important example of the use of intergroup contact to influence prejudice came about as a result of the important U.S. Supreme Court case Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed, based in large part on the testimony of psychologists, that busing Black children to schools attended primarily by White children, and vice versa, would produce positive outcomes on intergroup attitudes, not only because it would provide Black children with access to better schools, but also because the resulting intergroup contact would reduce prejudice between Black and White children. This strategy seemed particularly appropriate at the time it was implemented because most schools in the United States then were highly segregated by race.

The strategy of busing was initiated after the Supreme Court decision, and it had a profound effect on schools in the United States. For one, the policy was very effective in changing school makeup—the number of segregated schools decreased dramatically during the 1960s after the policy was begun. Busing also improved the educational and occupational achievement of Blacks and increased the desire of Blacks to interact with Whites; for instance, by forming cross-race friendships (Stephan, 1999). Overall, then, the case of desegregating schools in the United States supports the expectation that intergroup contact, at least in the long run, can be successful in changing attitudes. Nevertheless, as a result of several subsequent U.S. Supreme Court decisions, the policy of desegregating schools via busing was not continued past the 1990s.

Although student busing to achieve desegregated schools represents one prominent example of intergroup contact, such contact occurs in many other areas as well. Taken together, there is substantial support for the effectiveness of intergroup contact in improving group attitudes in a wide variety of situations, including schools, work organizations, military forces, and public housing. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis in which they reviewed over 500 studies that had investigated the effects of intergroup contact on group attitudes. They found that attitudes toward groups that were in contact became more positive over time. Furthermore, positive effects of contact were found on both stereotypes and prejudice and for many different types of contacted groups.

The positive effects of intergroup contact may be due in part to increases in other-concern. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) found that leading students to take the perspective of another group member—which increased empathy and closeness to the person—also reduced prejudice.

When we get past group memberships and focus more on the individuals in the groups, we begin to see that there is a great deal of variability among the group members and that our global and undifferentiating group stereotypes are actually not that informative (Rothbart & John, 1985). Successful intergroup contact tends to reduce the perception of outgroup homogeneity. Contact also helps us feel more positively about the members of the other group, and this positive affect makes us like them more. [222]

When working with young children, educators and caregivers may need to help scaffold this understanding and be really aware of who is represented (and who is not) in the materials in the classroom. Children bring ideas about "others" they have acquired settings and that may be supported in the materials in their homes, communities, and even the classroom. Consider this example:

Emma, Rakesha, and Annie all choose the dramatic play area as they make their plans for the day. Each of them has noticed the shiny new crowns their teachers have added to the dress-up clothes shelves since yesterday.

“Look at me. I’m a princess,” says Annie as she twirls in front of the mirror with a crown on her head. “Me, too,” adds Rakesha, choosing another of the crowns. “Mine has jewels.”

Emma, who has light skin and light hair and often takes the lead in assigning dramatic play roles, looks at both girls and states emphatically, “No!” She turns to Rakesha, who has darker skin and darker hair, and says, “You can’t be a princess because you don’t look like one. You have to look like the one in the princess book.”

Rakesha protests, “I can, too, be a princess! Everybody can be a princess.” The three girls continue to argue loudly about who can be a princess, and Ms. Denisha comes over to help them work out their disagreement. She sits down on the rug and motions to all three girls to sit down around her. She observes, “You girls look and sound pretty upset. What is the problem? Rakesha, why don’t you tell us first what made you feel so upset?”

Rakesha repeats Emma’s assertion that Rakesha can’t be a princess. Emma and Annie both add details to the story of the argument. Ms. Denisha listens, asks questions, and restates the problem. She then tells them, “It really hurt Rakesha’s feelings when you told her she couldn’t be a princess. Rakesha was right. People with any skin and hair colors can be princesses and other special characters. We can find books about many kinds of princesses. Now, I will stay and help you think of some ideas for your play this morning.” [223]

In classrooms with older children, teachers can use the jigsaw classroom, an approach to learning in which students from different racial or ethnic groups work together, in an interdependent way, to master material. The class is divided into small learning groups, where each group is diverse in ethnic and gender composition. The assigned material to be learned is divided into as many parts as there are students in the group, and members of different groups who are assigned the same task meet together to help develop a strong report. Each student then learns his or her own part of the material and presents this piece of the puzzle to the other members of his or her group. The students in each group are therefore interdependent in learning all the material. A wide variety of techniques, based on principles of the jigsaw classroom, are in use in many schools around the world, and research studying these approaches has found that cooperative, interdependent experiences among students from different social groups are effective in reducing negative stereotyping and prejudice (Stephan, 1999). [224]

Chapter Summary

We all have biases that are part of our life experiences and worldview. If we become aware of our hidden, even unrecognized biases, we can monitor and attempt to amend these hidden attitudes before the y are expressed through behavio r. Research suggests that a change in self-awareness can modify personal beliefs and attitudes and over time, reduce the strength of unconscious biases and lead one to critically think about bias and discrimination and take action to eliminate it. [225]

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3.2.1: Microaggressions

Table 1.3: Microaggressions

(9.3 Navigating the Diversity Landscape – College Success | OpenStax, n.d.)

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
Educational Status or Situation	"You're an athlete; you don't need to study."	Stereotypes athletes and ignores their hard work.
	"You don't get financial aid; you must be rich."	Even an assumption of privilege can be invalidating.
	"Did they have honors classes at your high school?"	Implies that someone is less prepared or intelligent based on their geography.
Race, Ethnicity, National Origin	"You speak so well for someone like you."	Implies that people of a certain race/ethnicity can't speak well.
	"No, where are you *really* from?"	Calling attention to someone's national origin makes them feel separate.
	"You must be good at _____."	Falsely connects identity to ability.
	"My people had it so much worse than yours did."	Makes assumptions and diminishes suffering/difficulty.
	"I'm not even going to try your name. It looks too difficult."	Dismisses a person's culture and heritage.
	"It's so much easier for Black people to get into college."	Assumes that merit is not the basis for achievement.
Gender and Gender Identity	"They're so emotional."	Assumes a person cannot be emotional and rational.
	"I guess you can't meet tonight because you have to take care of your son?"	Assumes a parent (of any gender) cannot participate.
	"I don't get all this pronoun stuff, so I'm just gonna call you what I call you."	Diminishes the importance of gender identity; indicates a lack of empathy.
	"I can't even tell you used to be a woman."	Conflates identity with appearance, and assumes a person needs someone else's validation.
	"You're too good-looking to be so smart."	Connects outward appearance to ability.
Sexual Orientation	"I support you; just don't throw it in my face."	Denies another person's right to express their identity or point of view.
	"You seem so rugged for a gay guy."	Stereotypes all gay people as being "not rugged," and could likely offend the recipient.
	"I might try being a lesbian."	May imply that sexual orientation is a choice.
	"I can't even keep track of all these new categories."	Bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations are just as valid and deserving of respect as more binary orientations.

Category	Microaggression	Why It's Offensive
	"You can't just love whomever you want; pick one."	Bisexual, pansexual, asexual, and other sexual orientations are just as valid and deserving of respect as more binary orientations.
Age	"Are you going to need help with the software?"	May stereotype an older person as lacking experience with the latest technology.
	"Young people have it so easy nowadays."	Makes a false comparison between age and experience.
	"Okay, boomer."	Dismisses an older generation as out of touch.
Size	"I bet no one messes with you."	Projects a tendency to be aggressive onto a person of large stature.
	"You are so cute and tiny."	Condescending to a person of small stature.
	"I wish I was thin and perfect like you."	Equates a person's size with character.
Ability	(To a person using a wheelchair) "I wish I could sit down wherever I went."	Falsely assumes a wheelchair is a luxury; minimizes disabilities.
	"You don't have to complete the whole test. Just do your best."	Assumes that a disability means limited intellectual potential.
	"I'm blind without my glasses."	Equating diminished capacity with a true disability.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: The Influences of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define what stereotypes are and how to dispel them.
- Articulate how hate can be unlearned.
- Describe and understand the role of culture.
- Explore how to find accurate information and gain essential knowledge of culture.
- Gain and understand the challenges created by poverty regardless of racial and ethnic background.
- Explore messages children see and hear in childcare settings.
- Practice culturally responsive care.
- Address cultural relevance in making curriculum choices and adaptations.

4.1: The Influences of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination
4.2: Thoughts Become Behaviors
4.3: Hate is Learned and Can Be "Unlearned"
4.4: Rights of the Child

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4.1: The Influences of Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Discrimination

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define what stereotypes are and how to dispel them.
- Articulate how hate can be unlearned.
- Describe and understand the role of culture.
- Explore how to find accurate information and gain essential knowledge of culture.
- Gain and understand the challenges created by poverty regardless of racial and ethnic background.
- Explore messages children see and hear in childcare settings.
- Practice culturally responsive care.
- Address cultural relevance in making curriculum choices and adaptations.

This chapter begins by describing the effects of stereotypes. Stereotypes lead to misinformation about others especially when we come from a place of judgement. We know that hate is learned. This means that hate can be unlearned. As we explore this topic, we will look at the importance of learning accurate information and gaining knowledge through developing reciprocal relationships with the families we serve. We will look at the importance of learning accurate information and gaining knowledge. The chapter places an emphasis on culture because early development and learning must be viewed within a cultural context and occurs through social contexts, as in families and communities, using language and everyday experiences (California Department of Education 2009a). Culture also "has an influence on the beliefs and behaviors of everyone." As research shows "culture influences every aspect of human development and is reflected in childrearing beliefs and practices. (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000, 3). [226]



Figure 15.1: Development and learning must be viewed within a cultural context [227]

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4.2: Thoughts Become Behaviors

What we know becomes what we feel. And what we feel affects our behavior. Let's look at how stereotypes can lead to discrimination.

Table 15.1: Definitions [228]

Term	Function	Definition
Stereotype	Cognitive; thoughts about people	Overgeneralized beliefs about people may lead to prejudice
Prejudice	Affective; feelings about people, both positive and negative	Feelings may influence treatment of others
Discrimination	Behavior; the treatment of others	Holding stereotypes and harboring prejudice may lead to excluding, avoiding, and biased treatment of group members

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are distorted pictures of reality that broadly label one group as being a certain way. Stereotypes influence our perception, evaluation, judgment, and memory about individuals and events. People tend to learn stereotypes from the people around them—such as peers and family—or from the media and entertainment. Overcoming stereotypes and working to eliminate bias are continuous processes.

It is essential to learn accurate information about different groups of people (e.g., race, religion, gender) through various ways (e.g., attending cultural events). However, this could reinforce stereotypes. Getting to know others who are different from us is very helpful in counteracting stereotypes, when we care about another person who has different experiences, we want to learn more about who they are which helps to dispel the stereotypes we have grown up with. It is important to remember that different does not mean abnormal or deficient.

To counter negative stereotypes, you can acknowledge you have a bias or stereotype, analyze what manifested it, and then seek out positive examples that cancel out or disprove the negative label. Doing this requires time, openness, and sensitivity. In stereotyping, assumptions are made about a person on the basis of his or her group membership without learning whether the individual fits those assumptions. To avoid stereotyping, we should reflect on our own beliefs about all aspects of child rearing and early childhood education. We must acknowledge our own beliefs and biases about specific groups of people that may be unintentionally communicated to children and families. [229]

Prejudice

Humans are very diverse and although we share many similarities, we also have many differences. The social groups we belong to help form our identities (Tajfel, 1974). These differences may be difficult for some people to reconcile, which may lead to prejudice toward people who are different. Prejudice is a negative attitude and feeling toward an individual based solely on one's membership in a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). Prejudice is common against people who are members of an unfamiliar cultural group. Thus, certain types of education, contact, interactions, and building relationships with members of different cultural groups can reduce the tendency toward prejudice. In fact, simply imagining interacting with members of different cultural groups might affect prejudice. Prejudice often begins in the form of a stereotype. [230]

Discrimination

When people act on their prejudiced attitudes toward and stereotypes about a group of people, this behavior is known as discrimination. Discrimination is negative action toward an individual as a result of one's membership in a particular group (Allport, 1954; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). As a result of holding negative beliefs (stereotypes) and negative attitudes (prejudice) about a particular group, people often treat the target of prejudice poorly.

Different Forms for Discrimination: The –isms

Unfortunately there are many forms of discrimination. These are often referred to with the suffix –ism.

Racism

Racism is prejudice and discrimination against an individual based solely on one's membership in a specific racial group. Racism exists for many racial and ethnic groups. Black, Latinx, Jewish, Arab, Asian, and Native Americans all experience systemic discrimination in the United States. Most people do not show extreme racial bias or other prejudices on measures of their explicit attitudes (as these are conscious and controllable). However, measures of implicit attitudes (which are unconscious and uncontrollable) often show evidence of mild to strong racial bias or other prejudices.

Sexism

Sexism is prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based on their sex. Typically, sexism takes the form of men holding biases against women, but either sex can show sexism toward their own or their opposite sex. Like racism, sexism may be subtle and difficult to detect. Common forms of sexism in modern society include gender role expectations, such as expecting women to be the caretakers of the household. Sexism also includes people's expectations for how members of a gender group should behave. For example, women are expected to be friendly, passive, and nurturing, and when women behave in an unfriendly, assertive, or neglectful manner they often are disliked for violating their gender role (Rudman, 1998). [231]

Table 15.2 – Other –isms

Term	Definition
Ableism	Discrimination against persons with disabilities or in favor of those without [232]
Ageism	Prejudice and discrimination toward individuals based solely on their age [233]
Antisemitism	Hatred and prejudice towards Jews (people who practice the Jewish faith and or identify as Jews)
Classism	Discrimination or prejudice that is based on social class. [234]
Cissexism	Bias or prejudice favoring cisgender people, people whose gender corresponds with their sex at birth (discrimination against transgender people) [235]
Heterosexism	Discrimination against homosexuals, bisexuals and asexuals in favor of heterosexuals. [236]
Religism	Prejudice based on religious affiliation. [237]
Weightism	Prejudice or discrimination based on body weight [238]

Homophobia

Another form of prejudice is homophobia: prejudice and discrimination of individuals based solely on their sexual orientation. Like ageism, homophobia is a widespread prejudice in U.S. society that is tolerated by many people (Herek & McLemore, 2013; Nosek, 2005). Negative feelings often result in discrimination, such as the exclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people from social groups and the avoidance of LGBT neighbors and co-workers. [239]

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4.3: Hate is Learned and Can Be "Unlearned"

Prejudice and discrimination persist in society due to social learning and conformity to social norms of the dominant race, which is white. Children learn prejudiced attitudes and beliefs from society: their families, teachers, friends, the media, and other sources of socialization.

It is important to note that hate can begin at an early age. As professionals in the early care field we must work to educate and eradicate the negative ideas and behaviors that stem from it. No child is born with prejudice. They are born wanting to connect with others. Just as love is learned when children are cherished and nurtured, hate is learned by the messages that are both verbal and nonverbal. As hate is learned, so it can be unlearned. According to the Anti-Defamation League, leading experts on child development argue that the problem begins early. [240] Infants and toddlers are keen observers of difference and when those differences are not supported, it can lead to fear, which can lead to hate if not nurtured appropriately. By preschool age, children have already learned stereotypes or acquired negative attitudes toward "others:" The process of countering those negatives with positives must also begin at an early age.

In an article by Caryl Stern, “Talking to Young Children about Bias and Prejudice,” Stern states, “Louise Derman-Sparks, an expert in the field of early care and education, points to three major issues that are important to keep in mind when talking to children about prejudice and discrimination.

1. Children are not colorblind

It is a myth that young children don't notice people's differences, especially skin color. Children are in fact acutely aware of our shadings and gradations, and they need matter-of-fact, simple, and truthful explanations of these differences. At an early age they may ask for explanations. It is important for families to be equipped to respond.

2. Talking about differences does not increase prejudice in children

Being aware of differences is not the same as avoiding, ridiculing, or fearing specific differences. Moreover, awareness does not lead to negative attitudes. Children learn biases from important adults in their lives, from the media, from books and from peers. Families need to talk to their kids-to give them accurate information and to reinforce when their behaviors indicate a value of differences as opposed to a prejudice. Surprisingly, many adults have trouble opening up and broaching the subject. For these adults, it's a good idea to practice the discussion with an adult before taking it up with children. Above all, families should ensure their words of wisdom are in tune with their actions. Sending a contradictory message only reinforces prejudices and stereotypes.

3. It is not enough to talk about similarities among people

While we want our children to understand the things that bind us as human beings, it is equally important that they understand that shared characteristics, language and customs are expressed in different ways. When we continuously tell our children, "See, they do that just like us;' we may be implying that similarities are the only things that make "those" people acceptable.

4. Talking to Children About Diversity: Preschool Years

A child's age is one of the most important factors in considering how to begin a discussion on any subject dealing with prejudice, discrimination or, more simply, the things that make people different. The most important thing to keep in mind is that it is never too early, or too late, to talk to children about respecting diversity.”

We must prepare ourselves to respond to acts of bias, even if they are unintentional. Children will carefully observe how the adults in their lives intervene when someone is the target of hurtful or discriminatory behavior. Silence in the face of injustice conveys the impression that adults condone the behavior or consider it not worthy of attention. We must make it clear to our children that name-calling will not be tolerated and explain the thinking behind "zero tolerance" when it comes to prejudice.” [241]



Figure 15.2: Children use adults as models of how to respond to hurtful behavior. [242]

Learning Accurate Information

Learning accurate information about cultures different from your own requires persistence, dedication, openness, and honesty. Exploring your own values, beliefs, and traditions—and learning how they impact you and the way you engage with the world—are preliminary steps to be taken before understanding others. In taking such steps, you also become more aware of your own stereotypes, assumptions, and biases (Sue 1998). There are many ways to pursue a higher level of self-awareness and reflect on your experiences and the cultural lens through which you view the world.

Gaining Knowledge

Increasing your cultural knowledge is essential. Families are rich sources of information for learning about their cultures. It is important to engage in meaningful conversations with families. Key skills that are important to possess include the ability to listen to others who are culturally different, to actively learn about their experiences, and to respect differences in a nonjudgmental way (Derman Sparks 1995).



Figure 15.3: Knowledge is gained by listening to others that are culturally different. [243]

There are many ways to learn about different groups of people. Reading information about a cultural group is one way (Phillips 1995), inquiring and learning about the various home practices of families (Gonzalez Mena 1995) is yet another. It is equally important to seek out educational and multicultural training experiences (Derman Sparks 1995). In addition, learning how culture can be integrated into the curriculum and classroom environment is essential (Derman Sparks 1995). [244]

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4.4: Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their families do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis. (UNICEF 1990, 1)

On the surface, the need to bring up racism, classism, or sexism would seem to be incongruous in the same breath as talking about childcare for children. Yet, sadly, it is necessary. Prejudice, bias, and societal inequity enter the lives of children in a variety of ways. Whether based on race, culture, gender, economic class, or family structure, these attitudes and realities have a negative, hurtful effect on the quality of life and development.

Although the child's immediate and extended family provides the primary environment of socialization for children in their early years, bias, prejudice, and societal inequity come from outside of the family. The professionals who provide children and their families with a range of services (e.g., child care providers, medical staff, social workers) are one source of the messages that convey whose way of life matters more and whose matters less. Some of these messages are obvious, some are subtle, and ironically, many are unintended. Some negative messages come from the attitudes and behaviors of the professionals. Many come from structural dynamics of the organizations in which human service professionals, including early childhood educators, work. These negative messages may include unexamined policies, procedures, and beliefs that create advantages for some groups and disadvantages for other groups.

The cumulative effect of messages about who matters (more or less) gradually influences how children begin to understand and feel about themselves and others—even in the first year of life. The messages also impact their quality of life. An understanding of the various forms of bias, prejudice, and inequity and how they influence children is critical to counteract potential damage to healthy development. Understanding grows from awareness, the first step to practicing culturally responsive, non-biased care that nurtures all children and families. [245]



Figure 15.4: Even early messages influence how children feel about themselves and others. [246]

Ethical Responsibilities To Families

In their Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment position statement , the National Association for the Education of Young Children shares the core values underscoring ethical behavior in the field of early childhood care and education. These are:

- "Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect"

They also detail the ethical responsibilities that early childhood educators have that affirm commitment to the core values. In the section that shares ethical responsibilities to families, the following are included:

- Welcome all family members and encourage their participation in the program
- "Respect the dignity and preferences of each family and make an effort to learn about its structure, culture, language, customs, and beliefs to ensure a culturally consistent environment for all children and families"
- Respect families' childrearing values and involve them in making decisions for their children
- Make every effort to communicate effectively with families in a language they understand
- Use families input when planning and implementing the program

And in the statement of commitment portion of the position statement, two of the commitments that early childhood educators make include:

- "Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children
- Engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection, realizing that personal characteristics, biases, and beliefs have an impact on children and families." [247]

Chapter summary

The stereotypes that people hold about others can lead to the development of prejudice. That prejudice can become discrimination that excludes others and leads to inequitable treatment. That discrimination includes, racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, cissexism, heterosexism, religism, weightism, and homophobia. But prejudice is learned and thus can be unlearned. We can teach children accurate information about others.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: The History and Influence of Systemic, Internalized Privilege and Oppression

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Differentiate privilege and power
- Provide examples of privilege
- Discuss the Privilege as Practice Framework
- Describe the Culturally Responsive Strength-Based Framework
- Define paradigm and discuss why the deficit-oriented paradigm of diversity needs to be shifted

5.1: The Influence of Systemic, Internalized Privilege and Oppression
5.2: Privilege as Practice Framework
5.3: Practices for Engaging Difference, Privilege, and Power
5.4: The Culturally Responsive Lens
5.5: Creating a Paradigm Shift

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5.1: The Influence of Systemic, Internalized Privilege and Oppression

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

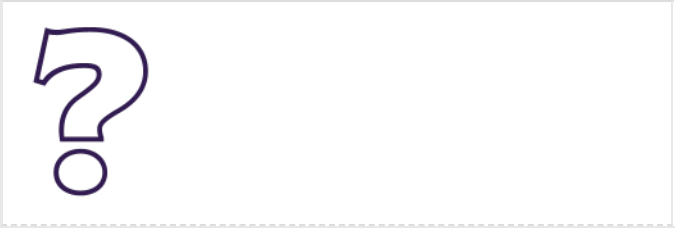
- Differentiate privilege and power
- Provide examples of privilege
- Discuss the Privilege as Practice Framework
- Describe the Culturally Responsive Strength-Based Framework
- Define paradigm and discuss why the deficit-oriented paradigm of diversity needs to be shifted

Introduction

Everyone is unique. This simple and somewhat obvious statement has significant implications when we consider the challenges associated with working together, creating community, and collaborative decision-making.

Research on group dynamics has shown that greater degrees of difference in social settings correlate with increased resilience (Lozano, 2007) and even creativity (Simonton, 1999). Page (2007) has further shown that groups that display a diverse range of perspectives and approaches to problem solving usually significantly outperform groups of like-minded experts at solving challenging problems. [253]

This is extremely important to remember in the early childhood education field. We need multiple and differing opinions on children and how to problem solve any challenges that will occur within our time with children.



Think About It…
Could you imagine how care for children in early childhood environments might look if we never had different opinions or thought processes? What would it be like if there weren't multiple options for families to choose from in the curriculum and environment sense?

The same forms of difference that enhance resiliency, creativity, and ability to solve problems can also lead to significant social challenges and conflict. This is the contradiction of diversity. Throughout history, diversity has provided the raw material for evolution of language, philosophy, and social and material innovation. And at the same time, humans have often used difference (e.g., skin color, spiritual belief systems, sex, learning styles, political affiliation, sexual orientation, etc.) as a basis for oppression and violence. Human history and the present day offer countless examples of persecution on the basis of differences. This history and legacy of oppression has led to a pattern where many forms of difference are culturally isolated and oppressed. In the absence of authentic and reciprocal relationships across difference, we miss out on the potential creativity, adaptability, and resilience that diversity can bring. [254]

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5.2: Privilege as Practice Framework

There should be the goal of enhancing our collective ability to engage with difference to strengthen relationships and improve the health of the systems that we inhabit. The following framework outlines an analytical system and a form of practice that we are calling Privilege as Practic e. The specific goals of this framework include:

- Deepening and expanding our capacity for self-awareness
- Furthering our ability to understand our own particular uniqueness to better understand how we each flourish and thrive
- Learning to recognize how systemic structures, norms, and processes preference certain differences over others
- Learning to identify degrees of privilege and recognize how multiple identities interact (intersectionality) in different social systems
- Building capacity to use our privilege and power to benefit the health and well-being of the systems that we inhabit
- Tending to the impacts of historical and present day forms of oppression and trauma

The Systemic Progression

As described throughout this book, diversity is a simple fact-of-life. Difference exists in all systems and has the capacity to be the raw material for adaptation, creativity, and resilience. Yet in many social systems, we find that accrued power is used to oppress, homogenize, and assimilate expressions of difference that do not fit with the dominant perspective or ideology. This pattern causes harm, limits the potential of individuals in the system, and consequently diminishes the wisdom and creativity of the group. Understanding the primary dynamics and processes associated with this pattern can be helpful in building our capacity to engage with difference with well-being in mind. Figure X.X below illustrates the common pattern and progression by which certain differences accrue power in social systems.

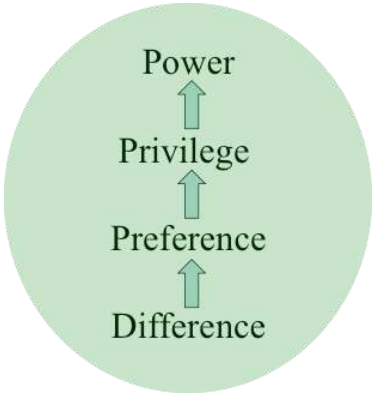


Figure 16.1: The green circle in this diagram represents any social system (an organization, community, school, family, etc.). The progression shown in the circle begins with difference and illustrates a common pattern by which power is accrued by individuals who embody certain characteristics. [255]

This progression can be used to track a variety of differences (internal, external, socially constructed, etc.) as they play out in a variety of different social systems across different scales. Like any conceptual framework, the patterns illuminated by this progression can be helpful in understanding power and privilege dynamics, and it is important to remember that this representation is a simplified interpretation of complex system dynamics. [256]

An example of systemic oppression and privilege can be found among young Black [257] * boys. The following describes information about how oppression and privilege have impacted the lives of children gathered by the Office of Head Start.



Figure 16.2: There are troubling education disparities for Black boys. [258]

Quality programming in early childhood programs incorporates knowledge of and respect for families' cultures and implementation of best practices including quality learning environments, intentional teaching, and family engagement strategies. When these program pieces are in place, they best support the development and learning of young children.

However, these program pieces are not always in place for ALL children. Evidence has been growing about the educational disparities facing Black boys. Many have not benefited from what is known about the connection between culturally responsive programming and child development. There have been reports on their disproportionately high suspension and expulsion rates from preschool. Educators and policy makers have made negative comments about the school readiness of young Black boys.

Awareness also has been growing about the societal context in which Black males live. News media and government reports have documented the gap between the realities of their daily lives and the American dream. The facts are stunning: in comparison to White Americans, Black males are more likely to live in poverty, live with only one parent, drop out of high school, and be unemployed (My Brothers Keeper Task Force, 2015). Taken together, these facts attest to the persistent challenges Black males face, starting at an early age.

> Neither zip code nor skin tone should predetermine the quality of a child's opportunities; however, too many children from low-income families, and [Black] students in particular, are without access to high-quality early education, which can make them less likely to enter elementary school prepared for success.
> — David J. Johns, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans citing research findings (Ackerman & Barnett, 2007) [259]

The research has highlighted an educational opportunity gap. Human potential is realized when strengths are built on, and the job of early childhood education is to do just that. But for many children, their potential is not realized starting at an early age. And the problem is not with them; their potential is untapped because, in the words of many educators and policy makers, there is an "opportunity gap" (Duncan, 2014). Some say the opportunity gap develops as early as 9 months of age, especially for Black males (Aratani, Wight, & Cooper, 2011 as cited in Iruka, 2013), and the gap is well-documented in the preschool years, when these disparities play out in the arena of school readiness.

> The term opportunity gap refers to the well-documented disparities in educational opportunity associated with race, ethnicity, class, community wealth, and other factors.
> — U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights Data Collection, 2014 [260]

The term “achievement gap” is widely used to refer to disparities in the educational performance of Black or other minority children. It is often cited in regard to test scores in reading and math for older children and in vocabulary knowledge for preschoolers. Often the reasons behind an achievement gap are erroneously cited to be inadequate home environments or children unable to learn basic skills who fall further and further behind. Such reasoning seems to “blame the victim,” and is based on deficit thinking. The term opportunity gap clearly places responsibility on those entities, such as early childhood and school settings that are responsible for providing equal learning opportunities.

Admittedly, there are many populations of children who experience an opportunity gap — often they are referred to in the aggregate as minority children or children of color. Along with increasing public awareness of the negative societal context affecting Black Americans, the project focus was triggered by reports on the disproportionate expulsion and suspension rates of preschool boys, and Black boys in particular.

- Black children were expelled from preschool at twice the rate of whites according to national data from 2005. Boys made up 91% of those expelled, and preschoolers were expelled at three times the rate of children in kindergarten through 12th grade (Gilliam, 2005).
- In 2011, national data indicated that Black children made up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children were suspended more than once. Boys received more than three out of four out-of-school preschool suspensions (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2014).

To say the least, these data were shocking to the public, educators, and policy makers. When preschoolers are expelled or suspended, the consequences are great. They are missing out on learning opportunities that would prepare them for success in school. Also, their self-esteem and self-efficacy are compromised, which affects their learning.

What is behind these statistics? Research (Gilliam, 2005) identified factors that predicted child expulsion, including an extended school day and high teacher-child ratio. Specific classroom factors associated with high expulsion rates are:

- Teacher job stress as reported by staff, such as “This child’s classroom behaviors…
- interfere with my ability to teach effectively.”
- may result in someone getting hurt or property damage.”
- are not likely to improve significantly.”
- Developmentally appropriate practices were infrequent
- Daily use of worksheets and flashcards
- Dramatic play once a month or never

The researcher concluded that teachers needed help managing challenging behaviors and that a mental health consultation intervention would be particularly promising and cost-effective.

Another perspective might be taken to interpret the challenging behaviors from a strength-based perspective — this would be in line with some of the current thinking about developmental research (Cabrera, 2013 a). It is also important that the field of early childhood education recognizes the importance of teachers to being deeply ingrained in understanding how children grow and develop and educated and trained to effectively guide children’s behaviors. One tool teachers can use is the Culturally Responsive Strength-Based (CRSB) Framework, described later in this chapter.

Several questions emerged from the research findings. When Black boys are enrolled in preschool, what are their experiences like? Are they of high quality? The answers were not very encouraging and helped explain the opportunity gap. Although positive outcomes for children are rooted in respect for their culture and in implementation of developmentally appropriate practices, these elements are often missing or diminished in the preschool settings of Black boys (Barnett, Carolan, & Johns, 2013). [261]

> Asa Hilliard, Black professor of educational psychology, framed the opportunity gap in a somewhat different way in his work (2003). “There is another gap [besides the achievement gap], one that is rarely acknowledged. It is a gap that has been submerged in the dialogue about intelligence and achievement because of the paradigm of human incapacity, especially pessimistic with respect to African students. This gap is the quality-of-service gap.” [262]



Think About It…
Can you think of other examples of privilege and oppression? If so, what are they? If not, what might that mean?

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5.3: Practices for Engaging Difference, Privilege, and Power

Understanding the pattern of why those in power continue to stay in power is critical to our ability to intervene and create something different. While there are many cases of intentional oppression and minimization of differences, there are also many situations where individuals in the mainstream group are unaware of their own privilege and are unconsciously supporting and reinforcing the status quo.

Part of the practice of engaging difference differently, involves honing our tracking and observational skills; learning to recognize the patterns associated with systems that minimize and oppress differences. In addition to improving our awareness and analysis skills, it is also critical that we develop skills, capacity, and courage to interrupt the dominant system archetype; using the privilege and power we have to find places in systems where we can leverage change to make the system healthier. This might involve changing our own behaviors, illuminating and influencing system dynamics, or tending to the impacts of marginalization and oppression.



Pin it! Privilege and Power

Privilege is a system of advantages, opportunities, and choices not available to all.

1. Privilege is contextual . We all move between sub-systems where we have different degrees of privilege (e.g., “at a social gathering my extroverted nature offers more privilege than when I’m in a silent retreat”).
2. Unearned privilege does not result from merit, integrity, or personal choice (e.g., “I have a suite of choices and advantages that are available to me because I was born as a White person in this country”).
3. Privilege rarely exists in a “have” or “have not” state. It is important to remember that we each have degrees of privilege.

Power is the capacity to exert influence or control in a system.

- Power can be accumulated from unearned privilege. It can also be earned – resulting from personal integrity (e.g., a person’s courageous actions can accrue respect and generate opportunities and influence).
- Power can be used to minimize and oppress difference (at individual, group and system levels) and create norms/structures that confer unearned privilege and power to a select few who embody certain characteristics. This is power over .

Power can also be used to create alliances and collaborations to change the ideology of oppression by transforming the norms and structures that would otherwise preference certain differences. This is power with. [263]

In many conversations about diversity, the terms power and privilege have taken on a negative connotation. And while power is often used to reinforce the status quo, minimize and oppress difference, and create norms/structures that confer unearned privilege and power to a select few, it can also be used to interrupt those cycles and create healthier systems.

As an example, we discovered the following story about a white woman who entered a popular women’s clothing store. After wandering around the store, she realized that all of the models in the big glossy photos on the walls were white. After some deliberation, she approached the store manager and pointed out this pattern and suggested that the photos be changed to include women of color. She said that she wouldn’t shop at a store that wasn’t making an effort to break the often unconscious patterns of white privilege. The store manager responded defensively, offering all of the reasons that the photos on the wall were out of her control. The customer pressed on, asking to file a formal complaint with the corporate headquarters. Upon leaving the store, the customer was stopped by an employee of color who told the customer that she had been waiting years for a white person to finally point out that pattern and use her white privilege and power to make a change. She explained that as a woman of color, any critique

that she might offer about the racial identities depicted in the photos could too easily be explained away by “oversensitivity” or a “chip-on-the-shoulder.”

This story of solidarity illustrates a different practice for engaging difference, privilege and power. Rather than using the unearned privilege and power associated with her whiteness to reinforce the status quo (or simply ignore the issue completely), the customer in this example used her power to attempt to interrupt the cycle of oppression. [264]



Think About It…
What might this process look like in early care environments? How might early childhood professionals look closely at their environments to ensure that all are equitably represented?

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5.4: The Culturally Responsive Lens

You can also use the Culturally Responsive Strength-Based (CRSB) Framework, which is used by Head Start, to address diversity. This framework presents the big picture and identifies the program pieces that support the growth and development of all children.

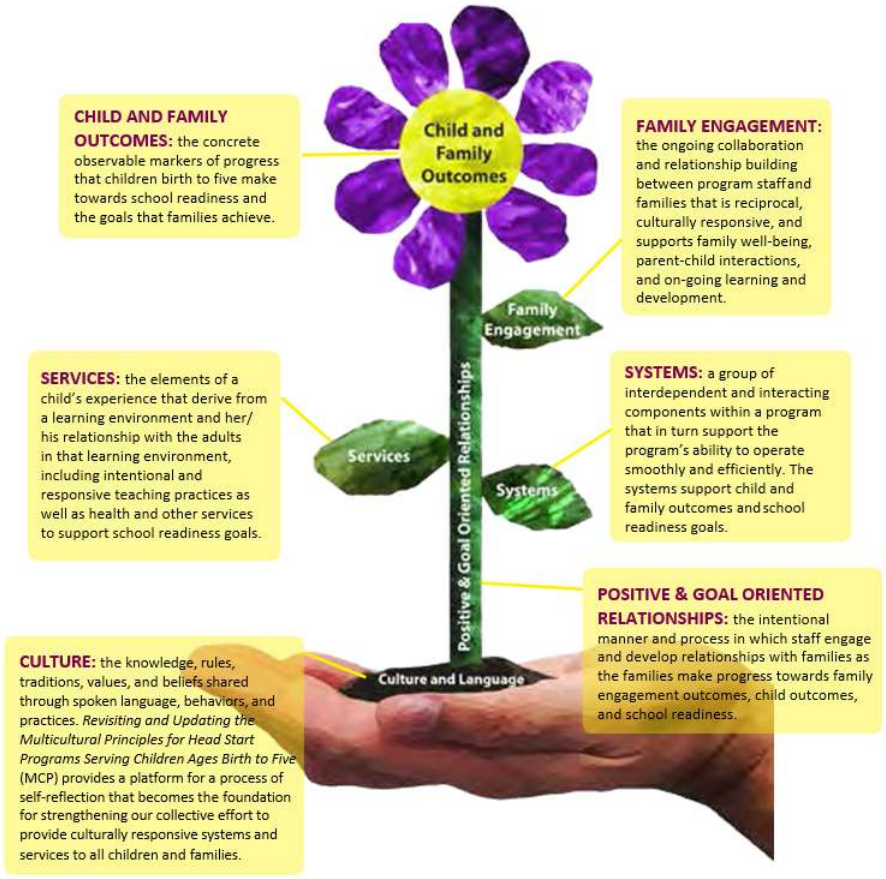
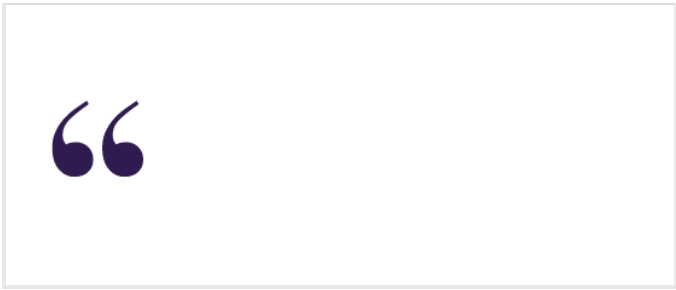


Figure 16.3: The elements of the CRSB Framework. [265]

Coupled with a culturally responsive approach, the CRSB Framework is a strength-based approach. The focus is on what children know and can do as opposed to what they cannot do or what they do not know. Cultural, family, and individual strengths are emphasized, not just the negative and proposed interventions to "fix the problem" that resides with the children, their families, and/or their communities.



The strengths approach has a contagious quality and it intuitively makes sense to those who reflect a “cup half full” attitude in life. — Hamilton & Zimmerman, 2012

If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find it, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. — Kral, 1989 (as cited in Hamilton & Zimmerman, 2012) [266]

The CRSB Framework should be used with the understanding that children are influenced by many environments, as represented in a bioecological systems model. A bioecological systems model captures the variety of environments that impact individual development over the course of a lifetime. Young children do not live in a vacuum, but co-exist in many environments that affect their development, starting with the family, extending into the community, and reaching out into the economic and political spheres.



Think About It…

There is also privilege surrounding socioeconomic status. How does the following excerpt change your perspective on future and current goals of children with different socioeconomic statuses? How will you as a teacher think about this?

A study done by Dumais (2005) found that:

- Parents from upper class backgrounds feel more comfortable in academic settings and feel education is an important part of their and their children’s lives.
- Parents in the lowest socio-economic status (SES) were most likely to believe that being able to count, draw, be calm, and know their letters before kindergarten are very important or essential
- More parents from the lowest SES (18%), than from the highest SES (7%), reported not being involved in their children’s schooling because they did not find anything interesting there
- 10% of parents from the lowest SES reported not feeling welcome at their child’s school, versus just 3% from the highest SES

56% of parents from the lowest SES expected their children will get a bachelor’s degree, while 95% of those from the highest SES expected the same [267]

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5.5: Creating a Paradigm Shift

A paradigm is the assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that influence how people view the world. Paradigms have been shaped over a lifetime by many influences that include families, schools, social and professional experiences, and the media. Each of us constructs our paradigms. Paradigms around diversity are often deficit-oriented, focusing on problems and vulnerabilities in the population being considered. These place emphasis on what people and families in that population are lacking.

Too often, children and their families in minority populations are considered “at risk” by policy makers, educators, and the media rather than “placed at risk” by a system that has historically viewed them from a deficit paradigm (Boykin, 2013). Scientific paradigms influence the ways that researchers in child development, often done by those in privilege and power, think and conduct their work. For example, research on minority children often employs a deficit perspective, and as a result, the knowledge base highlights the adversity and maladaptation of the minority children (Cabrera, 2013 a). Therefore, more is known about the problems than the positive qualities and strengths of the minority groups being studied. And this biased information leads many professionals to conclude that children from minority families are “at risk” and that they have many deficits to overcome in their learning and development.

But paradigms are not set in stone and for sure, the deficit-oriented paradigm needs to be turned on its head. A shift in mindset – a paradigm shift – is often experienced as a revolution or a transformation. It does not just happen, but rather it is driven by agents of change who might be families, community advocates, political leaders, researchers, educators, as well as other professionals. Ideas and activities in this resource also might trigger a paradigm shift in how you view those that are different from yourself.

As the research community shifts its deficit paradigm and redefines its research agenda, the knowledge base will expand to highlight successes and assets of children and their families. And this will lead high-quality program planning and implementation of effective strategies to promote all children’s learning and development. [268]

Chapter Summary

Although research supports the value of diversity, it continues to be used to oppress those that are different. Individuals who possess qualities given preference by social values gain unearned privilege. This privilege can lead to power over those without privilege. Or it can be used to change the structure causing the oppression. The Privilege as a Practice And Culturally Responsive Strengths-Based Frameworks can both be used to create a paradigm shift in how we look at diversity and to mitigate oppression.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: The Development of Identity in Children

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the role of peers in the development of children's identity
- Explain the importance of play for identity
- Discuss the role of culture in identity development

6.1: The Development of Identity in Children
6.2: How Children Develop Identity
6.3: Culture and Self-Identity

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6.1: The Development of Identity in Children

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the role of peers in the development of children's identity
- Explain the importance of play for identity
- Discuss the role of culture in identity development

Social identity is a complex but natural occurrence in all humans. The main questions we will be discussing in this chapter include: What is social identity? How do we help children in early childhood education with their social identity? Why does it matter?



Figure 3.1: What role does early childhood education play in children's development of identity? [30]

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6.2: How Children Develop Identity

During infancy we begin to recognize that we are a separate being. Then we begin to realize that this self is stable. Once this sense of self develops, we can formulate a categorical self. We become aware that even though we're separate and distinct objects or entities or beings, we also exist in the world. We exist with other objects and beings and entities, in that, each of these objects has properties, including ourselves. In early childhood, these categories that children apply themselves to are very concrete. They include our developmental age, our gender, our size, and the skills we have. [31]

The Role of Early Childhood Education and Play

Where we truly start seeing social identities begin is within families and their culture. Where we see social identities cultivated, especially in the classroom is through play. Children develop self-identity, who they believe themselves to be, and begin to form relationships through play and peer relations which contribute to their emotional, social and cognitive development. Theories of self generally agree that an early childhood program can foster children's self- esteem and build the foundation for future relationships with others.

Early childhood is a significant period for the children's development including the emergence of their abilities and skills in areas such as language, physical development, psychosocial development, and cognitive development. This can be greatly influenced by the nature of the educational environment that the child is exposed to in the first years of life (Bowman, Donovan and Burns, 2001). Young children's earliest years are the foundation for their physical and mental health, emotional security, cultural and personal identity, and developing competencies (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, paragraph 6 (e)).

Another dynamic surrounds 'personal' versus 'social' identity. Personal identity refers to children's subjective feelings about their distinctiveness from others, their sense of uniqueness, of individuality. Social identity refers, on the other hand, to the ways in which they feel they are (or would like to be) the same as others, typically through identification with family and/or peer culture (Schaffer, 2006). Factors like age, gender, religious background, ethnic background, interests, role models, talents, and hobbies play a part in a child's emerging concept of self.



Figure 3.2: Children are developing their personal and social identities. [32]

Relationships with Peers

As children develop their identity they are influenced by interactions and relationships with others. Woodhead (2008, p.6) highlights that identity has two distinct aspects –" that of the unique individual person and that of the shared social person". In addition, identity is expressed through children's subjective feelings about themselves and about others.

Warin (2010) notes that identity does not exist outside the social context in which it is constructed and is something that the person carries about with them through time and through the range of social situations they participate in. This illustrates the educational importance of self-awareness and awareness of others.



Figure 3.3: Quality relationships with peers affects identity. [33]

Friendship is of value to children as they help each other understand the world in which they live. According to Dunn (2004), the quality of children's friendships affects their development of a sense of personal and social identity. Children with friends have better social skills and fewer adjustment problems as friends provide social support and can protect against the difficulties of starting school, victimization and bullying (Dunn, 2004). Having friends is an important resource for developing identities.

Studies (George, 2007; Weller, 2007).have discussed the importance of friendship groups in relation to identity formation As Currie, D., Kelly, D. and Pomeramtz, S. (2007) note, membership of a group (or exclusion from it) can greatly inform the construction of 'who you are' in terms of identity- both in relation to one's own self-identity and how others see you and how you see others. Children's peer cultures work to influence and constrain the ways in which children construct meanings and values, act and communicate with each other; conduct aspects of identity in relation to themselves and their peers (Adler, P. Kless, S. and Adler, P., 1992).

Play

Play is crucial in Early Child Education (ECE) and families, caretakers, preschool teachers play a vital role in the early years of a child's education. (Wood 2004). Children try to gain a sense of self and identity of their own when they associate with other people around them. During the early years of childhood (first 8 years) major development of brain occurs and lack of play activity based education can negatively impact on the child's cognitive development during a crucial stage for identity development. Children develop self-identity and begin to form relationships. Play contributes to children's emotional development and since play requires use of multiple motor and mental functions, children develop various skills as well. Play-based learning aids children in developing moral and social skills. [34]

There is accumulating scientific evidence of the potential of play and playfulness to enhance human capacity to respond to adversity and cope with the stressors of everyday life. In play, we build a repertoire of adaptive, flexible responses to unexpected events, in an environment separated from the real consequences of those events. Playfulness helps us maintain social and emotional equilibrium in times of rapid change and stress. Through play, we experience flow—A feeling of being taken to another place, out of time, where we have control of the environment.

Neuroscientific evidence of the significance of early experience not just to individual health, but also to the long term social and economic prosperity of society as a whole is driving a new public policy agenda in early childhood development. The evidence highlights the interconnectedness of physical, intellectual, social and emotional development, and of physical and mental health. There is powerful evidence about the impact of excessive stress and adversity in the early years on the incidence of a range of chronic diseases in adulthood , creating a new emphasis on the importance of social and emotional health in early childhood and growing public policy interest in early intervention with children living in families coping with the stresses of poverty, violence, mental illness, and substance abuse. Early childhood is on the public policy agenda, and the environments where children spend time in their pre-school years are under intense scrutiny.



Figure 3.4: If these boys weren't playing, would they be allowed to use sidewalk chalk (or another marking making tool) this way. [35]

For the child, play and playing is fundamentally about agency, power, and control. In play, children actively explore their own social and physical power, in relationship to the world, and to other children. As each child participates with other children in the social contexts of play, exploring and testing and making decisions at the edges of their own possibility, they come to understand what it means to be in control, and what it means to be out of control. When left to control their own play, they explore what it means to exert their own power over others, and take chances and physical risks. The risks that they take, are calculated risks that can be supported by early childhood professionals, who understand the need for risk-taking. It is worthy of note that the notions of participation and control are deeply embedded in the language of health promotion. Active participation in community and in particular in the decisions that affect us contributes to a sense of control over the multiple factors that influence not just our physical and mental health, but also our subjective sense of well-being and belonging.

Play has the potential to contribute to social and emotional health in early childhood, which supports the idea that the power of play to make us resilient, flexible, and strong—emotionally, socially, physically, intellectually, and perhaps spiritually—may lie in its propensity to invert and subvert the order of things. Spontaneous play may provide critical opportunities for children to experience a sense of social belonging, well-being and participation in the culture of childhood, as well as to develop social and emotional awareness, control and resilience. Play helps children learn to "roll with the punches" of everyday life, and to experience the ongoing social and emotional balancing of self that is fundamental to successful participation in social life. [36]



Think About It…
How are resilience, social belonging, and social and emotional awareness related to diversity and equity?

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6.3: Culture and Self-Identity

Culture is a major factor in the constitution of the ability to develop one's identity. As mentioned throughout this text, culture means the way in which individuals or groups of people handle the raw material of their social and material existence in order to develop their own specific ways of life with their own distinct forms of expression as a network of meaning. Successful identity is the result of having been enabled and empowered to pursue one's own meaning in life in a process of constant exchange with others who are also endeavoring to build a meaningful existence for themselves. [37]

Cultural identity is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, region, or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity or upbringing.

A range of cultural complexities structure the way individuals operate with the cultural realities in their lives. Cultural identities are influenced by several different factors such as ones religion, ancestry, skin color, language, class, education, profession, skill, family and political attitudes. These factors contribute to the development of one's identity.

Some might be able to adjust to the various cultures in the world by committing to two or more cultures. It is not required to stick to one culture. People may socialize and interact with people in one culture in addition to another group of people in another culture, although many people interact with others who share the same social identities. [38]

Education, including early childhood education is an important area of culture. Does school help enable and empower young people to develop their own authentic meaning in life which should also entail becoming aware of one's social reality and of adopting a critical attitude towards existing structures in society? Or is it more inclined to further the development of those qualifications which are more in line with that which is socially acceptable? Schools may be inherently inequitable when those in power believe their understanding of the world is the only legitimate one. It becomes the dominant culture of the school alienating and excluding those in minority groups, which can lead to loss of self-esteem and challenges in being successful in the educational environment. [39]



Figure 3.5: What if these children were told the food their families eat is gross, rather than being invited to share making it with their classmates? What message would they get about their culture? [40]

Identity is formed through direct relation to the people that we interact with, our physical and temporal environment, and the culture that we are a part of from the beginning. We can examine the social and cultural systems that surround us to see how the various dimensions are involved with our self-identity. In this chapter, we examined how the early childhood environment plays a role in the formation of children's identity development. The chapter also examined the role of the teacher in children's identity development as well as how teachers' identity development, both personal and professional, contribute to the early childhood environment.

We leave this chapter asking ourselves important questions:

- What are the ways in which we are involved in children's identity formation?
- How can we ensure that this involvement is inclusive and supportive of all children?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Teachers' Professional Identity and Becoming Equity Minded

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Analyze how teachers' professional identities are formed
- Discuss how teachers gain knowledge and experience in working with children and families

7.1: A Teacher's Identity Development and Becoming Equity Minded
7.2: The Journey Towards Equity

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7.1: A Teacher's Identity Development and Becoming Equity Minded

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Analyze how teachers' professional identities are formed
- Discuss how teachers gain knowledge and experience in working with children and families

Introduction

In addition to examining how children develop their identities, we must also reflect on our own identities and how it effects our teaching. We must also reflect on how our identities were created. Most importantly, how does our identity effect our teaching methods and the children we work with?

Development of Teachers' Identity

As our identity affects so much about the way we respond, it is critical to look at our own identity as individuals and in our professional role of early childhood educators. In addition to developing a personal and social identity, teachers also develop a specific professional identity. This process begins during childhood and continues throughout the lifespan.

The professional identity of teachers includes the following: their personal values and beliefs, their professional values and belief, and their cultural experiences which they learned in their childhood and their cultural experiences that they have accepted into their daily lives. In reflecting on these experiences, it affords teachers opportunities to gain deeper understanding of themselves which helps them to understand others. It provides them opportunities to gain empathy and understanding of others that can only be accomplished when we understand ourselves.

Most early childhood professionals had experiences during their schooling that have shaped their ideas of teaching. [41]

> "I do not exactly remember what I, as a child, wanted to be when I grew up. I think it was not a concern of mine. But I recall a certain episode, already in 4th grade, in which I answered I wanted to be "a teacher of children". By that time, my representation of a teacher was "someone who knows a lot of things". Later, throughout the years, I wanted to be other things, depending on my interests:… It was only later, when I was already in college, studying to be a teacher, that the desire of the 4th-grade girl intensified. It was the experience in a summer camp, with children aged 4 to 12, which made me want to know more about the world of the child. Now, looking back, I think, humorously, that this profession, at that time, was still "not yet born" and that, somehow, I was expecting its birth [emphasis added]."
> Miranda (student teacher) [42]

The teaching profession is a journey of reflection to learn more about ourselves in this role. As we learn more about who we are, we are able to understand our teaching philosophies and our role in promoting equitable learning environments. The journey is one of progress not perfection. As we interact with the children and families we serve, we become more aware of our role.

Learning is inherent to the human condition. Every human has the capacity to learn throughout the lifespan. Education provides opportunities to improve oneself, acquire and/or modify knowledge, gain competency, and construct meaning (which may be the same as acquiring and/or modifying information so may not need to include that or use that instead of the former). We do this through the experiences we have, the interactions with others (development of interpersonal relationships), observing other teachers in action and applying what we have observed and learned in our course of study.

This learning includes:

- Knowledge for practice is the one which derives from academic research (formal knowledge) and from which teachers structure their practice, i.e., it is the application of formal knowledge to practical teaching situations.
- Knowledge in practice is the one acquired during the activity, since teachers' knowledge is immersed in their practice, in what they perform about practice, in questioning, and in the narrative of this practice. Knowledge comes from action/experience, from the understanding, and from the reflections and decisions which teachers make every day in schools.
- Knowledge of practice is what Formosinho (2009) calls the knowledge built in a collective manner inside local communities, formed by teachers who work in school development, education, or collaborative questioning projects.

It is from the gaining of knowledge and engagement in learning experiences (action) that it becomes possible to articulate theory and practice. The teacher learns how to learn and learns how to teach.



Figure 4.1: Part of the student teaching experience is the formation of the professional identity. [43]

This group culture and the feeling of belonging to a professional family (Tejada Fernández, 2009a, 2009b) constitute a complex, interactive, and multidirectional process between the student and the teacher, in which relationships are based on ethics, respect, and by valuing social differences (Tejada-Fernández, Carvalho, & Bueno, 2014). [44]

In response to increased accountability measures and evaluation systems, schools adopt new approaches and innovations. Such activities often require teachers to adopt new roles and responsibilities, develop new knowledge and skill, and reconfigure their relationships with peers and administrators. As a result, teachers build new professional identities in response to the underlying question—who am I as a teacher? [45]

Becoming Equity Minded

Once the student teacher becomes a teacher in an early childhood classroom, the journey of gaining knowledge and experience continues. This journey includes taking the path towards social equity. This requires teachers reflecting on the underlying reasons for the way they educate and care for children so that they can become equity-minded. One way to define equity-minded.



Think About It…
Based on what you've read and learned so far, how would you define equity-minded?



Figure 4.2: Teachers must reflect on their role in creating social equity. [46]

It is important for teachers to act as critical thinkers and not just supposedly neutral performers of what is considered to be effective teaching. Very often teaching young children is seen as just supervising play, managing behaviors, and implementing activities with children. But teaching should be considered to be an important responsibility, in which the teachers use what they know about children and their families to create a developmentally appropriate curriculum and build strong, reciprocal relationships with children and families based on their cultural and social contexts.

This culturally responsive approach, supports children to become participants in a democratic society and work towards equity. This involves taking an active responsibility in asking fundamental questions about what they actually teach, and especially about the broader aims which they wish to achieve, and about their role in developing a democratic and just society. Books, such as this one and the course it was written for will support your journey as an equity minded early childhood educator.

Summary

As future teachers pursue their education, they build knowledge, skills, and experiences in working with children and families. This process in addition to the personal identities, contributes to their professional identity. It's important for teachers to be self-aware and self-reflective. That process will support teachers in becoming equity-minded professionals.

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7.2: The Journey Towards Equity

As mentioned previously in this book, becoming culturally responsive and equity-minded is not a simple or short journey. Hopefully, this book and the course you are using it for has given you information and opportunities to reflect on the important of early childhood educators engaging in this process with an open heart and open mind.

As you become aware of your own culture, the importance of forming strong partnerships with the families and authentic relationships with the children you serve, and recognize your role as an early childhood educator as advocate for social justice and equity, you can go even a bit deeper into your reflection on the importance of diversity and equity. This chapter introduces the process of reflecting on privilege and power and how those leads to oppression in our society and also how those with privilege and power can use those to make changes towards more equitable systems and environments across society (including early childhood education).

This process is rarely a comfortable or uncomplicated one. Our goal is not to assign blame or guilt, but to encourage respectful and thoughtful engagement and open-minded reflection that is appropriate for where you are at in your personal journey towards equity.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Environments, Materials, and Approaches

Learning Objectives

- Discuss developmentally appropriate practices.
- Describe strategies to create culturally responsive early childhood education environments.
- Evaluate the diversity of children's books.
- Identify how the importance of play relates to developmentally appropriate practices.
- Compare and contrast different methods for teaching children about different cultures.
- Outline practices for effectively working with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- Discuss perspectives on celebration of holidays in early childhood education programs.

8.1: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Environments, Materials, and Approaches
8.2: Approaches to the Environment and Cultural Responsiveness
8.3: The Role of Diversity in Early Childhood Programs across the Globe
8.4: Suggestions for Your Program and Classrooms

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8.1: Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Classroom Environments, Materials, and Approaches

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss developmentally appropriate practices.
- Describe strategies to create culturally responsive early childhood education environments.
- Evaluate the diversity of children's books.
- Identify how the importance of play relates to developmentally appropriate practices.
- Compare and contrast different methods for teaching children about different cultures.
- Outline practices for effectively working with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- Discuss perspectives on celebration of holidays in early childhood education programs.

Chapter introduction

The environment is the "third teacher". It is crucial to have our environment be culturally and developmentally appropriate. This chapter will dive into the reasons why our environment is so important and how we have our classroom environments be culturally and linguistically rich and valuable.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

In 1997, NAEYC released its revised publication on developmentally appropriate practices. This term was formulated by professionals making decisions about the well-being and education of children, on the basis of at least three important pieces of information:

1. What is known about child development and learning: Knowledge of age-related human characteristics that permits general predictions within an age range about what activities, materials, interactions, or experiences will be safe, healthy, interesting, achievable, and challenging to children.
2. What is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group: [Necessary] to be able to adapt and be responsive to inevitable individual variation.
3. Knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live: [Necessary] to ensure that learning experiences are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for the participating children and their families. (Bredekamp & Copple 1997, 8–9)



Figure 5.1: Classroom environments must reflect diversity of the children and families. [47]

With this information, programs are expected to use knowledge of children's cultural and social settings as a key component of decisions about teaching environments. In 2009, NAEYC released its third revision of the publication (Bredekamp & Copple 2009). In this most recent version, the three types of knowledge identified in the 1997 publication remain. The decision-making process for developmentally appropriate practices is presented in Figure 5.2. [48]

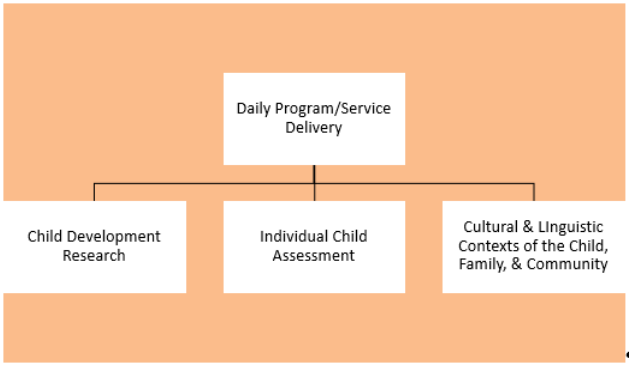


Figure 5.2 Sources of Developmentally Appropriate Practices [49]

Curriculum in Multicultural Classrooms

The term culturally responsive practices has been used to refer to the implementation of effective teaching practices in diverse early education settings. Culturally responsive practices are teaching to the individual needs of children who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. This term implies the integration of assessment and curriculum practices: program staff must learn about the individual abilities and preferences of each of the children enrolled in their program, and then find ways to plan and implement a curriculum that is based upon each individual child's needs and interests. For example, teachers can use home visits to learn about the child, to observe ways that families interact with their child, and to begin a dialogue with families about their goals for the child.

Classroom Materials

In her 1995 book, The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8, Martha Bronson offers detailed suggestions for selecting play materials that are safe, appropriate, and supportive of play and development. It is relevant to note here that classroom materials can potentially depict people in stereotypical ways or only contain simplified or inaccurate images of culturally diverse people. Therefore, the challenge is to provide classroom materials that reflect all children, families, and adults in the program, and to eliminate stereotypical or inaccurate materials from daily use. For example, books and dramatic play materials should reflect diversity of gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds, special needs and abilities, and a range of occupations and ages. Books and environmental print should also represent the different languages of children in the classroom.



Figure 5.3: What diversity is represented in this image of children and dolls? [50]

The challenge for programs is to establish systems and procedures that take the cultural and linguistic contexts of the children into account. Once in place, these classroom materials should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that the classrooms reflect all enrolled children without stereotyping. Programs are encouraged to seek information from families and knowledgeable members of the community for their input in equipping classrooms to reflect cultures and languages in respectful ways.

Finally, encouraging children's language and cognitive growth does not preclude the responsibility to support each child's sense of wellbeing, the formation of his or her identity, and feelings of security. A consensus within the research is that effective environments for children support all domains of development, and that environments associated with learning outcomes should also provide strong support for social–emotional development (Hart & Risley 1995, 1999; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin 1998).

With this in mind, the developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate environment mirrors the ideas, values, attitudes, and cultures of the children it serves (Gestwicki 1995). The following are some specific strategies suggested by Derman Sparks (1989):

1. Use images in abundance that represent all children, families, and staff in your program.
2. Use images of children and adults from the major ethnic groups in your community and in U.S. society.
3. Use images that accurately reflect people's current daily lives in the U.S. during work and recreational activities.

1. Offer a balance among different cultural and ethnic groups.
2. Provide a fair balance of images of women and men doing "jobs at home" and "jobs outside home." Provide images of older people of various backgrounds doing different activities.
3. Provide images of differently abled people of various backgrounds at work and with their families.
4. Use images of diversity in family styles, such as single mothers and fathers, and extended families that are multiracial and multiethnic.
5. Use images of important individuals, past and present, and that reflect diversity.
6. Exhibit artwork—prints, sculpture, and textiles—by artists of various backgrounds.

Children's Books

In the past, children's books generally treated minority groups badly or ignored them completely. In the 1960's-1970's, Children's libraries were supported by federal government. This encouraged publishers to produce many ethnic groups' books. Banks (1979) stated that "It would be difficult to pinpoint its origin, but it may be safe to assume that the term multicultural literature came after the advent of the multicultural education movement in the 1960s. In 1965, Nancy Larrick wrote "The All White World of Children's Books" to report almost no Black people appeared in any of America's children's books. People began to recognize and include Black people and other minority groups in the books. In 1966, the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) was founded. CIBC encourages authors to write about their own cultures. In 1969, the American Library Association (ALA) gave the Coretta Scott King Award to excellent Black writers and illustrators. In 1974, the National Council for the Social Studies gave the Carter G. Woodson Award to excellent minority and race children's books. In 1985 only 18 books were eligible for the Coretta Scott King Award. In the last decade, multicultural literature has begun to flourish. Nowadays, multiculturalism is a big issue. Understanding multicultural issues is important. Banks (1991) stated "By the year 2020, one of every two students in the United States will be a person of color.". Dietrich & Ralph (1995) stated that "educators should help students explore their own cultures and contribute to intercultural understanding." [51]

While there may be more multicultural literature now, there is still a lack of diversity in children's books. Please see the following graphic.

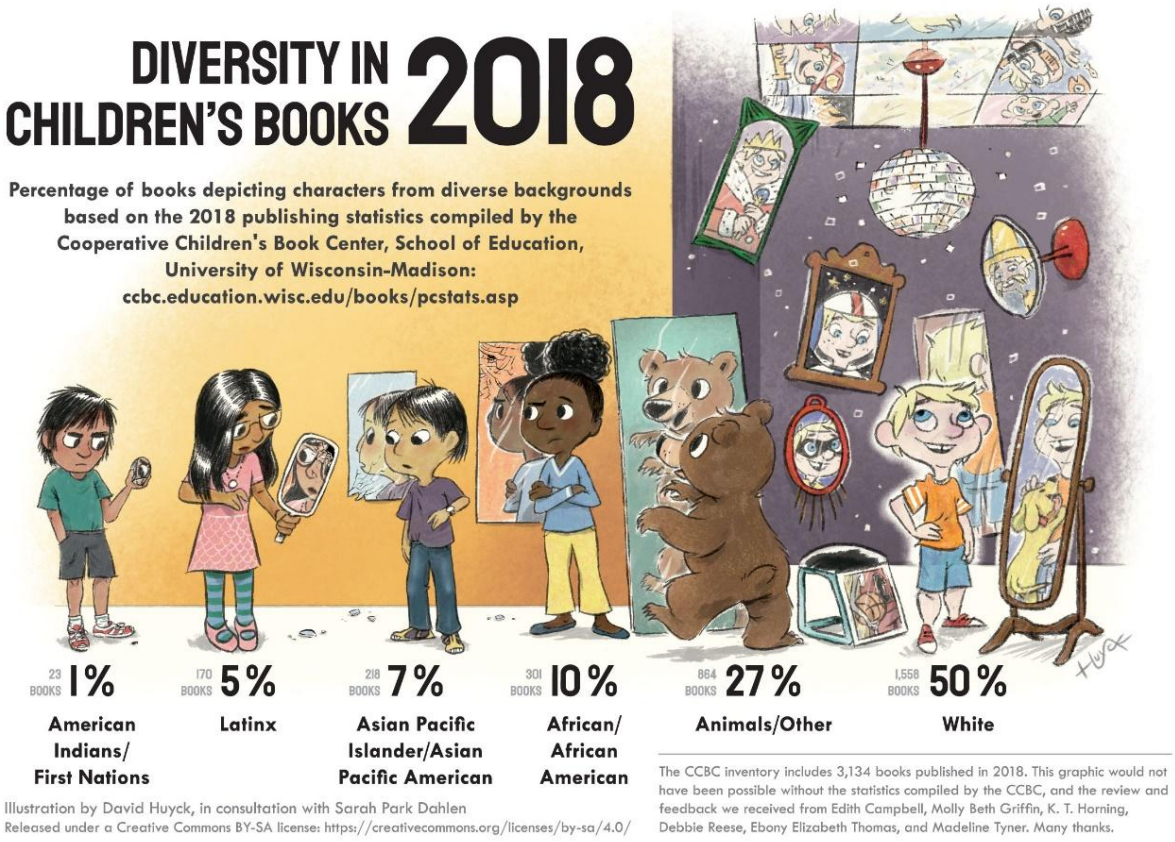


Figure 5.4: Diversity in Children's Books [52]

Look for Accuracy

You may notice that there are funhouse mirrors in the graphic. These were chosen to illustrate how "[c]hildren's literature continues to misrepresent underrepresented communities, and we wanted this infographic to show not just the low quantity of existing literature, but also the inaccuracy and uneven quality of some of those books." [53]

"Accuracy of cultural representation is a crucial aspect of high quality multicultural literature." Shioshita (1997, p.1) stated that books must have current, correct information, be careful of not reinforcing stereotypes, and use actual language in books. Harris (1993,p.50) also stated, "Information should be factual and up-to-date." In other words, an accurate multicultural book must give readers the right information about other cultures. When readers understand other people who live in the world have some similarities with them, they do not have xenophobia anymore. "A good multicultural book must avoid racial and cultural stereotyping" (Tunnell, M., & Jacobs, S., 2008, p.190).

Having cultural background knowledge to write multicultural books is important, because insufficient cultural background knowledge can make writers write a distorted multicultural book. We can evaluate cultural background knowledge by checking the author's website or autobiography to see if the author comes from the same culture in which the book is written or the author has other deep connections to the culture. We can also ask people who come from the same culture of the book to read and judge whether it is a good book or not before we read it to students. And we can use reviews, such as those of the Social Justice league to see how selected books rate on their representations of diversity.

It is also really important for multicultural books to be respectful. People may mistrust, fear, or hate other people who are unlike them. "The character of the book must represent members of cultural minorities and must have their own set of personal values, attitudes, and beliefs and must present a positive image" (Tunnell, M., & Jacobs, S., 2008, p.190). [54]

Ensuring Books Have High Quality Representation of Diversity

Louse Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force include looking at the following in their recommendations as a starting place for evaluating books on how anti-bias they are

- Check both the illustrations and storylines. Make sure books are age appropriate and engaging.
- Do you see stereotypes? Are people represented in a derogatory and generalized way (people with disabilities cannot be independent and should be pitied; all Muslims are Arab; nonathletic boys are effeminate; strong female characters are man-like). Remember that stereotypes are not always overt and that people in the same race may not look the same.
- Watch for tokenism. Are all people represented as genuine and distinctive individuals? Is there only one diverse character in the book?

Look for who might be invisible in the books. Certain groups of people are often missing or underrepresented in books and media: including: families in rural areas, families with two moms or two dads, single parent families, homeless families, transgendered children and adults, families with incarcerated parents, and blue-collar workers.

- Are their power imbalances portrayed? Does a non-white or female character have to “exhibit extraordinary qualities or be the one to understand, forgive, or change?” Are “people of color, women, low-income families, or people with disabilities depicted as needing help or in passive roles, while whites, men, and “able-bodied” people are in leadership and action roles?”
- Examine what values and ideals the storyline promotes? Are the values only representative of a dominant culture? Who are the heroes and what qualities are they admired for? Who typically causes the problems and who usually resolves it?
- Look for how diverse people are represented? Are they contrasted as being different or less than? Is a culture depicted in an over-simplified way or inaccurately? Are there negative judgements of ways of life that differ from the dominant culture or socioeconomic class?
- Are there characters in the book that children can identify with that will support a positive self-identity?
- Is the author from the minority background they are writing about? If not, is there another way they are connected to the culture they wrote about?
- What are the perspective, values, and goals of the author? Do those represent cultural responsive messages and inclusion?
- Watch for loaded words and terminology (lazy, primitive, savage, docile, etc.). What gender pronouns are used? Is gender neutral language used where possible?
- Look at when the book was written. Before the early 1970s most children’s books were written, edited, and published in ways that reflected the White culture and usually did not represent gender equality.
- Remember that books that have animals instead of people are not substitutes for books that explore diversity that have people as the main characters.
- A book being a classic, favorite, or beloved fairy/folk tale is not justification for including it in the classroom if it misrepresents modern culture or conveys biased messages (sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, gender bias, or colonialism) [55] , [56]

Benefits of Multicultural Literature

Diamond & Moore, (1995, p.13) stated, "Multicultural literature further heightens understanding, respect, and affirmation of differences because it acknowledges that it is alright to be who you are." Royce (2006, p.33) stated that reading multicultural literature about their own culture can help minority children increase self-esteem and help majority children know people who are different from them. “Multicultural literature helps children identify with their own culture, exposes children to other cultures, and opens the dialogue on issues regarding diversity” (Colby, S. A., & Lyon, F. 2004, p.24).

Children often see other's perspective through characters who are their age. After children see these multicultural characters suffering from social injustice, they will make a decision to advocate and stand up for social injustice. Diamond & Moore, (1995, p.14) stated, "Once students understand the harmful effects of social injustice and inequities, they can make informed and rational decisions about the most effective ways to correct injustices in their community."



Figure 5.5: Reading children's books with multicultural characters suffering from social injustice can be a powerful learning experience with young children. [57]

The world demographic is quickly becoming more diverse and multicultural literature provides an excellent opportunity to teach and understand compassion and cultural understanding. In order to combat racism and break down cultural barriers, literature provides the perfect vehicle to inspire and educate children in understanding the benefits of cultural diversity. Multicultural literature provides children the tools to live, work and participate for the future in an increasingly multicultural world. [58]

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8.2: Approaches to the Environment and Cultural Responsiveness

The following article, used with permission, shares four different approaches that are used to embrace multiculturalism and provides some information about being culturally responsive. You will explore having a multicultural classroom using an antibias curriculum in depth in Chapter 10.



Think About It…
As you read the article, reflect on your reactions to and thoughts about the different approaches described by Levy. What are strengths of each? What concerns do you have with each?

Culture in the Classroom

For a number of years teachers have become more interested in multicultural education, with the assumption that such approaches help children feel more welcomed, validated, integrated, and able to cooperate with others in their classroom (Allen, McNeill, & Schmidt, 1992; Bredenkamp, 1986; Byrnes & Kiger, 1992; Gollnick & Chin, 1994). In my experience, in addition to these benefits, exposing young children to different cultures makes for a fun and exciting learning environment! There are four main approaches to teaching young children about different cultures. These are multicultural education, anti-bias curriculum, global education, and international education.

Multicultural Education

Patty Ramsey (1987) defined multicultural education as a perspective which:

- “encompasses many dimensions of human difference besides culture, such as race, occupation, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation, and various physical traits and needs;
- is relevant to all children, even those who live in homogeneous areas; and
- extends beyond the boundaries of this country to beliefs and attitudes about people all over the world” (pp. 2–4).

In practice this means that if your class includes a variety of cultures or abilities, the group spends time learning about and cultivating an understanding of those unique features.

The teacher pays careful attention to the types of literature available to the children and to the activities presented, while also encouraging children to cooperate. If there is little diversity within the group, the teacher presents many different cultural practices during the school year. For example, in many classrooms December is spent on the theme “Christmas around the world." The overall goal is to expose children to differences at an early age so that they can begin to appreciate and value them rather than to dismiss them.

Anti-Bias Curriculum

The Anti-Bias Curriculum is a handbook written in 1989 by Louise Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Force. Their intent was for this curriculum to be used throughout the day, integrated into daily interactions and activities within the classroom—not for teachers to set aside a special time to use the curriculum. The basic goal of the Anti-Bias Curriculum is to help children develop positive self-concepts without acquiring attitudes of superiority and ethnocentrism. The authors write, “It is value based: Differences are good; oppressive ideas and behavior are not. It sets up a creative tension between respecting difference and not accepting unfair beliefs and acts.”

Derman-Sparks and Ramsey have collaborated on many projects and articles. They see the Anti-Bias Curriculum as a corollary to the multicultural approach and a helpful tool for teachers in confronting their own biases while empowering children who may have previously been stereotyped by others in the classroom.

Global Education

Global education, usually used with middle and high school students, helps children recognize the interconnectedness of the world through a study of the problems and issues that cut across national boundaries (Tye, 1990). It involves perspective-taking and the

realization that while there are differences among people, there are also common threads that connect us all. Because of its abstractness, this approach is not commonly found in early childhood programs.

International Education

International education exposes children to a single culture for a period of at least a year. Over the course of that year, children move beyond celebrating holidays toward a more detailed study of culture, including clothing, food, music, shelter, celebrations, city and country life, and family dynamics. The level of information depends on the children's stage of development. Through sustained experience, children move beyond a superficial knowledge of a country and culture and into a true understanding of the people who live there.

To illustrate the difference between the multicultural and international approaches, the analogy of a party is useful. If you attend a party and briefly chat with seven people, the next morning you may have difficulty remembering which story you heard from which person. You would have only a surface knowledge of each of the seven people. This is similar to the multicultural approach, in which young children learn a small amount about many cultures.

On the other hand, if you met only one new person at the party and spent the entire evening speaking with him or her, you would have a far greater knowledge and appreciation for who that person was as an individual. This is similar to international education, in which young children focus on a single culture and learn about it in great detail over an extended period of time.

Whether you use a single approach or combine several approaches, you must make educated decisions about how you use multicultural curriculum in your classroom. The last thing that you want to do is further enforce stereotypes.

Culture in the Classroom

There are many ways that cultural differences are taught to young children. Everything we do tells children about how we see the world and what we think of others. Think about how you communicate to the children in your care. How do you communicate culture explicitly (i.e., directly) and how do you communicate culture implicitly (indirectly)?

Explicit communication involves the activities and themes you plan for the children, the artifacts you provide from other cultures/countries, the books you make available, the toys and games you choose, and how you actively present information to the children. These are the hallmarks of your program.

Implicit communication includes the background items that don't necessarily define your program but which are important parts of daily activities and the learning environment. The background music you choose, the name of your classroom, how you define groups of children, the way you interact with the children, what information you value, how you resolve conflict, and how you arrange the room are all examples of implicit communication.

Each aspect of your program is an opportunity to provide cultural education. For instance, my classroom reflects the international education approach. The classroom name is Kenya. Much of what we do each day is similar to other developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs. However, we also include a strong cultural element. Kenya is not our entire curriculum, but is an important piece of it.

Teaching culture requires a substantial commitment from teachers to learn personally about other cultures. Over a number of years, each program evolves and increases the depth of information provided. As time goes on, the teacher becomes a reservoir of information and activities. In a field where burnout is common and salaries are low, there is not sufficient respect and appreciation for what teachers accomplish. It is often hard to accept this added challenge of continued learning. I have included culture as an essential element in my classroom for the past eight years. What I have noticed during that time is that cultural education is imperative at every stage of children's development. While teaching methods may change based on the age of the children, cultural awareness always remains important.

The Kenya Classroom

Explicit Components

- Month-long themes on African animals, Kenyan tribes, geography, African folk tales, music, and the people of Kenya are used.
- Our reading area is under a "Baobab" tree. A wide variety of books which reflect children of different races, genders, ethnicity, and cultures are provided, including a large number of Africa-related stories and fact books.
- Musical instruments from Africa are provided.
- We create soap sculptures of "wooden" animals and bowls.
- Mancala and other African games are available in the puzzle and game area.

Implicit Components

- I sing a homemade melody to gather children on the playground, "Friends from Kenya, please line up."
- "Misa Luba" African melodies serve as our clean-up music.
- We use lots of brown and black to decorate our room.
- Blankets are used for storing toys, games, and books as well as for rest time.
- Sheer leopard print curtains are hung on "spear" curtain rods.

Confirmation from the Children

I began teaching four- and five-year-olds about Japanese culture. During my five years in the Japan classroom, my curriculum evolved. Each year new things were added and more information gathered. I received a grant to travel to Japan and developed a sister school relationship with a lab school in Kyoto. Two interns from Japan worked in my classroom over the years. Other Japanese guests also visited our classroom. I contacted the Japanese Consulate in Boston, Massachusetts, and made numerous trips to museums in the area to gather information about Japanese life and art forms. By my final year in the Japan room, approximately 50 percent of the curriculum centered around Japanese culture.

Then I moved to a classroom where I developed a program for kindergartners which reflected Kenyan culture. I felt overwhelmed leaving an established curriculum which had become second nature to me. It was at this point that I needed to evaluate what I wanted to communicate to the children and how to approach a new culture.

Many of the children who were entering my class had been in the Japan classroom. After settling ourselves into what kindergarten meant and becoming comfortable with the basic routine, we talked, as a group, about how best to learn about Kenya. I read a basic book about Africa to the children. They found many aspects of the book fascinating. We listed topics we wanted to learn more about. It was then that I realized that I had not only taught these children about Japan, but also how to learn about another culture. As a group they identified the things that might differ about another culture – things like holidays, customs, language, geography, housing, clothing, and animals. Their reactions and input helped me to understand that I had achieved what I had set out to do–to help children become inquisitive and open to other places in the world which are different from their own surroundings.

On another occasion, while we were studying African animals, I read a book called Elephant Crossing by Toshi Yashida. The children became very excited. They realized that the author's name sounded Japanese. We looked in the back of the book and found that the author was from Tokyo (which they remembered was the capital of Japan). The children couldn't get over the coincidence that a Japanese man would write a book about African animals. The pure joy the children took in this experience was breath-taking and confirmed that spending an extended period of time focusing on one culture gave them a sense of ownership, pride, and comfort.

Many other experiences reaffirm the impact of the international education approach on the children. One day, a young girl was working in her journal. She began by drawing a tree. As she drew the tree, it changed from an apple tree into part of a Brazilian rain forest. She added many details that she had learned while in the Brazil classroom, nearly three years earlier. As she wrote the names of the animals in her picture (using invented spelling), she told me that she wanted to share her masterpiece with her past teachers in the Brazil room. "Maybe it will help those kids learn about the rain forest animals," she proudly said.

The journal entry came at a perfect time. Many discussions with teachers in my school have centered around the amount of effort required to teach children about other cultures. Some express the sentiment that it doesn't always seem worth the minimal outcome they are able to detect. This was a perfect opportunity to show the other staff that children are assimilating valuable information even though it may not always be apparent. It was exciting for them to share this wonderful experience and to witness how deeply affected the children can be when given the opportunity to learn about other cultures!

Set Clear Goals

As teachers, we must make educated curriculum decisions. Investigation of the different approaches to culture education should be undertaken before you choose a direction for your curriculum. The following questions will help guide your curriculum decisions:

- Are there a variety of cultures represented in the young children in my care?
- What is the goal of exposing children to different cultures? (i.e., What message do I want to teach the children?)
- What cultural information do the children already have? Is it enough?
- Will teaching children about many cultural practices from a variety of cultures or from a single culture be more beneficial?
- Which cultures do I have information about? Is this information accurate or will it only build on existing stereotypes?
- Where can I get accurate information on a culture?

- Will I have support for my commitment to teach culture from other teachers and families?

I am a proponent of the international education approach because I believe that exposing children to a single culture for an extended period of time enables them to retain more information and be more sensitive as they approach other cultures. Each teacher, however, must decide which approach best fits the goals he or she is trying to achieve. There is no doubt that children are our future. The key to the future lies in helping the next generation to respect and embrace diversity rather than fear and reject differences. By exposing children to culture in the classroom, and being confident that our methods are worthy and effective, we can influence the future, and make it a brighter, more peaceful one! [59]

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8.3: The Role of Diversity in Early Childhood Programs across the Globe

Being culturally responsive and equity-minded in early childhood education is important to programs across the globe. Here are some examples of the role diversity plays in early childhood education from Australia and New Zealand.

From Australia

Queensland children come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, participate in a variety of social, cultural and religious belief systems, and have different knowledge, skills, abilities and needs. They live in different places: in urban, rural or remote areas.

The vision is for communities, children and families to experience welcoming, inclusive and culturally rich early education programs where all children, regardless of their differences, are engaged in learning.

Approach

To fulfil this vision, a holistic approach is needed that considers the challenges Queensland families face in accessing and participating in early childhood programs. This approach comprises three key elements: People, Programs and Places.



Figure 5.6: The key elements of the approach.

People

The first step involves people developing a shared value for early childhood education.

Embracing the benefits of early childhood education and the associated positive impacts on a child's future development, learning, health and wellbeing is fundamental to developing this shared value.

Early years and family-centered services promote these benefits and make connections between families and local service providers.

Programs

Programs should be culturally rich, inclusive and engaging, and make families feel welcome.

Importantly, when families reach the door of a service, a welcoming, safe and inclusive program and environment encourages them to stay and become engaged in their children's learning.

Places

Places must then be accessible. Ease of access to early childhood education programs for families is critical. This means ensuring:

- sufficient places are available for all children
- there is flexibility in the models and settings of programs
- programs are affordable for all families
- support is provided in navigating enrolment procedures and managing transitions across a range of services.

Guiding principles

Five principles guide the approach to valuing diversity in early childhood education:

1. Engagement that supports the development of positive and respectful relationships, building trust and achieving genuine community connectedness among families, educators and broader communities.
2. Integration that efficiently utilizes existing early childhood development initiatives and resources and supports successful educational transitions.
3. Targeted approaches in areas of identified need that use a range of strategies to allow for the needs of individual communities.
4. Early intervention that recognizes the importance of early childhood development and investment in young families and children younger than school and kindergarten age.
5. Improvement and accountability of initiatives by incorporating appropriate performance monitoring and review. [60]

New Zealand's Te Whariki Curriculum

New Zealand's curriculum for early childhood education, Te Whariki, is founded upon a socio-cultural process of teaching and learning. One of the major aspects of this system of education is consideration for the "aspirations of the children" (Schurr, 2009, p. 4). This implies that the education given to children must be able to equip them with the competence and confidence that they require to develop a sense of belonging and contribute positively to their society. Te Whariki in New Zealand is thus described as "assessment for learning" which is learner based and intended for documentation of everything that the young children have learnt.

There are several benefits of this socio-cultural form of assessment.

- Whakamana: empowerment that protects the identity of young children as competent and self-assured learners
- Kotahitanga: children are considered holistically and their entire developmental process is considered
- Whanau Tangata: involving the children's family and community members in the education process
- Nga Honoga: taking into consideration the different associations that young children form with others in their social and cultural surroundings

Socio-cultural assessment enables educators to comprehend the manner in which children react when confronted with challenges or transformations in their surroundings. According to Gibbs and Teti (1990, p. 77) socio-cultural perspective of learning and assessment is very advantageous due to the fact that it enhances the social associations that young children have with others that are more informed; this enables the young children to increase their knowledge. Socio-cultural assessment is also very important in the Te Whariki educational system of New Zealand due to the fact that it enhances the identification of cultural identities and diversity and allows the assessors and children alike to gain insight into their own cultures and those of other. [61]

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8.4: Suggestions for Your Program and Classrooms

Suggestions for Your Program and Classrooms

1. Respect the Uniqueness of Each Family System

Characteristics of the family system are often heavily influenced by a family's cultural values and beliefs. For example, researchers have found that, in some cultures, the family unit includes extended family members or clans composed of several households of relatives with a commitment to a family-based support network, while other families tend to focus on the immediate family and utilize external support networks. Knowledge and understanding of the variety of family structures and systems increase the professional's ability to respond to the family's needs. In turn, respect for the diverse systems of family organization enhances a professional's effectiveness.

2. Develop a Personalized Relationship with Families

Families are more likely to develop effective working relationships with professionals they trust. Yet, this relationship may be forged in different ways. Some families may prefer a more formal relationship with early education professionals, while others may prefer a more informal, friendly relationship. In some cultures, the father may be considered the head of the household and, therefore, may be responsible for making decisions for the rest of the family. In other cultures, the oldest female member of the household may hold the position of authority. Researchers in the early education field suggest that these issues need to be considered on a family-by-family basis, because intra-group differences are as great as inter-group differences. Awareness of these differences increases the likelihood of building effective relationships.



Figure 5.7: Including families in the classroom is one way to build relationships. [62]

3. Communicate in Culturally Appropriate Ways

Cross-cultural differences in communication may also affect professional
-family relationships. For example, researchers note that if professionals assume a dominant role in conversations, the submissive role in which the family is placed may be a source of tension and may result in family members withholding information. Communication of this type may be particularly offensive to some families from traditional Hispanic, Native American, and Asian backgrounds. As discussed in the literature, knowledge of issues related to the use of translators and interpreters is important for early education professionals because communicating with linguistically diverse families often requires individuals fluent in the family's primary language to explain or clarify information related to programs and services.

It is also critical to maintain open, ongoing communication with families from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This communication may take the form of home-program notebooks, oral exchanges, or other modes of communication based on each family's preferences.

4. Recruit Staff Who View Diversity as an Asset

Efforts should be made to hire bicultural and bilingual staff to increase an organization's ability to create trust between families and professionals. However, researchers note that what is even more essential is to hire staff who embrace diversity as an asset and demonstrate a willingness to learn about the experiences and traditions of individuals whose backgrounds are different from their

own. By recruiting such individuals, early childhood programs will substantially enhance their ability to work with families from diverse cultural backgrounds.

5. Create Alliances with Cultural Guides

It is important to encourage the participation of community leaders as "cultural guides" to facilitate communication and understanding between professionals and families. The literature describes several roles these individuals can play:

- Provide professionals with insights concerning community beliefs, values, and communication style.
- Offer families information about programs and services in a culturally sensitive and responsive manner.
- Act as facilitators to bring families and professionals closer together to reach desired outcomes.

Examples of cultural guides include community leaders, members of the clergy, and business leaders who are from the family's cultural group or who speak the family's primary language.

6. Evaluate Process and Outcomes

The final strategy addresses the need for ongoing evaluation of early childhood programs that serve diverse families. Evaluation can take several forms, such as asking families to complete surveys or sharing information through face-to-face or phone interviews. Early education professionals may also participate in program improvement activities by conducting a needs assessment to identify areas for training and then self-evaluating their knowledge and skills in those areas. With collaboration from bicultural/bilingual staff and cultural guides, information can be collected in ways that match families' preferences. In turn, early education professionals can use this information to improve their programs and their interactions with families. [63]

What about holidays?

Talking and thinking about holidays in early childhood programs today is a "hot topic." Diversity among children, families, and staff who make up our programs is ever increasing. Many of us believe that holidays should be celebrated, while many others think celebrations do not belong in the classroom. These opposing views have created a divide and uncertainty on whether to celebrate. As an industry, (and even program by program) we need to discuss the decision and ramifications on whether 'to celebrate or not to celebrate'. [64]

The Southern Poverty Law Center notes on their Teaching Tolerance website that there are some things programs should avoid doing when it comes to celebrating:

- Having a December-only emphasis on the holidays. While there are some important holidays for many families that fall in December, there are holidays that are really important to some families that do not occur in December.
- Making some holidays exotic and others just part of regular life and using the "tourist approach" (of including many holidays, but only in stereotyped or superficial ways). These can happen unintentionally when trying to expose children to new holidays that you don't have as much information about or experience with or when you only recognize the culture on the specific holiday, rather than through the school year. [65]

And the National Association for the Education of Young Children reminds us to remember that

- Some holidays go against the values of families.
- The way holidays are celebrated is not always healthy and inclusive.
- Some holidays present a very lopsided perspective on history that can unintentionally lead to misinformation and stereotypes being passed on.
- Families may celebrate holidays the teacher and other children are not familiar with and may not fully understand or they may celebrate holidays in very different ways. [66]

Programs that choose to celebrate holidays should take care to make sure that what is celebrated represents all of the children and families their program serves. This requires meaningful conversations between staff and families. This should be done through respectful dialogue and requires staff to keep an open-mind about things beyond their personal experiences and beliefs and to trying new things and new ways of celebrating. [67]



Think About It…
One holiday that has evoked concerns about bias and equity is Thanksgiving. What are concerns that people have about Thanksgiving? How might a program navigate those concerns? How does this play a part in ensuring there is equity in what is celebrated and how it is celebrated?

Chapter summary

When educators use developmentally appropriate practices, they incorporate knowledge about each child's cultural and social settings. It is important to reflect on the materials that are in the classroom and make sure that they include and represent every child. Children should be able to see themselves and their families in their classrooms. Books have the opportunity to provide valuable social justice experience, but still lack diversity and accuracy. An important part of developmentally appropriate practices, play, is very beneficial to children's overall well-being and provides a valuable social context that affects children's understanding of themselves and others.

Classrooms may choose to incorporate different forms of multicultural education into their classrooms. The different approaches should be explored to make the right choice for the curriculum. It is vital to respect, involve, and communicate with families. Programs must make hiring staff that value diversity a priority, should seek out cultural guides in their community, and continually evaluate how they serve diverse families.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Using Anti-Bias Curriculum

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the practices that teachers use to promote multiculturalism
- Define the anti-bias approach.
- Discuss addressing white privilege and oppression.
- Analyze the importance of reflecting children's culture in your approach to guiding their behavior.
- Explain how to support children as they work through conflict.
- Identify social justice issues in early childhood education.
- Outline ways to support healthy gender development.

9.1: Goals of multicultural and anti-bias education
9.2: The Role of the Early Childhood Educator
9.3: Practices to Promote a Multicultural Classroom
9.4: Going One Step Further with an Anti-bias Classroom
9.5: Issues of Social Justice in the Early Childhood Classroom

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9.1: Goals of multicultural and anti-bias education

Learning Objectives

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- Explain how to support children as they work through conflict.
- Identify social justice issues in early childhood education.
- Outline ways to support healthy gender development.

Classrooms around the United States are becoming more and more culturally diverse. Early childhood educators need to understand that teaching their new students successfully means learning about new cultures. Moreover, how educators respond to the multicultural makeup and needs of children will determine how well the children fulfill their responsibilities in the years to come

Goals

In early childhood classrooms, educators should transmit multiculturalism to children and the following goals need to be accomplished:

1. Recognize the beauty, value, and contribution of each child and their family.
2. Teach children to respect others' cultures as well as their own.
3. Talk to children about racism and current events regularly.
4. Assist children in functioning successfully in a multicultural society.
5. Increase children's opportunities to talk and play with diverse people.
6. Encourage children to experience in positive ways both their differences as culturally diverse people and their similarities as human beings.
7. Help children notice and do something about unfair behavior and events.
8. Help children who are affected by racism develop a positive self-esteem. [68]

The above goals are variations of the four core goals of Anti-Bias education for Young Children, as outlined in the book *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards.

The 4 Goals of Anti-Bias Education:

- Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
- Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity, accurate language for human differences, and deep caring human connections.
- Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness and understand that unfairness hurts
- Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice, and/or discriminatory actions

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9.2: The Role of the Early Childhood Educator

By understanding diversity and respecting individuality, educators can better serve culturally diverse students. Moreover, early childhood educators should possess three elements.

1. Personal commitment

There is no short cut or single answer to accomplish educational equality for America's culturally diverse populations. In addition, working with children and their families with diverse cultures is challenging and can be difficult. In order to make significant progress, educators need to have sincere and wholehearted commitment. Such commitment can be tough but is necessary for educators in dealing with a variety of issues in multicultural classrooms and in meeting the challenge of diverse groups of children.

2. Knowledge of what makes a difference

"Recent research has redefined the nature of our culturally diverse students' educational vulnerability. It has destroyed both stereotypes and myths and laid a foundation upon which to reconceptualize present educational practices and launch new initiatives. This foundation recognizes the homogeneity/heterogeneity within and between such populations."(Garcia, 1995). The study findings for early childhood contribute important knowledge to general instructional organization, literacy development, academic achievement in content areas and the perspectives of children, families, and educators. Therefore, educators should recognize that academic development has its roots in sharing knowledge and experiences through communication. Within the knowledge-driven curriculum, skills are tools for acquiring knowledge, not an essential goal of teaching events.

3. Educational leadership

Educators need to move beyond national educational goals. Educational leadership is needed to spread new knowledge, to apply new knowledge to skill development, and to engage in childhood development. [69]

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9.3: Practices to Promote a Multicultural Classroom

Curriculum and activities need to be carefully designed and implemented in the program. An antibias curriculum can help children to learn about their own identity and to respect different gender, ethnicity, races, backgrounds among people.

Teaching to Children's various Learning Styles

Every child learns in different ways. To be able to meet children's physical, emotional, social, and academic needs, educators need to know each child's unique learning style.

Welcoming Family and Community Involvement

Educators should provide families and the community frequent opportunities to be involved in school activities. Some recommendations are personalizing your approach to the family, ensuring communication is nonjudgmental, expressing resolve in maintaining involvement, providing strong leadership and administrative support, and managing community outreach.



Figure 6.1: These families are enjoying their involvement in the classroom [70]

Supporting and Valuing Every Child

The concepts of valuing the individual and respect for human diversity have evolved slowly over the ages. Every child needs to be treated as an individual and children need to learn their own identity and background. [71]

Supporting Children's Understanding of Fairness and Respect for Others

“That’s not fair!” expresses a preschooler’s concern for fairness, and the child’s growing sensitivity to others’ feelings also contributes to this concern. Efforts to act fairly can be manifested in turn-taking, sharing, cooperation, and understanding how preschool program rules help to maintain fairness. During the preschool years, children gradually become more capable of balancing their own interests with those of other children and of respecting others’ desires and goals. Teachers contribute to these achievements as they explain rules (and the reasons for them) that emphasize fair conduct, the need to cooperate with the interests of others, and using words to help children understand another’s emotions, viewpoints, and goals. It is also important to assist children when they think that fair equals the same. Sometimes what is fair is doing what is needed for each child. There are times that a child may need an adult’s help to do something (e.g., hold the jar steady) and another child is asked to do it without an adult’s help.

You can support this with the following interactions and strategies:

- Maintain a culturally inclusive environment; being mindful of the social expectations of children’s home cultures.
- Model respect and care in everyday interaction; listen attentively to children’s ideas and feelings.
- Use language that promotes concern and care for the community (e.g., our class, our room).
- Discuss the “whys” of fairness and respect; talk about the feelings behind situations (such as, not sharing); use situations in which children need adaptations to talk about differences and fairness.
- Teach social skills, such as patience and generosity, by using social stories and role-play experiences; perspective taking activities provide valuable practice for children.
- Coach children during their interactions with peers; build perspective by describing another person’s feelings and needs and offer suggestions for appropriate responses.
- Intervene and address negative interactions immediately to ensure the environment is one in which all children feel safe and secure.
- Use storybooks to enhance children’s understanding of ways to express feelings and build peer relationships. (see Chapter 8 on choosing books as part of your curriculum)

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9.4: Going One Step Further with an Anti-bias Classroom

“Numerous research studies about the early process of identity and attitude development conclude that children learn by observing the differences and similarities among people and by absorbing the spoken and unspoken messages about those differences.”(Hepburn, 2007). In order to teach children to respect and value diversity, educators should include the following elements in the early childhood programs:

Raising Cultural Awareness

Educators need to acknowledge that frequently developing their own multicultural awareness, attitudes toward children and their families, and knowledge and skills is necessary and significant. By doing that, appropriate instructional materials like multicultural literature should be provided in the class. In addition, an antibias and multicultural

Going One Step Further with an Anti-bias Classroom

The anti-bias movement was born out of the multiculturalism movement. Some of the people involved in the multiculturalism movement felt that it did not do enough to address social problems in the education system.

The anti-bias approach urges educators to be aware of biases that perpetuate oppression and create an inequitable environment and to eliminate them. The anti-bias approach is intended to teach children about acceptance, tolerance and respect; to critically analyze what they are taught; and to recognize the connections between ethnicity, gender, religion, and social class, and power, privilege, prestige, and opportunity. [72] Anti-bias curriculum also embraces differences and uniqueness. There is no such thing as "color-blindness." We need to accept and acknowledge differences.

The National Director of the Anti Defamation League, Abraham H. Foxman has said, "Children are born into this world without prejudice, but can learn prejudice as easily as the alphabet or tying their shoes; getting to children as early as possible is important when you want to instill them with positive images of themselves and others” (Anti-Defamation League, 2001, How Can We Stop Hate Before it Starts? section, para. 0). Therefore, while it is important to educate adults about bias and discrimination, raising children who will be anti-bias is an essential step towards achieving real change in our society. Incorporating anti-bias curriculum in early childhood education provides children with a foundation to fight for social justice later in their lives.

In the Classroom

A classroom environment rich in possibilities for exploring diversity provides children with opportunities to develop ideas about themselves and others, allows them to initiate conversations about differences in a safe environment, and provides teachers with a setting in which they can introduce activities about diversity (Stern-LaRosa, 2001, Talking to children about diversity: Preschool years section, para. 7). Teachers are an integral part of a child’s development, and can be key figures in shaping children’s perceptions of differences. They are influential role models who have the potential to teach children to be anti-bias.



Figure 6.2: Teachers are role models for anti-bias. [73]

The formation of children’s attitudes towards difference is a social process in which the family, school, and media all play major roles (Derman-Sparks, 2006, p. 15). Thus, in our society, children are constantly exposed to bias, prejudice, and discrimination, but the school is a place where these views can be challenged (Lee, 2006, p. 4). Because children absorb societal beliefs, it is important to teach them during their development to appreciate differences rather than allowing them to internalize society’s biases.

Children's experiences in early childhood shape how they will approach differences throughout their life. The preschool years lay the foundation for children's development of a strong sense of self, empathy, and positive attitudes towards difference and social interaction skills. The bias and discrimination that exist in our society has the ability to sabotage their healthy development in these areas. Through anti-bias activities and the help of educators, children can learn to resist various forms of bias (Derman-Sparks, 2006, p. 193). Even young children have the ability to be anti-bias; what children learn in the classroom can be transferred into action to combat the injustice they encounter in the world around them. [74] Children can be taught to be allies. This means that they are willing to stand up when they see bias occurring.

Curriculum

Anti-bias curriculum strives for the development of a student who will actively promote social justice. Through activities that build a strong sense of self, empathy, a positive attitude towards people different from oneself, and healthy social interaction skills, students may be guided towards the path of social justice.

The Anti-Bias Curriculum, developed by a multi-ethnic group of early childhood educators, promotes the following goals:

1. To nurture each child's construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-concept and group identity.
2. To promote each child's comfortable, empathic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds.
3. To foster each child's critical thinking about bias.
4. To cultivate each child's ability to stand up for her/himself and for others in the face of bias (Derman-Sparks, 2006, p. 193).

These principles should be a topic of discussion and a part of primary activities, but also relevant to students' role as activists, because, as Kalantzis and Cope point out, "Multicultural education, to be effective, needs to be more active" (Nieto, 2006 p. 26).

An integral part of anti-bias activism among young students involves awareness about the seriousness of the issue. It is therefore necessary to discuss and define principles and ideologies regarding prejudice with children from a young age. Sandra Fitzpatrick emphasizes the importance of starting with concrete examples and working towards the more abstract when working with particularly young students. She suggests role-playing and contextual conversations to help children grasp the concepts of race and prejudice. For example, the Dr. Suess children's book, "The Sneetches" is particularly useful in explaining that what is on the outside doesn't matter (Fitzpatrick, personal communication, April 24, 2008). Once students have a grasp on what prejudice is, and how it can hurt people, anti-bias activities can begin. Activism can happen right in the classroom, around the community, or in larger society.

One activity Louise Derman-Sparks recommends involves "flesh-colored bandages… a material of considerable interest to young children" (Derman-Sparks, 2006, p. 195). One day, while attending to a minor scrape, she said to the children, "Look at this—it says on the box that these bandages are flesh-colored. That means they are the same color as our skin. Let's see if it really is true." Each child then received a bandage on his or her arm, and they noticed that the bandages matched very few of the students' skin tones. The next day, they invited members of other classrooms to participate in the experiment. Noticing that the bandages were, indeed, not a universal skin color, they opted to write a letter to the company. The children dictated what they wanted to say, Derman-Sparks added a description of their experiment, and the letter was mailed to the company. They also got families involved, sending letters home about what they were doing. A few weeks later the class received a box of bandages with a polite note reading, "Enclosed find some transparent strips which are more flesh-colored" (Derman-Sparks, 2006, p. 196).

Although teacher-led activities are a great way to get students into the habit of speaking out against prejudice, when the students themselves lead, it becomes more than just an activity. It becomes activism. Early childhood educators Tara Karr and Sandra Fitzpatrick have seen remarkable cases of anti-racist activism within their classrooms.

Tara Karr, a pre-school teacher at Gorse Child Study Center, has found that her students are also capable of responding to those precious classroom events we call "teachable moments." This year she has a set of twins who are particularly vocal in reacting to other students' comments about the families made of "scary brown people" in stories or the "impossible" family structures that have two moms. Karr has found that when the twins reply with, "What is scary? She is saying only good things to her daughter," or "There doesn't always have to be a dad, family is the people that love you," the entire class jumps in for a student-led discussion about skin color, or what makes a family, etc. (Tara Karr, personal communication, April 25, 2008).

One year in Sandra Fitzpatrick's career as a kindergarten teacher at the Three Rivers School, the gym classes hosted a "jump-a-thon." The children were to raise money outside of school, and the students who had raised the most would win prizes. At the end of the competition, it was the students who came from wealthy families who had raised the most money, and therefore won the prizes. Fitzpatrick describes the students in her class who had not won prizes as "devastated," and those who had won prizes were

equally concerned. Having learned about prejudice earlier in the year, the class decided to take a stand against the biased system. They chose to return their prizes, talk to other classes in the school about the event, and make a video explaining why the system was unfair that they then sent to the American Heart Association, who had sponsored the event (Sandra Fitzpatrick, personal communication, May 5, 2008). [75]

Guiding Children's Behavior in Culturally Appropriate Ways

Children are products of their environment and their families are their first teachers. When children are enrolled in school, they bring with them what they have learned from their home environment. This could be positive or negative and it may fit well into their new learning environment or it may not. [76] "For children whose home language or culture differs substantially from the norm in early childhood classrooms, this transition may expose them to conflicting expectations about how to behave and other potential sources of [cultural difference between home and the early childhood education program]." [77]

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Culturally Appropriate Positive Guidance with Young Children by Zeynep Isik-Ercan, we have to remember that children have cultural routines that heavily influence their behavior. When caregivers and teachers respond to behavior it is important to consider the cultural scripts that children might be following.

They should consider the issue through a lens of culturally appropriateness that takes into consideration factors such as:

- Family traditions
- Religious beliefs
- Community etiquette
- Social class
- Contextual differences (such as urban, rural, and suburban practices)
- Parenting style

When educators respect a families cultural practices, even if they don't necessarily agree, they promote children's social and emotional well-being. One way to accommodate families' diverse perspectives on guidance is to provide a structure that is flexible to meet individual needs. And when children have conflict that stems from their cultural and linguistic diversity, educators can support children's developing social abilities by helping understand social norms and mediating their relationships. [78]

Guidance through Peer Culture

"Peer culture—'the stable sets of routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share with each other' (Corsaro 2012, 489)—is an important component of classroom culture. Teachers may gain valuable insights when they examine various elements of the peer culture in their classrooms and use children's interactions to establish positive guidance." Children can monitor and regulate their peers' behaviors before they can do the same for their own behavior. By interacting with other children, they receive feedback that helps them begin to internalize social expectations about their behavior. [79]



Figure 6.3: What might happen next in this situation (where the child in the back is using the toothbrush on another child's head) that will reinforce socially appropriate behavior?

Working through Conflict with the Anti-Bias Approach

In their book Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves , Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards provide guidelines that can be used to help children navigate conflict related to diversity in ways that protect all children's rights and are culturally responsive.

To support children's ability to recognize unfairness and the negative impact it has educators can:

- Notice and learn about the sources of children's misconceptions and stereotypes.
- Plan experiences that allow children to compare accurate representations to their inaccurate understandings
- Support their attempts to make unfair things fair

Educators should remember that biased behaviors are just as serious as physical aggression. To help children act against prejudice and/or discrimination, educators can:

- Notice when unfair practices affect children
- Facilitate dialogue about the feelings and ideas about these situations
- Provide information as needed to help children understand
- Think about the children and families and what their needs are and take into consideration how they handle prejudice and discrimination
- Provide diverse ways to handle discriminatory situations that will accommodate the diversity of families
- Plan and carry out actions to address the problem with children [80]
- If you are unsure how to respond, tell the child or children you will think about it and get back to them (ensuring that you always follow through)

Supporting Children's Conflict Negotiation

It is important for educators to coach young children, step-by-step, as they learn conflict resolution skills. Model a predictable, effective sequence of steps children can eventually use on their own: acknowledge feelings, gather information about the conflict, restate the problem, ask children to suggest possible solutions, help them choose one to try, and then check back with them soon after as they implement their solution. As they mature and practice, gradually step back and take a less central role in solving problems, prompting children if they "get stuck" on the path to resolution. After they do resolve a conflict, briefly summarize the ways children solved the problem successfully. This reinforces children's skills for the next time a problem arises.

Developmental Sequence of Conflict Negotiation

As children mature, they are able to better understand the perspectives of other people and can negotiate more constructively with peers to resolve conflicts.

1. Beginning level : Children can express to each other (using words, actions, or facial expressions) their own desires, but adults need to provide ideas for resolving disputes.
2. Next level : Children begin to use appropriate words and actions to express their perspectives and desires to each other and seek adults for help during disputes.
3. Next level : Children not only express their own needs and desires to each other during a conflict but can suggest simple solutions based on their own perspectives.
4. Mature or proficient level : Children can consider each other's perspectives when there is a disagreement and can suggest and agree on some mutually acceptable solutions. [81]

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9.5: Issues of Social Justice in the Early Childhood Classroom

Social justice and bias (implicit and explicit) have recently become key terms in the field of early care and education, but have been researched for many years. Dissecting biases can often lead straight to imbalances in social justice which include inequity in education, access to resources including food and healthcare, and in areas early educators see as vital to development such as play.

The Disappearance of Play

In early education, we have been taught that play is a child's work. Children learn about the world through play, practice social norms including role-playing, learn how to negotiate, use their imagination and release stress, develop fine and gross motor skills and misdirected energy. Yet as we look at early education centers who are located in lower socioeconomic communities, play can be little to none. Often times it can be used as a reward and given, or a punishment and taken away. Schools that serve impoverished communities may mistakenly eliminate play and replace it with more formal, structured instructional time, believing this will help children learn. This ignores the facts that children are fully engaged when playing, developing self -regulation through movement and choice, social-emotional skills by negotiating and building ideas together, and practicing what works in language. (K. Esquivel, 2019)

"Free play should not be seen as a "reward" for young children's hard work - play is the work of a young child. Early childhood educators must use play as a tool for cognitive and social-emotional growth." Young children need play in order to develop full, healthy lives. It gives them a unique way to engage with language and build literacy skills. It builds their knowledge as they solve problems, interact with concepts, and test their hypotheses. "Children build resilience, confidence, physical abilities, and relational skills as they engage in play with meaning."

Play is increasingly being pushed out of children's daily lives, in spite of the advocacy for play from researchers, psychologists, and early childhood educators. "The issue of missing play in schools is essential for educators to address as children continue to grow in stressful situations, requiring the unique supports that development through play offers. Children who experience a play-based early education are empowered as confident people with tools for healthy development in every area of their lives. Play is a tool that educators must use to honor children's needs as they learn and grow." [82]

Inequitable Access to Play as Curriculum

As we discuss the types of curriculums used in more affluent schools, we will see the vast difference on how play is welcomed, nurtured, appreciated and viewed as a necessity. We also know children from more affluent communities tend to have less behavior related challenges, more impulse control, and greater use of language which shows a direct correlation to the increased play that is received and valued.

As the next generation of early care and education educators, there is a need to be cognizant of the social justice issue rooted in play, while also acknowledging the biases which may be linked to children playing. Some of these biases are:

- Play is a waste of time
- "Those" children are already too wild and get more wild when they play
- Children are to be seen and not heard
- "Those" children are already behind and need to be learning not playing

Understanding why a family or school pushes back on children's play is an important first step towards change and delivering information and moving towards changing imbalances. Diverse cultures place differing value on play. Not all families will understand or agree with the importance of play for young children in early childhood education programs.

A disparity in materials purchased can also be noted and rooted in the feelings of certain groups being less deserving and/or not taking care of nice materials. As professionals, we know fancy materials are not needed, rather the upkeep of an inviting, clean environment and quality interactions using materials that are in good repair and rotated frequently to maintain engagement. Additionally, providing the 'basics' are needed such as:

- Various building materials
- Various art materials including writing
- Various books that are culturally relevant to those in the class
- Outdoor space with ways to practice fine and gross motor skills

Appropriate classroom materials including how to design high quality environments can be found in Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) for preschoolers or Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) for infants and toddlers. Additionally, there are separate tools used for family child care centers, Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (FCCERS-R) and for programs that serve out-of-school programs, School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS).

Differences in Food and Mealtimes

Meal practices vary based not only on family culture, but differences can be seen based on the location of the early education center. Schools located in more affluent areas have a tendency to get more fresh foods and homemade meals by default vs the opposite in other communities who receive packaged or processed foods.

Many programs are understanding the value in children having access to fresh foods including fruits and vegetables and are adjusting their practices and budgets accordingly. Families are also understanding the negative effects on children's growth and development along with the immediate effects on their child's behavior due to various dyes found in many foods (K. Esquivel, 2019).

In addition to the food served, meal time practices also vary. Meal times are most beneficial when they are enjoyable, not rushed, and filled with back and forth conversations that allow for children to socialize and practice social norms. Having family style meals (where the food is on the table and children serve themselves) allows for children to practice their fine and gross motor skills and leads to children trying a variety of foods they may not typically be exposed to. Educators must consider the possibility of push back because of family traditions, food scarcity, socializing at the table only being for adults and eating all things given is a must.

As you work with families who exhibit meal time traits that do not align with best practice, strategies discussed in Chapter 14 may be helpful. One strategy is starting a conversation with the family, while encouraging the child to take a more active role in their meals is a useful tool. There is a fine line between respecting the family culture and their wishes, and perpetuating social injustices that can be linked to socioeconomic differences (K. Esquivel, 2019).

It is also important to note that the use of food as a play material is a topic that families and early child educators may have strong feelings about. For some, especially those who have experienced food insecurity (not knowing where their next meal was coming from), it may be considered wasteful to use food for play instead of nourishing people. Programs may choose to implement a policy to respect the views and the values behind them.

Biased Response to Children's Behavior

Developing a culturally responsive understanding of child development is imperative to ensure child behaviors are not categorized as negative when they are actually rooted in race, ethnicity, and/or gender. Educators must acknowledge that goals and beliefs about children's development vary across different cultural contexts (the cultural context of the many adults in the child's life: parents/caregivers, extended family, practitioners, teachers).

The behavior of children of color, particularly Black, Latino and Native American boys, is often mislabeled as challenging and negative. Boys from these groups are singled out more often for displaying the same behaviors as and withheld from more opportunities than their white peers. They are suspended at much higher rates, even from preschool and are more harshly labeled as being aggressive, loud and disrespectful.



Figure 6.4: Behaviors in boys of color are more harshly labeled. How might this picture be interpreted?

Boys of color are seen as much older than their actual age, thereby having expectations being placed on them well beyond their ability. Research has shown that implicit bias, the unconscious beliefs each of us possesses about specific groups, plays a large role in the negative connotation given to typical child behaviors. [83]

In his experimental study, Dr. Gilliam asked early educators to watch a video of children in a classroom and press a button each time they saw a "behavior that may become a potential challenge". The video included four children- a black boy and girl and a white boy and girl engaged in a small group activity. In reality, the video had no challenging behaviors in it. Using an eye tracking device, the research team measured where teachers were looking on the screen. Findings revealed that teachers spent significantly more time looking at the Black boy in the video, than any other child.

This research may shed some light on the stubborn disparities we see in expulsion and suspension practices. If early educators are scrutinizing black boys more, looking at them more, expecting more challenging behavior from them- we may expect they may find it, or in some cases think they've found it, even if objectively it is not there.

When the federal government published its own data on preschool suspensions for the first time, the results were remarkably similar. Though black boys made up 18% of preschool enrollment, they made up 48% of preschoolers who had been suspended. New Federal data released just this year, again, show that the numbers haven't moved. While black children make up 19% of enrollment, they make up 47% of suspensions. This year's data also reveal that black girls make up 20% of the female preschool population, but 54% of all preschool girls suspended.

Of course, when we see such pervasive and long lasting disparities, many of us consider the possibility of bias in the system. Dr. Gilliam's research is important because it provides us with data that explicitly finds implicit bias in the educators and directors who work in our early childhood programs. While it is exceedingly disturbing that bias, which is pervasive across all systems, is also present in our early childhood programs, it is not surprising.

All of us have biases- no matter what our profession, no matter where we live, or where we're from. We are all exposed to a society that is full of implicit biases—biases of all kinds. In fact, research shows that while explicit bias has decreased in our country over time, implicit bias has remained stable. And it is instilled in us at very early ages. [84]

Chapter summary

The field is committed to educating professionals and practitioners on implicit bias. Organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Administration for Children and Families (ACF) including Head Start, as well as the California Department of Education (CDE) have been working collaboratively to address this need that is rooted in social justice disparities. You may want to explore some of the documents and websites linked throughout this book in the footnote attributions.

Teaching can do many things to help increase equity in classrooms. This includes using an anti-bias curriculum, addressing power and oppression, keeping culture as a context when providing guidance for children and helping them work through conflict.

There are social justice issues in the field of early childhood education that lead in inequity in education. These include the disappearance of and inequitable access to play, meal time practices and access to nutritious food, and biased responses to children's behavior.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Effectively Negotiating and Resolving Conflict Related to Issues of Diversity

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Articulate the importance of celebrating diversity
- Discuss why cultural differences may lead to conflict between families and programs
- Explain how to develop relationships with families that are inclusive and supportive
- Outline how to create practices and policies that respond to differences respectfully
- Describe three steps to deal with cultural differences in early childhood education programs

Working in an early education setting, with children, family and coworkers from varying backgrounds, conflict is inevitable. However, if managed correctly, conflict can be a learning and growing experience for all.

10.1: Differences and Conflict
10.2: Preventing Conflict
10.3: Navigating Cultural Differences
10.4: Dealing with Differences

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10.1: Differences and Conflict

Working in an early education setting, with children, family and coworkers from varying backgrounds, conflict is inevitable. However, if managed correctly, conflict can be a learning and growing experience for all.

In her book Diversity in Early Care and Education: Honoring Differences , Janet Gonzalez-Mena discusses the need to honor, learn about and explore not only other cultures different than ours, but acknowledge how our own beliefs play a role in our professional caretaking roles. She shares her own process, “They say we teach what we need most to learn. I am a good example. I’m working on my dialoguing skills. The problem is that when I have a strong reaction to something that doesn’t fit my system, I usually consider it a problem…..My natural reaction is to become defensive and start arguing.” This is a common response for many because our upbringing has taught us that our way is the ‘right’ way, so anything different simply doesn’t feel right.

As professionals, it is imperative we build relationships with families and create a classroom of inclusiveness that celebrates diversity.

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10.2: Preventing Conflict

Building relationships

Some conflict can be prevented when we build relationships with families based on a willingness to listen to hear about who they are and what they want for their children. Here are some cultural considerations to keep in mind as you work to understand the experiences and values families have and how you can best meet their needs:

- Many families are most comfortable keeping young children at home with a parent, relative, or friend, especially with families from the same cultural background. So, when they do rely on out-of-home child care, they may experience some discomfort and may not be aware of licensing requirements and restrictions.
- Some cultures may expect that the mother's primary role is taking care of children and the home. However, both parents may need to find work due to financial need and thus depend on out-of-home child care. This can create guilt, shame, fear, and discomfort.
- Families with limited English skills are likely to have difficulty gathering information about the varied early care and education options and may rely on word of mouth or recommendations from others within their ethnic or religious community.
- Families may seek reassurance that early care and education providers understand and respect their family's religion and will not inadvertently violate the family's religious practices (e.g., abstaining from pork products).
- Families of a child with a disability may not be aware of the legal educational requirements, learning possibilities, and school options for children with disabilities.
- Hiring staff from the same culture and language as families and providing opportunities for families from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds to connect may encourage family engagement and mutual support.
- Some cultures show respect for teachers by not being intrusive and interfering with their job (e.g., not offering suggestions or sharing negative opinions). By American standards, this can look like lack of interest. Families may not know the expectations for family engagement in school.

We can start conversations that will help us understand where families are coming from and how we can effectively and respectfully engage and communicate with them. Questions to ask might include:

- What are some ways staff can learn more about your perspectives and needs?
- How would you like to communicate and partner with staff?
- Describe what school was like in your country of origin (if the family has immigrated or are refugees). [85]

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10.3: Navigating Cultural Differences

Cultural differences can lead to conflicts. For example, people may disagree on practices for handling a baby, responding to crying, or feeding. Home visit staff may be concerned over how and when to intervene in family arguments. Staff and families in early childhood education programs may differ about how programs should support children's home or native language. Given the wide range of cultural ideas, it is not surprising that adults can have differences that are rooted in the core of their being.

Gonzalez-Mena (1992, 2001, 2008) indicated that these disagreements may be when adults from different cultural backgrounds may find that their familiar ways of working with children are different or when adults within the same culture can disagree. In both of these situations of conflict between program staff and families, Gonzalez-Mena identified four possible outcomes:

1. All sides gain understanding, negotiate, and/or compromise, leading to resolution of the conflict.
2. Program staff understand the families' perspective(s) and change their practices.
3. Families take on the perspective of the program staff and change their practices.
4. No resolution is reached (here, the conflict may continue or intensify; or both sides can cope with the differences).

Of course, conflicts can occur over numerous issues. To help program staff make progress, Gonzalez-Mena challenges them to question their own assumptions about child development practices (e.g., "My way of thinking about X is not the only way to think about it. My way of doing Practice Y is not the only way to work with the child."). Once this commitment to test one's own assumptions is in place, two goals for a conflict situation are: (1) to minimize (or eliminate) extreme differences in practices; and (2) to resolve the situation for the benefit of the child. Program staff are encouraged to take a child centered look at any situation of conflicting practices. [86]

The process for each varies greatly not only based on cultures, but even within similar cultures. These practices can often times go against program policy and best practice as we have been taught in the field. [87]



Pin it! Differences in Feeding Practices

The following is a scenario from the NAEYC's publication, Diversity and Infant/Toddler Caregiving :

"Junior, who is new to the center, is excited when he sees a bowl of food. The baby makes happy sounds, kicks his legs, and waves his arms. But when Helen puts Junior in the high chair and places the bowl in front of him, he just sits there and makes no attempt to feed himself. He looks confused and becomes distressed. Finally he slumps over, a glazed look in his eyes.

His mother explains later that she has taught Junior not to touch his food. In fact, her son has never been in a high chair; he has always been fed on his mother's lap, wrapped up tightly in a blanket to discourage him from interfering with her." [88]

Gonzalez-Mena and Bhavnagri suggest that when the family and program do not agree about a practice or policy, early childhood educators should ask themselves:

1. What is the family's cultural perspective on the issue?
2. How do the family's child care practices relate to their cultural perspective?
3. What are the family's goals for the child? How has the family's culture influenced these goals?
4. In review of these goals, is the family's practice in the child's best interest?
5. Is there any sound research that shows that the family's practice is doing actual harm?
6. Is the program's practice or policy universally applicable, or is it better suited to a particular culture?
7. Did the family choose the program because of its particular philosophy, even if it is based on a different culture from their own?
8. Have program staff members attempted to fully understand the family's rationale for its practices, the complexity of the issues, and other contributing factors?
9. Have staff members attempted to fully explain the rationale for program practices? Have they looked at how their own culture influences their perspective?
10. What are some creative resolutions that address the concerns of both partners and the program? [89]

The point is to begin and continue to dialogue with families and to exchange information with the goal of resolving the conflict for the benefit of the child. The “bottom line” is really: What is in the best interest of the child? As stated in the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s Code of Ethical Conduct , our first and foremost ethical responsibility to children is to do no harm.

By learning more about the goals that families have for their children, and about the types of behaviors or practices that families prioritize and implement as they raise their children, program staff can more easily match the learning experiences of the classroom to those of the home. For example, if a teacher is concerned that a 3-year-old in her class is not skilled with using a fork, she should first find out if this is a goal of the family. Do they scoop their food at home using spoons? Do they use chopsticks? Do they feed the child or allow the child to self-feed? It is best for the teacher to check what the family practices and goals are before they misjudge what this child needs from them in terms of support and understanding.

According to National Association for the Education of Young Children’s developmentally appropriate practice one of the tenets is to be culturally responsive. In preparing an environment that supports children and families, we need to ensure that we have considered the beliefs, values, and needs of the family to deliver curriculum that addresses the child both individually and as a group. [90]

These exercises can be done individually and at a staff/team meeting. It’s important to involve the family and all caregivers as a way to ensure all perspectives are heard. Now that questions have been identified, having the conversation to gather the information is next; however, this comes with challenges. As you enter into the conversation, it’s important to put personal biases and beliefs aside and be ready to actively listen to hear and learn about the family and their point of view. [91]

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10.4: Dealing with Differences

The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers (PITC) has outlined three steps in their training Dealing with Differences: Acknowledge, Ask, Adapt that can be used in early childhood programs that serve children of all ages.

Step 1: Acknowledge

How does the caregiver recognize the need for communication with the family? How does the caregiver's attitude convey sincere interest and response? What can the caregiver say to the family to communicate awareness that there is a problem they need to jointly solve?

- Take time to think about how you feel about this issue and get clarity on the reasons behind your feelings.
- Listen carefully to the other person's concern. If you bring up the concern, do it respectfully with an attitude of wanting to understand the issues.

Step 2: Ask

What questions can the caregiver ask the families to get information that will help her or him understand more precisely the families' point of view?

- The next step is about data gathering, trying to get to the real sources of conflict or misunderstanding for the family, the child or you. Ask questions that seek to clarify (and allow families to ask questions to understand the program's point-of-view).
- Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal responses. Restate what you think is being said, take time to be sure you are meaning the same thing in the language you are using.

Step 3: Adapt

How does the caregiver work with the family to define the issues and boundaries of the problem? Does the caregiver seek "common ground" as the basis for negotiation? How does the caregiver open up a negotiation with the family about what to do?

- Once the issues have been defined, seek out the common ground by stating your areas of greatest importance to each other. Listen carefully for areas of common agreement.
- Negotiate around the areas of important agreement and boundaries. Come to a resolution that addresses the real/major issues. Sometimes we have to agree to disagree. [92]

While using this method is a great start to get the most desired results, there will be instances when it won't take place. A few outcomes to become familiar and comfortable with are different outcomes that may come during the conversation.

- Sometimes there may be a resolution through mutual understanding and negotiation. Both parties see the other's perspective which is where both parties give a little or a lot.
- There may be a resolution that takes place through gradual education and understanding of the caregiver and seeing the perspective of the family.
- There can also be a resolution through the process of family education. This happens when the family sees the caregiver's perspective and decides to change.
- Lastly, and it's common, there can be no resolution. When this happens, the professional should look at Community Care Licensing Regulations(CCL), as well as internal policies and procedures to ensure no laws or rules are being violated. There are times when internal processes are created, but can be adjusted to meet the individual needs to families. These discussions and determinations should be made with the assistance and input of the site administrators. In some circumstances, the program and family may come to a mutual decision that the program is not a good fit for the family's needs.

Conflicts related to diversity are inevitable and should not be seen or approached in a negative way but rather with the goal of partnering to create the best environment for the child to thrive while in your care. The process of partnering takes time, mutual understanding and for at least one person to take the first, often uncomfortable step.

A few things to remember:

1. All families want what's best for their child and are doing what they believe is best
2. Be curious: what are the expectations the family has from you? From the program and for their child? This will help guide any conversations and interactions.
3. Become self-aware: what makes you uncomfortable? What are your personal beliefs?



Think About It…
Think about a time you had conflict related to diversity with a child in your classroom or family member. How could you have used these tools to create an equitable outcome?

Chapter summary

We know that being respectful of difference is valuable in an early learning setting. As indicated, these differences can lead to conflicts between families, early childhood professionals, and the program their child is enrolled in. With strong relationships, some of that conflict can be prevented. Early childhood educators can be reflective when disagreements over practices and policies occur. And they can use the three steps outlined by PITC's Dealing with Differences: Acknowledge, Ask, Adapt training to help mitigate the conflict respectfully.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

11: The Importance of Culture

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss what culture is and how it has been defined or described
- Describe how culture is passed
- Identify myths about culture
- Relate how culture affects development
- Explain the importance of being responsive to children and families' culture

11.1: Introduction
11.2: The Role of Culture in Development
11.3: Myths About Culture
11.4: Responsiveness to Culture and Language Supports Children's Learning
11.5: What Children See and Hear in Child Care Settings
11.6: Socialization in Two Cultures
11.7: Religion in Families
11.7.1: Introduction to Religion in Families
11.7.2: What Programs Can Do to Support Children with Religious Differences
11.7.3: Section Summary

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11.1: Introduction

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Discuss what culture is and how it has been defined or described
- Describe how culture is passed
- Identify myths about culture
- Relate how culture affects development
- Explain the importance of being responsive to children and families' culture

Culture is a broad concept that refers to the customs, values, beliefs, and practices of a group of people. It incorporates family roles, rituals, communication styles, emotional expression, social interactions, and learned behavior. Culture also refers to a shared way of life that includes social norms, rules, beliefs, and values that are transmitted across generations (Hill, McBride-Murry, and Anderson 2005, 23). Although cultural groups often share ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, these are not what define culture. Culture has been described as arising from "a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, of behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our lives" (Gay 2000, 8).

Culture infuses and is reflected in routines of daily living. Culture is a primary source of beliefs, attitudes, language, and personal efficacy (belief that one has control over and is responsible for one's life), sense of time (whether time is thought of in large chunks such as hours and days rather than precisely in terms of minutes and seconds), and perceptions of personal space. Culture is the source of the symbols used to capture aspects of life such as important life transitions, relationships, status and power, achievement, group identity, and the meaning of life and death. Culture conveys a set of beliefs about how social relationships should be ordered and how the world operates. [18]

A variety of definitions of culture are provided in the table below. The purpose of providing these definitions is to invite us to review and discuss the various definitions of the term as a framework for further discussions. [19]

Table 2.1: Definitions of Culture [20]

Culture is…
• The organized and common practices of particular communities. • A shared organization of ideas that includes the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and the meaning of communicative actions. • The complex processes of human social interaction and symbolic communication. • A set of activities by which different groups produce collective memories, knowledge, social relationships, and values within historically controlled relations of power. • An instrument people use as they struggle to survive in a social group. • A framework that guides and bounds life practices. • All that is done by people. • The ways and manners people use to see, perceive, represent, interpret, and assign value and meaning to the reality they live or experience. • The complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. • Shared understanding, as well as the public customs and artifacts that embody these understandings. • Patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. • Not so much a matter of inert system in which people operate, but rather a historical construction by people that is always changing.

Culture is complex and is something we are exposed to from the day we are born. It is a process detailed in the following deep structures:

1. Culture is a set of rules for behavior . Culture cannot be "seen" because the rules are invisible; one can see only the products of culture: the behaviors produced by the rules. Nevertheless, cultural rules do not cause behavior; they influence people to behave

similarly, in ways that help them to understand each other. It is by understanding a culture's rules that one knows how to greet a person younger than oneself, older than oneself, a friend, or a stranger. Cultural rules help people to know how to hold a baby. Cultural rules shape food preferences and celebrations—determine whether the sun or the moon is celebrated; whether to wear a dress or pants, or nothing at all. These rules give meaning to all the events and experiences of life. The essence of culture is not these behaviors themselves, but the rules that produce the behaviors.

2. Culture is characteristic of groups. The rules of a culture are shared by the group, not invented by the individual. The rules of the group, which are passed on from one generation to the next, form the core of the culture. Although one most remember that in addition to group cultural differences, there are individual differences. Each person develops a unique personality as a result of his or her personal history and, at the same time, develops in a cultural context with some behavioral characteristics that are shared by other members of the group.



Figure 2.2: Culture is not seen, but you can see the behaviors that result from acculturation. [21]

3. Culture is learned. No one is born acculturated; rather, each person is born with a biological capacity to learn. What each person learns depends upon the cultural rules of the people who raised them. Some rules are taught with words: "hold your fork in your right hand, and your knife in your left." Other rules are demonstrated by actions—when to smile, how close to stand when talking to someone, and so on. Because culture is learned, it is a mistake to assume a person's culture by the way she or he looks. Someone may be racially black and culturally Irish. A person can also become bicultural or mulitcultural by learning the rules of cultures other than his or her own primary group.
4. Individuals are embedded, to different degrees, within a culture. Culture is learned and as children are acculturated, they usually learn the core rules of their culture, yet they may not always learn each cultural rule equally well. Some families are more bound to tradition, others less so. Further, even though families and individuals learn the cultural rules, they may not always behave according to what they have learned—some people are conformists; others are nonconformists. Consequently, the behavior of members of a cultural group will vary, depending on how deeply embedded their experiences are within the core of a culture. Thinking about behavioral variations in this way helps those who work with individual families to understand why those from a similar culture do not share all culturally based behaviors.
5. Cultural groups borrow and share rules. Each cultural group has its own set of core behavioral rules and is therefore unique; yet some of the rules of Culture A may be the same as the rules of Culture B. This happens because cultural rules evolve and change over time, and sometimes when two groups have extensive contact with one another, they influence each other in some areas. Thus, two groups of people may speak the same language, yet have different rules about roles for women. Understanding of this concept helps to avoid confusion when a person from another culture is so much like the teacher in some ways, yet so different in other ways.
6. Members of a cultural group may be proficient at cultural behavior but unable to describe the rules. Acculturation is a natural process; as people become acculturated, they are not conscious that their ideas and behavior are being shaped by a unique set of rules. Just as a four-year-old who is proficient with language cannot diagram a sentence or explain the rules of grammar if asked

to do so, so also people may become thoroughly proficient with cultural behavior without consciously knowing that they behave according to rules. In the same way, understanding acculturation explains why one cannot walk up to a person and ask him or her to explain their culture.

Cultivating openness about culture and development promotes a curiosity for the early childhood educator that helps with curtailing the two common assumptions that exist in society today. The first assumption is that there is one set of “best practices” and one set of universal developmental goals for all children and families. By avoiding this static view and looking instead at culture as a fluid set of practices organized to accomplish specific goals, one sees that each cultural community may have a unique set of "best practices" to promote socialization and developmental goals for its children. These practices and goals are situated within the broader community context that includes political, social, and economic history.

The second assumption is that culture is equivalent to one’s ethnic or linguistic background. Looking at culture as a set of practices rather than as a person’s background provides a more powerful way to understand variations within ethnic and linguistic groups than simply comparing attributes across groups. As teachers, early care providers, and researchers often note, it is typical for more differences than similarities to appear among children from the same ethnic or linguistic backgrounds. Families from similar ethnic or linguistic backgrounds do not necessarily have the same routines, goals, or practices. Routines, goals, and practices are developed in the context of a family’s history, including cultural and linguistic heritage, but they vary across regions and from country to country and are usually associated with the immediate and recent social, political, and economic goals of the community. The cultural practices, or routine ways of doing things, define the cultural context in which humans develop. Using this approach, practitioners and researchers can explore how culturally based practices with children drive developmental outcomes rather than focus exclusively on how developmental outcomes differ across ethnic and linguistic groups. The following vignette illustrates this concept. [22]

Naptime Struggles



Figure 2.3: Children patterns vary based on home culture. [23]

José is a 17-month-old child whose family lives in an apartment in a large city located close to the Mexican border. His family has recently moved to the United States and has been living with his aunt and her four children. José has been attending a local infant/toddler program for almost two months. His teachers report that naptime is particularly difficult for José. Although obviously very tired, José struggles to transition to his cot and often lies on the floor and cries, which disturbs the other children and often wakes them.

José's primary care teacher has tried carrying José to his cot and giving him a book or favorite toy to help him calm down; however, José rolls off the cot and onto the floor and continues to cry. When José finally does fall asleep, it is usually time for the children to get up and have a snack. The lead teacher, Carla, decides to bring up this issue to her supervisor during her next reflective supervision meeting.

When asked to describe how José's behavior during naptime makes her feel, Carla shares that she feels sad for José because he is so obviously distressed and that she wishes she could do something to help him. She also feels that since José has been in the program for almost two months, he should be able to make the transition to naptime more easily. When asked how José's behavior makes her feel in her role as lead teacher, Carla shares that she feels ineffective as a teacher and worries about the effect that José's behavior has on the other children. She also worries about how she and her assistant will get their lunch breaks since all children need to be asleep in order for one of them to leave the classroom.

Carla's supervisor suggests that she do a home visit to get to know the family better and learn more about the family's caregiving routines. During the home visit, Carla learns that José has slept with his mother since birth and that in José's country of origin, children typically sleep with a parent until another sibling is born, at which time they generally move to an older sibling's bed. When discussing this with her supervisor, Carla comes to understand that co-sleeping reflects a goal of José's cultural community, which is to foster interdependence. [24]

As this vignette illustrates, the interdependence valued in José's home is dramatically different from the emphasis on self-reliance and autonomy found in his early care program. Researchers have reported that environments where sleep patterns are different from those of the home setting can lead to uncertainty for children (Provence, Naylor, and Patterson 1977) and that sleep patterns are often among the final practices to change when a family moves to a new country (Farooqui, Perry, and Beevers 1991). José experiences very different practices in the early care program, which are based on the goal of independence, from those he experiences at home. By making a home visit to learn more about family practices, Carla has taken an important first step toward understanding José's behavior and creating a sensitive and responsive classroom. [25]

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11.2: The Role of Culture in Development

Although the early childhood field has a long history of commitment to developing culturally appropriate approaches to educating young children ("multicultural education"), it still struggles with understanding the role of culture in the development of our youngest children (Maschinot 2008; Derman-Sparks and Olsen Edwards 2010). To develop a culturally responsive approach, it is essential to understand that what children learn from families and teachers is an idea system that extends deep into the values of a group of people. Learning goes far beyond the things generally associated with culture, such as art, music, styles of dress, or holidays. As a child acquires cultural ways of being, these cultural rules for behavior impact identity by giving children the tools to understand their family/community and be understood in it.

Acquiring the idea system of the group is so powerful that it gives children the ability to interact with the group. For example, babies are born with the capability to make sounds; however, those sounds become meaningful only as they communicate with their families. Through communication the sounds are shaped and organized into the words and sentences the babies' families use to share meaning. Thus, as children come to know the ideas that govern speech and language in their community, they gain the power to communicate and to represent themselves in the world.

So, when teachers treat culture with an almost exclusive emphasis on the celebrations, styles of dress, art, music, and food habits, they fail to appreciate the depth of cultural impact and the idea system at work in the process of development. Although a child's identity is impacted by participation in family cultural rituals, the focus neither starts nor ends there. Surrounding children with artifacts and customs that are a part of their history, homes, and communities is important. However, when that approach becomes the sole emphasis in attempts to embrace culture, it diverts attention from the more fundamental role that culture plays in the development of children's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual well-being. The challenge for teachers of young children is to understand the importance of culture to human development and to move beyond mere cultural appreciation and enrichment to cultural empowerment. [26]



Figure 2.4: Children learn by being around others that are different than themselves. [27]

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11.3: Myths About Culture

Myth 1, Essentialism : It is possible to learn all there is to know about a culture by studying its traditions, beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

Truth : It is nearly impossible to reduce the essential and distinguishing features of any culture or cultural group to descriptive statements or lists of characteristics

Myth 2, Overgeneralization : Cultural practices and beliefs apply in the same way to all members of a cultural group.

Truth : Cultures are dynamic and constantly evolving in response to such factors as environmental conditions, new challenges, technology, and acculturative pressures resulting from close encounters with other cultural groups. Cultures that are in proximity borrow from and are influenced by one another.

Myth 3, Assumption of stability : Cultures are static, constant, and stable.

Truth : The shared system of beliefs, morals, values, attitudes, practices, roles, artifacts, symbols, and language that make up a culture are adaptive, dynamic, and in constant flux in response to changes in the social context. Cultures change in response to strains, opportunities, and altered social landscapes. Learning and relearning must take place continually.

Myth 4, Single-culture assumption : Within a home and family, a single culture predominates.

Truth : Within in a single family there may be blending of several distinct cultures and ethnic identities. This means that individuals living with a single family may reflect not one, but several cultural traditions. [28]

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11.4: Responsiveness to Culture and Language Supports Children's Learning

Responsive environments create a climate of respect for each child's culture and language when teachers and other program staff partner and regularly communicate with family members. They work to get to know the cultural strengths each child brings to their early childhood education program. An essential part of being culturally and linguistically responsive is to value and support each child's use of home language, for continued use and development of the child's home language is beneficial, as is becoming multilingual (learning English in addition to any home languages).

Equally important are nurturing interactions with children and their families in which ". . . teachers attempt, as much as possible, to learn about the history, beliefs, and practices of the children & families they serve. . . ." In addition to being responsive to the cultural history, beliefs, values, ways of communicating, and practices of children and families, teachers create learning environments that include resources such as pictures, displays, and books that are culturally rich and supportive of a diverse population, particularly the cultures and languages of the children and families in their preschool setting. Community members add to the cultural richness of a preschool setting by sharing their art, music, dance, traditions, and stories. [29]

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11.5: What Children See and Hear in Child Care Settings

Messages about who matters or does not matter—and who matters more—are significant pathways of bias and inequity. The visual and auditory environment of early childhood education programs communicate many of these kinds of messages. These matter because young children are just beginning to amass and process information about themselves and others. And this awareness starts very early. For example, as young as six months, infants begin to notice differences in skin color (Bronson and Merryman 2009; Katz 1976). Noticing, paying attention to, or being curious about differences and similarities in their environment is not a sign of emerging prejudice, but rather a characteristic of how all children learn.

Inaccurate and stereotypical images of people like themselves are one type of bias that young children may encounter in the early care program. Those images communicate misinformation about their own social identities, which damages their developing sense of self and family. They need accurate, authentic photographs, posters, and pictures of themselves and their families. To begin to develop positive attitudes toward people different from themselves, children also need accurate images about people different from themselves. They do not need misinformation from commercialized, stereotypical, or cartoon looking images of people. Visibility (or the lack thereof) is another powerful pathway of bias and inequity.

When children see images of people who look like them, they receive a positive message for their self-concept. However, seeing only images similar to them conveys a second, negative message: only people like you exist or are important. Conversely, young children who do not see images of people similar to them in the early care and learning environment receive the message that they do not matter as much as the people whose images and languages are visible. Experiencing invisibility in an early childhood education program is especially damaging, since it is one of the first societal institutions that very young children encounter.

The numerical balance of images that reflect diverse racial identities, families, and cultural ways of life also conveys messages about who matters and who matters more. When the majority of the images in an early childhood environment reflect the “way of life defined by the dominant group in society as the “normal or right way to live, the message conveyed is that the dominant group is the most important. When one cultural group’s way of life becomes the standard for everyone else, the seeds of racial and cultural advantage and disadvantage are sown.

In addition to the visual environment, the sounds of a program also convey information about whose family’s way of life matters or not. The language of the program is the most obvious source of sound—and it may or may not be what children hear at home. Hearing a language different from the one at home creates a more complicated adjustment and developmental challenges for young children than that experienced by those whose home language matches the program’s language. Similarly, the sounds of music and song evoke—or do not evoke—the security of home, depending on how similar or different they are from what a child is used to.

A growing body of research also indicates that misinformation and prejudice about social identity harm children’s development (e.g., Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2004; Tatum 2003). The negative impact is cumulative—coming not just from messages of direct prejudice, but also from the effect of microagressions, brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership, [248] as well as messages of invisibility regarding who they are.

Children receive both overt messages and covert messages, those that are disguised and subtle and often rationalized in ways that lead to societal acceptance [249] in many forms. They also are exposed to prejudices and discriminatory actions in their daily lives. These all build up to become toxic to children’s sense of self, well-being, and competence. A non-biased environment is a necessary condition for nurturing each child’s healthy identity and positive attitudes about diversity. However, the visual and auditory environment is only one component of culturally responsive programs. [250]

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11.6: Socialization in Two Cultures

The widespread use of outside-the home group and family care signifies that, for the first time in human history, the family—nuclear and extended—is no longer the only primary child-rearing environment of young children. This means that in the earliest years, hundreds of thousands of children experience two differing cultural contexts every day—that of the family and that of early care and education. Thus, the cultural continuity, the consistency of cultural practices, in child rearing is disrupted.

Paying attention to cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity between home and early childhood education programs is a central issue in a culturally responsive approach. Where a child's experiences fall on the continuity-discontinuity continuum depends on the degree of similarity or difference between the specific cultural dynamics of their family and those of the early childhood program. These include fundamentals such as furniture, equipment, spatial organization, care procedures, language, and how staff members interact with the children and each other. Some children experience a high degree of continuity, while others experience a high degree of discontinuity. The more discontinuity children face, the more they find that what they are learning in their family about how to be in the world does not work for them in the care and education program.

Discontinuity between very young children's two primary socialization environments may have negative effects on children. The degree of familiarity or unfamiliarity with a program's care practices makes it easier or harder for children to adjust, to build strong relationships, to act and feel competent, and to feel secure. It is also known that a primary source of a child's sense of belonging, security, and empowerment in an early childhood education program comes from as much continuity as possible with what children experience in their home culture.



Figure 15.8: Continuity between the home culture and ECE program is important. [251]

Young children thrive when an early childhood program respects and integrates their home languages and cultures into all of its operations. In such programs, children can learn and develop because they feel "supported, nurtured, and connected not only to their home communities and families but also to teachers and the educational setting" (NAEYC 1995, 2). In sum, when a child's home culture (including language) differs significantly from the culture of her/his childcare program, she does not have the opportunity to thrive. [252]

Chapter summary

Culture can be defined in many ways, is complex, and is continually developing. It affects the way children and their families behave, what they value, and their identities. It is critical that early childhood educators partner with families to understand, value, respect, and honor the individual cultures of the children in your early childhood education classroom.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

11.7: Religion in Families

Learning Objectives

- Explain the following laws within the Ideal Gas Law

Children in early childhood classrooms will come from families with a variety of religious beliefs. This chapter will introduce major religions in the U.S. First let's look at the religious make-up of the United States based on a 2016 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute.

11.7.1: Introduction to Religion in Families

11.7.2: What Programs Can Do to Support Children with Religious Differences

11.7.3: Section Summary

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11.7.1: Introduction to Religion in Families

Children in early childhood classrooms will come from families with a variety of religious beliefs. This chapter will introduce major religions in the U.S. First let's look at the religious make-up of the United States based on a 2016 poll by the Public Religion Research Institute.

Table 13.1 – Religious Affiliation in the U.S. [172]

Religious Affiliation	Percent of U.S. Population
Christian	70.6
Protestant	46.5
Evangelical Protestant*	25.4
Mainline Protestant**	14.7
Black church	6.5
Catholic	20.8
Mormon	1.6
Jehovah's Witnesses	0.8
Eastern Orthodox	0.5
Other Christian	0.4
Unaffiliated	22.8
Nothing in particular	15.8
Agnostic	4.0
Atheist	3.1
Non-Christian	5.9
Jewish (Judiasm)	1.9
Muslim (Islam)	.9
Buddhist	0.7
Hindu	0.7
Other non-Christian	1.8
Didn't know/Didn't answer	0.6

* Evangelic Protestants are found across many Protestant denominations. The main movements are Baptist churches, Pentecostalism, and Evangelicalism

**Mainline Protestant includes: Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, American Baptist, United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Quakers, Reformed Church of America, and others [173]

Religion in California

In 2019, California had the following representations of religious beliefs:

- Protestant (Christian) - 32%
- Catholics (Christian) - 28%
- Non-Religious (atheist, non-affiliated theists, and agnostics) - 27%
- Jewish - 3.2%
- Muslim - 1%

- Other (Buddism, Shinto, Sikhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Mormon, and others) [174]

Unaffiliated/Non-Religious

As shown in being the second most identified religious practice/belief in both the in the U.S. in general and specifically in California, it is important to note that every society also has nonbelievers, such as atheists, who do not believe in a divine being or entity, and agnostics, who hold that ultimate reality (such as God) is unknowable. While typically not an organized group, atheists and agnostics represent a significant portion of the population. It is important to recognize that being a nonbeliever in a divine entity does not mean the individual subscribes to no morality. [175]

A Quick Look at the Most Practiced Religions in the U.S.

Religions have emerged and developed across the world. Some have been short-lived, while others have persisted and grown. In this section, we will very briefly introduce the five most praticed religions in the U.S. This is not intended to be a replacement for learning more about world religions or about the specific religious views and practices of each of the families in your program.

Christianity

Today the largest religion in the world, Christianity began 2,000 years ago in Palestine, with Jesus of Nazareth, a charismatic leader who taught his followers about caritas (charity) or treating others as you would like to be treated yourself.

The sacred text for Christians is the Bible. Different Christian groups have variations among their sacred texts. For instance, Mormons, an established Christian sect, also use the Book of Mormon, which they believe details other parts of Christian doctrine and Jesus' life that aren't included in the Bible. Similarly, the Catholic Bible includes the Apocrypha, a collection that, while part of the 1611 King James translation, is no longer included in Protestant versions of the Bible. Although monotheistic (worshipping a single god), Christians often describe their god through three manifestations that they call the Holy Trinity: the father (God), the son (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a term Christians often use to describe religious experience, or how they feel the presence of the sacred in their lives. One foundation of Christian doctrine is the Ten Commandments, which decry acts considered sinful, including theft, murder, and adultery. [176]

Judaism

After their Exodus from Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C.E., Jews, a nomadic society, became monotheistic, worshipping only one God. The Jews' covenant, or promise of a special relationship with Yahweh (God), is an important element of Judaism, and their sacred text is the Torah, which Christians also follow as the first five books of the Bible. Talmud refers to a collection of sacred Jewish oral interpretation of the Torah. Jews emphasize moral behavior and action in this world as opposed to beliefs or personal salvation in the next world. [177]

Identifying Jewish is not necessarily indicative of religious beliefs or practices. Many people identify themselves as American Jews on ethnic and cultural grounds, rather than religious ones. [178]

Islam

Islam is monotheistic religion and it follows the teaching of the prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 570 C.E. Muhammad is seen only as a prophet, not as a divine being, and he is believed to be the messenger of Allah (God), who is divine. The followers of Islam are called Muslims. [179]

Islam means "peace" and "submission." The sacred text for Muslims is the Qur'an (or Koran). As with Christianity's Old Testament, many of the Qur'an stories are shared with the Jewish faith. Divisions exist within Islam, but all Muslims are guided by five beliefs or practices, often called "pillars": 1) Allah is the only god, and Muhammad is his prophet, 2) daily prayer, 3) helping those in poverty, 4) fasting as a spiritual practice, and 5) pilgrimage to the holy center of Mecca.

In example of how different cultural identities may intersect, Muslims are the most likely to be born outside of the U.S. and are the most diverse religious community. They are also the most likely religious group to report discrimination (which is referred to as Islamophobia). [180]

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama around 500 B.C.E. Siddhartha was said to have given up a comfortable, upper-class life to follow one of poverty and spiritual devotion. At the age of thirty-five, he famously meditated under a sacred fig tree and vowed not to rise before he achieved enlightenment (bodhi). After this experience, he became known as Buddha, or

“enlightened one.” Followers were drawn to Buddha’s teachings and the practice of meditation, and he later established a monastic order.



Figure 13.1: A family worshipping at a Buddhist temple. [181]

Buddha’s teachings encourage Buddhists to lead a moral life by accepting the four Noble Truths: 1) life is suffering, 2) suffering arises from attachment to desires, 3) suffering ceases when attachment to desires ceases, and 4) freedom from suffering is possible by following the “middle way.” The concept of the “middle way” is central to Buddhist thinking, which encourages people to live in the present and to practice acceptance of others (Smith 1991). Buddhism also tends to deemphasize the role of a godhead, instead stressing the importance of personal responsibility (Craig 2002). [182]

Hinduism

The oldest religion in the world, Hinduism originated in the Indus River Valley about 4,500 years ago in what is now modern-day northwest India and Pakistan. It arose contemporaneously with ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures. With roughly one billion followers, Hinduism is the third-largest of the world’s religions. Hindus believe in a divine power that can manifest as different entities. Three main incarnations—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—are sometimes compared to the manifestations of the divine in the Christian Trinity.

Multiple sacred texts, collectively called the Vedas, contain hymns and rituals from ancient India and are mostly written in Sanskrit. Hindus generally believe in a set of principles called dharma, which refer to one’s duty in the world that corresponds with “right” actions. Hindus also believe in karma, or the notion that spiritual ramifications of one’s actions are balanced cyclically in this life or a future life (reincarnation). [183]

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11.7.2: What Programs Can Do to Support Children with Religious Differences

Early childhood education programs are often the first context in which children are confronted with different religions and religious attitudes than those experienced in their family environment, and it is very important that they learn to treat each other with respect and to be sensitive to differences. Taking children's opinions and interests into account and exploring how early childhood educational institutions deal with religious differences contributes to both childhood research and raising awareness of aspects of dealing with religious differences in educational institutions, which has not often been researched.

Young children notice religious differences, even when they don't quite understand it or may not have the language to fully explain it. Even though it is noticeable, religious differences are often overlooked in early childhood education. "Many teachers are uncomfortable talking about religion in their classrooms, yet many schools continue to celebrate the traditional Christian holidays, such as Easter and Christmas, which further marginalizes non-Christian students." [184]

The Importance of Communication

Communication plays a key role in dealing with religious difference. Religious difference increases the need for communication about religion and religions. People get to know each other in two-way conversations. "Otherness is not threatening, but awakens the desire for communication. It is precisely because one or the other is different that we need communication."

Early childhood education is a place for discussions between teachers, with administrators, and with children and families. If the staff and/or families in an early childhood program have different religious affiliations, communication about their different religious traditions makes sense in the kindergarten.

Questions early childhood education programs should ask themselves, include:

Values

- What is the value base of the program?
- Who defines and promotes these values?
- How do these values encourage and promote dialogue and respect? • How do the values reflect the religious difference of the families served by the program?
- Are these values publicized and agreed upon with the families and community the program serves?

Policy

- How is religious difference taken into account and addressed in the admission of children to kindergarten?
- How far do policies promote values of religious difference and respect?

Program Recognition

- How does the program take religious differences into account?
- To what extent does the calendar reflect religious difference?
- To what extent do holidays reflect the diversity of religious holy days?
- To what extent is the religious difference in the range of meals offered in kindergarten considered?
- How is the wearing of certain clothing or religious symbols dealt with?
- How are conflicts and challenges arising from religious differences addressed?

Curriculum

- How does the curriculum address religious differences and how are they received by children?
- How far is the program's tradition based on the dominant religion of the program and/or larger community?
- When and in which areas is religious difference discussed?

Professional Development of Teachers

- How are teachers prepared to address religious difference?
- What opportunities are there for educators to educate themselves in relation to religious difference, and how are these opportunities taken advantage of?

Communication about religious difference

- How do programs connect with families to learn their desires for dealing with religious differences?

- How and when do team meetings take place in the program in which questions of religious difference are discussed?
- When do children address religious difference and how are children's curiosities about religion addressed?

Communication about religious difference can bring challenges. But when programs create trusting, reciprocal relationships with families, dealing with conflicts, including dealing with religious conflicts, offers the opportunities for programs to become more culturally responsive. [185]

Recognition of Minority Religions

In education, including early childhood education, there is a tendency to focus exclusively on the major religion, but not on the minor religions and religious differences. Research has found that children of the minor religions often do not feel comfortable expressing themselves about their religion or their religious expressions and that their religion is given little attention by early childhood education programs in general or in the behavior of the teachers. Inclusion and integration of all religions, both major and minor. Children should be not be expected to assimilate to the major religion. Religious students should have the opportunity to address their religious perspective and not hide it. When children of different world religions live together in the group, the children have a right to be heard and told about their respective traditions. [186]

Remembering Individual Differences in Religiousness

Children and adults belonging to a religion are also different in their religiousness, which can be seen in different forms of expression. It is important for early childhood educators to remember that how families observe and express their religion will vary, even within the same religion. [187]

Creating a Safe Place for Exploration

Even if complete equity cannot be achieved in early childhood education, it is important to strive for it and to develop a safe space in which children are recognized in their individuality and their difference and in which they can address topics that concern them. While most early childhood settings appear to be calm and friendly places on the surface, there may be a great deal of underlying inequity in practice, as both adults and children inevitably bring with them their own perceptions and prejudices to the setting and in their interactions with one another. [188]

> *If the children's religion and the resulting religious difference have no place in the kindergarten – if it is important to them – a part of them has no place.* [189]

Child-Centered Exploration of Religion

The naturalness and curiosity with which children encounter religious difference is a good foundation or learning processes about religious difference. The children's conversations or questions that suddenly arise during the program day can, provided that they are perceived and sensitively taken up by the educators, be opportunities for learning, in which an examination of religious difference can take place. [190] "For young children, sharing their stories can be a vehicle to open conversations about religion and diversity." [191]

Religious Differences Surrounding Food

Early childhood education programs should provide food that can be enjoyed by all children. Mealtimes offer a chance to make religious differences visible in the different eating habits of the children. It is critical that cultural (and religious) differences in food and meals be understood and respected by the program. How religious eating habits are dealt with in meals can therefore be an important indication of how religious differences are dealt with by the program in general. [192]

Clothing, Hairstyle, and Head Coverings

Some families may have religious practices that prescribe specific clothing, hairstyle, or head coverings. Early childhood education programs must learn about these practices from the families and help children follow these practices while the child is in the care of the program. [193]



Figure 13.2: Head coverings may be an important part of a person's religion. [194]

Celebrations

"Holidays and celebrations are important topics in schools because they offer interesting and relevant opportunities for students to learn about cultures different than their own and to develop awareness of how religion influences cultures." [195] Early childhood education programs should be careful that the celebrations they observe are authentic and reflect the values and beliefs of the families, they serve. The unique celebration of a festival of another religion without other consideration of religious difference in the program seems to miss the desired intentions despite the positive intentions. When festivals are celebrated, the question arises how this is done so that the celebration is not perceived as an "exotic activity" but is based on the recognition of religious difference in the program. [196]

Using Children's Literature

Multicultural children's literature can be used to help children become more aware of the many religions and religious traditions. "Reading and discussing multicultural literature fosters opportunities for students to not only learn about world religions, but to explore commonalities and differences amongst people from a variety of places and religious practices (Dever, Whitaker, & Byrnes, 2001)." [197]

Factual Information

Children need explanations from adults in order to understand religious differences they notice. Children are often not given an explanation on the religious background of some children who observe different religious traditions. If the children do not know the reason for the difference, they may unintentionally find an explanation that is hurtful or irritating for the children concerned.

Due to the importance of teachers in early childhood institutions and the teacher's diverse tasks in dealing with religious differences, teachers require interreligious competence. [198]

Professional Development

Early childhood educators often experience insecurity and fear of dealing with conflict or challenging situations, including those surrounding religious differences. Training of awareness of religious difference and the expansion of knowledge about different religions can take place to help build knowledge. Through support and professional development opportunities, the fears and concerns of the teachers and administrators can be addressed. This can lead to increased comfort surrounding addressing religious differences.

Staff meetings in which opportunities and challenges are discussed together make it clear that religious difference is not the concern of a single person in the program, but rather a common concern. Further training dedicated to the desires of the staff can be context-sensitive to the specific program and its situation.

One area that deserves further attention and training is that examination of one's own prejudices, as is implemented in an anti-bias approach. [199]

Dealing with One's Own Religiousness

In addition to knowledge, it is important for educators to examine their own values and attitudes in order to develop a sensitivity to different religions and world views. Dealing with one's own religion and religiousness is important to

- avoid confusing their own feelings with statements or actions of children.
- be able to receive children's opinions as impartially as possible.
- recognize the significance that religion could have for children.
- be able to recognize that in addition to the challenges that religious difference can bring, it also brings opportunities. [200]



Think About It…
How might it feel if you are caring for a child with different religious beliefs than your own (maybe even contradictory)? What would you need to do to ensure the child and family's beliefs are respected and honored in your classroom?

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11.7.3: Section Summary

The content within this section is intended to share information about the diverse populations within our communities and children that may be in early childhood education programs. It would be impossible to represent every aspect of all forms of diversity. And ultimately each family is an expert of their background and family history. As early childhood educators it behooves us to create a learning environment of inclusivity while honoring individuality. This should be done by creating a relationships with families that allows you to learn about who they are.

Understanding a family's cultures and dynamics takes curiosity, patience, commitment, and a willingness to feel uncomfortable at times. It also takes courage and humility to reflect on our own experiences and understand how they affect our attitudes toward families. And it requires a readiness to recognize when we have misunderstood or made a mistake. Our interactions are always a result of cultural influences—ours and those of the families in our programs. Program expectations, routines, and policies also influence our interactions with families. It is our responsibility to be open to understand and appreciate the meaning of a family's choices, even if they do not align with our own preferences or the policies of our program. The process of understanding the cultural beliefs, values, and perspectives of others – as well as those of our own – is essential to effective family engagement. [201]

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Race, Ethnicity, and Language

Learning Objectives

- Explain the following laws within the Ideal Gas Law

12.1: Introduction
12.2: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity
12.3: Immigrant and Refugee Populations
12.4: Dual Language Learners
12.5: Summary

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12.1: Introduction

Some of the ways the children and families you will serve are related to race, ethnicity, national origin, and language. This chapter will explore the race and ethnicity and demographics of young children in California, how collectivist and individualistic cultures differ, information about immigration, including refugees and asylees, and children that are dual language learners. Guidance and suggestions are provided to help programs use what they know about these in the children and families they serve to support and include all families effectively.

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12.2: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity

Introduction

Chapter 8: Race, Ethnicity, and Language

Introduction

Culture, Race, and Ethnicity

Culture, language, ethnicity, race, and national origin are related concepts by which individuals are assigned to social groups, but they are not one and the same. For example, persons of African descent living in the Caribbean, Latin America, Nigeria, South Africa, or the United States may be classified as falling within the same racial category, but they belong to different cultural groups. Jamaican or Haitian families living in California may be lumped into the same racial or ethnic category as Black or African American families that have lived in the United States for generations. Although language, ethnicity, and national origin may be associated with culture, none of them alone define a specific cultural group. For example, Spanish speakers in Europe, Mexico, Africa, Central or South America, and the United States share a language with common features, but may have divergent cultures and self-identify with different racial groups.

National origin—such as being from China, Sudan, or Peru—does not sufficiently specify a cultural group because within each of these nations exist groups with several distinct cultures. Racial group is sometimes confused with cultural group. Race is a social construct that has no basis in culture, biology, or genetics. Race is a social category that is based either on self-identification or how individuals are seen by others. This means that the traditional ethnic and racial categories such as those used in the U.S. Census are social categories that fail to specify culture even though they continue to be interpreted by many as cultural categories. [93]

In the U.S. Census, there are five categories of race:

- American Indian or Alaska Native. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- Asian. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- Black or African American. A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as "Haitian" can be used in addition to "Black or African American."
- Hispanic or Latino. A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, "Spanish origin," can be used in addition to "Hispanic or Latino."
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- White. A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Ethnicity comes closer to defining cultural groups than race or national origin, but it is not a perfect match. Ethnicity refers to a group's identity and denotes a people bound by a common broad past. Members of an ethnic group often share a common ancestry, history, and sometimes language. To the extent that an ethnic group uses a common language, shares practices and beliefs, and has a common history, members of ethnic groups may be said to share a culture. However, ethnicity and culture are not always the same. Individuals may not necessarily identify strongly with the group to which they are assigned (in the minds of others). Nevertheless, ethnicity is a useful concept because it signals a group identity and a sense of connection and belonging. [94]

In the U.S. Census there are only two ethnicity categories : "Hispanic or Latino" and "Not Hispanic or Latino." [95] But the idea that all Latinos are white or nonwhite is inaccurate. The idea that a large subgroup all has one big group identity is superficial and does not represent the reality today in California. [96]

Demographic Information for Young Children in California

In 2010, of the more than 2.5 million children under the age of five living in California, about half of these children were Latino (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). It is important to note that Latinos may be of any race, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. White non-Latino children make up 30 percent of children under five in California, Asian-Pacific Islanders make up 10 percent, Black or African Americans make up 6 percent, and the remaining 4 percent represent a wide range of ethnic groups (Whitebook, Kipnis, and Bellm 2008). [97]



Figure 8.1: Recognizing the importance of families and culture is important. [98]

Collectivist Versus Individualist Cultures

A feature that has often been used to distinguish societies and cultural groups is where they fall along a continuum from individualist to collectivist orientations.

In collectivist societies, the self is defined principally in terms of identity with the group (Roland 1988). When what may be good for the whole competes with what may be good for the individual, the good of the whole takes precedence. In societies at the collectivist end of the continuum, children are imbued with the sense that their behavior will reflect for the good or the bad on the rest of the group. They may be instilled with a sense of shame if they behave in a way that reflects badly on the group.

In a family with an individualist cultural orientation, each child has his or her own possessions. In some families with a more collectivistic perspective, private ownership is downplayed and everything is shared. When the family has that perspective, they may require sharing from infancy on; whereas someone with a child development background or a more individualistic orientation might hold the view that the child must understand the concept of ownership before he or she can become a truly sharing person and that understanding usually starts in the second year of life. Sharing of the program's toys and materials is expected; however, if the child brings something from home, possessiveness is expected and there may be different rules about that in the program.

Individualist versus collectivist orientation should be understood as a tendency in a society rather than an absolute characteristic. Few would claim that pure forms of individualist and collectivist societies exist. Both orientations exist in most cultural groups, to varying degrees. This tendency is especially relevant in the context of teaching and learning, where children whose families emphasize a collectivist orientation may be more familiar with learning settings that focus more on group experiences and learning, while individualist orientations focus on individual work and learning, not in relation to the group. Individualist and collectivist orientations coexist within the same society. [99]

What Programs Can Do

Because of the diversity and dynamism of cultures represented in California's early childhood programs, efforts to profile cultural groups would be quickly outdated. In addition to the practices in Chapters 3 and 4, programs can also use Culturally Responsive Strength-Based (CRSB) Framework, which is used by Head Start, to address diversity. This framework presents the big picture and identifies the program pieces that support the growth and development of all children.

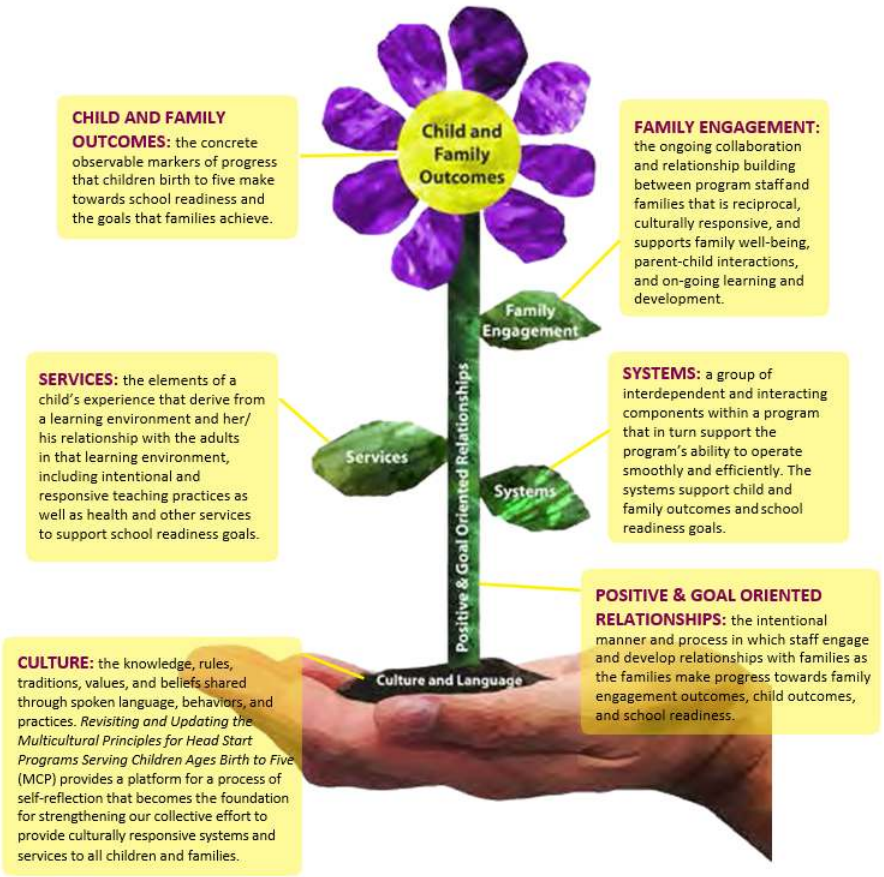


Figure 8.2: The elements of the CRSB Framework. [100]

Coupled with a culturally responsive approach, the CRSB Framework is a strength-based approach. The focus is on what children know and can do as opposed to what they cannot do or what they do not know. Cultural, family, and individual strengths are emphasized, not just the negative and proposed interventions to "fix the problem" that resides with the children, their families, and/or their communities.

> The strengths approach has a contagious quality and it intuitively makes sense to those who reflect a "cup half full" attitude in life. — Hamilton & Zimmerman, 2012
>
> If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find it, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. — Kral, 1989 (as cited in Hamilton & Zimmerman, 2012) [101]

The CRSB Framework should be used with the understanding that children are influenced by many environments, as represented in a bioecological systems model. A bioecological systems model captures the variety of environments that impact individual development over the course of a lifetime. Young children do not live in a vacuum, but co-exist in many environments that affect their development, starting with the family, extending into the community, and reaching out into the economic and political spheres.

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12.3: Immigrant and Refugee Populations

An immigrant is a person who has been granted permission by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reside permanently in the United States as a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR). They are eligible to apply for citizenship after five years. In general, immigrants come to the U.S. voluntarily, while refugees are forced to leave their homeland, often with little time for preparation. Some people entering the U.S. are considered undocumented immigrants (those who enter the country without invitation or application; or who enter legally as a visitor, student, or temporary employee, and stay after their visa expires). In addition, some groups are awarded a temporary status (such as "Temporary Protected Status") by USCIS due to extraordinary and temporary conditions in designated countries that would threaten personal safety. This type of status can be terminated at any time, and it therefore provides an uncertain future to those it covers.

Refugees are a special class of immigrants who have fled their countries of nationality and have been determined unable or unwilling to return to their countries due to a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees are screened and approved for resettlement to the United States by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Refugee migration may involve a long and difficult journey, long waits in refugee camps or other countries, extreme deprivation, and/or physical and emotional trauma, including torture. Asylees are approved according to similar criteria, but apply for asylum after they arrive in the United States.



Figure 8.3: This man was a refugee from Togo in 2005. [102]

In absolute numbers, the United States has a larger immigrant population than any other country, with 47 million immigrants as of 2015. [103]

What Programs Can Do

For refugee and immigrant children and youth, it is important to help them nurture a strong and positive connection to their ethnic heritage, to maintain their home language, and to develop a positive bicultural identity as Americans. This helps to keep families strong and thereby provides the support that children need to succeed in this country.

Refugee and immigrant families come to the United States with a wealth of parenting strengths, drawing on culture, tradition, and family experience. Like most parents in the U.S. they tend to be responsible and nurturing, and have often sacrificed tremendously to provide their children with an opportunity for safety and success in this new country. At the same time, families that are new to the U.S. have often experienced incredible loss and trauma, including the loss of extended family members, community, and homeland, and they must adapt to new traditions and lifestyles that are often at odds with their own beliefs and practices. Refugee and immigrant families also must overcome cultural, language, and practical barriers to learn about and access the community services that are available to them as having newly arrived to our country.

It is important for early childhood education programs to use family- and community-centered, strengths-based approaches with refugees and immigrants. This helps to maximize family and community input and build upon cultural assets in order to successfully engage and serve families who have newly arrived in the U.S. [104]

All providers can support families in identifying high quality early care and education options that can support a child's development and strengthen school readiness. Understanding the opportunities, activities, and options for family engagement can help families form meaningful home-school partnerships that benefit the entire family, program and community.

Learning more about families is an important part of creating a relationship and gaining valuable information about a child's culture. Consider using these or similar conversation starters:

- Describe what school was like in your country of origin.
- Who cared for your child when you needed support in your country of origin?

- How do you currently communicate and partner with staff at your child's school?
- What are some ways staff can learn more about your perspectives and needs?

Some cultural considerations that you should remember as you help families navigate an unfamiliar system of early childhood education:

- Many families are most comfortable keeping young children at home with a parent, relative, or friend, especially with families from the same cultural background. Some refugee families using in-home childcare providers may not be aware of licensing requirements and restrictions.
- Some cultures may expect that the mother's primary role is taking care of children and the home. However, both parents may need to find work due to financial need, or due to resettlement program requirements.
- Families with limited English skills are likely to have difficulty gathering information about the varied early care and education options and may rely on word of mouth or recommendations from others within their ethnic or religious community.
- Families may seek reassurance that early care and education providers understand and respect their family's religion and will not inadvertently violate the family's religious practices (e.g., Muslim children abstaining from pork products).
- Families of a child with a disability may not be aware of the legal educational requirements, learning possibilities, and school options for children with disabilities.
- Hiring staff from the same culture and language as families and providing opportunities for families from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds to connect may encourage family engagement and mutual support. However, it is important to identify any areas of discrimination or political conflict that program staff or families from the same region may have experienced.
- Some cultures show respect for teachers by not being intrusive and interfering with their job (e.g., not offering suggestions or sharing negative opinions). Families may not know the expectations for family engagement in school and their respect may look like lack of interest.
- Home-based programs may be an effective service model for some families that are less comfortable with center-based programming, or those who do not drive. Home visits can help to build trust and relationships for future center-based enrollment.

As you support the families, here are some valuable things that you can share with families about family engagement and the central role that families have in early childhood education programs:

- Early care and education plays a vital role in providing the environment and support to prepare children for success in school and in life. The quality of the relationships and experiences provided has long-term effects on their development, capacity to learn, and ability to regulate emotions.
- Family engagement has a positive impact on children's learning and skill development. Families and staff are encouraged to engage in open communication and develop meaningful relationships.
- To ensure responsive engagement, it is important for staff to build trusting relationships with families over time. Through these relationships, staff can learn about family's culture, values, and beliefs (e.g., health and nutrition practices, child rearing practices, home language, family composition, cultural celebrations, etc.).
- Families can offer their knowledge, skills, culture, and language by participating in decision-making classroom, and community events, at parent-teacher conferences, and as a volunteer in the program.
- Translation and interpretation services can support family engagement. This includes face-to-face experiences e.g., meetings and events, as well as written communication from the program and are essential to engage families who staff cannot speak or communicate with directly.
- The frequency of family engagement opportunities will vary from program to program. Programs will often meet with families at the time of enrollment to share information, to discuss a family's interest and ability to participate, and to consider cultural and linguistic needs or preferences.
- In the U.S., all children, including children with disabilities, are required to start attending school when they reach their state's compulsory school attendance age (generally between 5 and 7 years of age but dependent upon each state's laws). [105]

When integrating immigrant and refugee families into the community, celebrate cultural diversity. Work to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment that respects families and engages them in meaningful ways. [106]

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12.4: Dual Language Learners

Dual language learner (DLL) means a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. The term "dual language learner" may encompass or overlap substantially with other terms frequently used, such as bilingual or multilingual, English language learner (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP), English learner, and children who speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE). To be as inclusive as possible, in this book we have chosen to use dual language learner and multilingual in most contexts.

Language is essential in developing a strong sense of culture and overall learning. It has been noted that children who are dual language learners (DLL) form a substantial and growing segment of the preschool population in California. Sixty percent of all children under five are English learners. [107] For the majority of these children, Spanish is the home language, followed by Vietnamese, Cantonese, Hmong, Tagalog, Korean, and other languages." [108]

Over 200 languages are known to be spoken and read in California, with Spanish used as the state's "alternative" language. California has more than 100 indigenous languages, making California one of the most linguistically diverse areas in the world. All of California's indigenous languages are endangered, although there are now efforts toward language revitalization. [109]



Figure 8.4: Teachers can supplement oral language with gestures. [110]

Children who are dual language learners bring a wealth of ability and knowledge as well as varied cultural backgrounds to early childhood settings; they also require curricular adaptations to make the most of their abilities while they progress toward full English proficiency. Current knowledge, based on successful practices and sound research, strongly suggests that specific teaching strategies, individualized interaction approaches, and enhanced environments are critical to the long-term success of young children who are not native speakers of English. [111]

What Programs Can Do

The California Department of Education has developed the following guiding principles to assist practitioners in their work with children who are dual language learners:

- Families matter: T he education of children who are dual language learners is enhanced when preschool programs and families form meaningful relationships. It is through these relationships that teachers will not only learn about home language use but the hopes and aspirations that parents have for their children's overall development.
- Recognize existing language and literacy strengths in the home language: Engaging in multiple literacy practices, such as reading books, singing songs, and reciting poetry, is part of the daily life of many families. It is important to recognize that dual language learners have a variety of literacy experiences in their home language that range from an emphasis on oral language development to literacy activities involving print.
- Respect cultural values and behaviors reflected in the child's language and communication: Language and culture are highly integrated, so attention must be paid to cultural values and behaviors, which are embedded in both the language and communication style of the home language and the new language being learned.

Benefits of Maintaining Children's Home Languages

"All children benefit from the social and cognitive advantages of multilingualism and multiliteracy." [112] Specific benefits include:

- Individuals who are multilingual switch between different language systems. Their brains are very active and flexible (Zelasko and Antunez, 2000).
- Multilingual people have an easier time understanding math concepts, developing strong thinking skills, using logic, focusing, remember, and making decisions, thinking about language, learning about languages
- Maintaining home languages supports children's maintenance of strong ties with their entire family, culture, and community.
- Multilingual children are also able to make new friends and create strong relationships in their second language—an important personal skill in our increasingly diverse society
- Children raised in multilingual households show better self-control (Kovács and Mehler, 2009), which is a key indicator of school success.
- People who use more than one language appear better at ignoring irrelevant information
- Thinking in a second language frees people from biases and limited thinking
- What is learned in a home language creates strong foundations that can be transferred when learning additional languages.
- Multilingual adults have more job opportunities around the world than monolingual adults and earn an average of $7,000 more per year than their monolingual peers.
- Those that are multilingual can participate in the global community in more ways, gain information from more sources, and learn more about people from other cultures.

Multilingualism is an asset to individuals, families, and our entire society. Early childhood educators can share the benefits of bilingualism with families, find ways to support children's home languages, and encourage families to keep their language strong. It is important to "make sure families of emergent bilinguals understand the academic benefits and the significance of supporting their child's home language as English is introduced through the early childhood program, to ensure their children develop into fully bilingual and biliterate adults." [113]

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12.5: Summary

The race, ethnicity, national origin, language, and other cultural considerations are important aspects of diversity for early childhood educators to be aware of. Partnering with families will allow you to learn about the unique cultures of the families you serve. Families that are immigrants, refugees, and asylees should be recognized for their strengths and may need support as they navigate unfamiliar systems to access resources. It is important that programs promote bicultural identities. The home language of dual language learning children should be recognized and valued. Teachers should make sure that families understand the value of multilingualism.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Gender in Young Children

Learning Objectives

- Explain the following laws within the Ideal Gas Law

13.1: How Children Learn about Gender
13.2: Gender as a Social Justice Issue

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13.1: How Children Learn about Gender

Introduction

Sex refers to physical or physiological differences between male, female, and intersex bodies, including both primary sex characteristics (the reproductive system) and secondary sex characteristics (such as breasts and facial hair). Gender is a term that refers to social or cultural distinctions associated with a given sex; it is generally considered to be a socially constructed concept.

As young children develop, they begin to explore gender and what it means to be a boy or a girl. Cultures provide expectations for boys and girls, and children begin learning about gender roles from the norms of their family and cultural background. They also hear messages about gender roles from the larger world around them.

How children learn about gender

Through their interactions and their play exploration, children begin to define themselves and others in many ways, including gender. Children may ask their parents and teachers questions about gender, take on “boy” and “girl” roles in dramatic play and notice differences between the boys and girls they know. They may choose certain toys based on what they think is right for boys or girls. They may also make statements about toys and activities that they think are only for girls or only for boys (Langlois, & Downs, 1980; O’Brien, Huston, & Risley, 1983; Egan, Perry, & Dannemiller, 2001).



Figure 12.1: When we look at this picture, do we make an assumption about the gender child wearing these clothes? [152]

The ability to recognize when things are the same or different is an important skill that children develop over time. It’s only natural that they start asking questions to help them sort out the differences between boys and girls. It’s easy to see how they may think that being a boy means doing some things and liking some things, and being a girl means doing and liking other things.

Many things that may have traditionally been limited to one gender or another are not inherently male or female. We can help children develop an understanding of categories that can include both boys and girls by such simple, straightforward responses as “toys are toys” and “clothes are clothes.” These messages can help children learn that any child can, for example, play with any toy or dress up in any kind of clothing.

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13.2: Gender as a Social Justice Issue

The social impacts of imposing gender roles on children become evident very early in life and usually follow the child as they continue their development. It is most observable when they interact with other members of their age group. A child's peers serve as both an archetype and a sounding board for the proper way to express themselves.

Children are especially apt at noticing when one of their peers violates their established gender role. As Fagot (1990) found, children had a pronounced response when one of their peers violated their established gender role. Same-sex peers acted as the distributors of both rewards for proper gender role behavior and punishments for improper gender role behavior. Boys who preferred to play with dolls rather than trucks were five to six times more likely to be harassed by their peers than those who conformed to the norm. Girls who preferred to play firefighter rather than nurse were ignored rather than criticized. Most importantly, Fagot's study shows the effect of gender segregation on children; boys tended to respond more readily to feedback from other boys while girls likewise responded to feedback from other girls. By surrounding themselves with members of the same sex, children are placing themselves in a situation where they more readily accept and conform to accepted gender roles. A study by Bandura and Bussey shows that kids want to be like others of their sex. They begin labeling objects as "for girls" or "for boys" and conform to what is expected of them. [153]

The attitudes and expectations surrounding gender roles are not typically based on any inherent or natural gender differences, but on gender stereotypes, or oversimplified notions about the attitudes, traits, and behavior patterns of males and females. Gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism, or the prejudiced beliefs that value males over females. [154] This is problematic for all children, but especially those that do not conform to gender roles and/or who are gender diverse.

Let’s look a bit more at gender roles and learn how programs can promote equity based on gender and acceptance of all children’s gender identity.

What Can Programs Do

Children need a safe and nurturing environment to explore gender and gender expression. It’s important for all children to feel good about who they are and what they can do.

Sometimes we unintentionally expect and encourage particular behaviors and traits based on a child’s gender. For example, adults tend to comment on a girl’s appearance, saying things like “Aren’t you adorable?” or “What a pretty dress!”

On the other hand, comments about boys tend to center on their performance with a focus on abilities, such as “You’re such a good climber!” or “You’re so smart.” As an adult supporting healthy development, you can develop a habit of commenting on who they are as individuals.

You can foster self-esteem in children of any gender by giving all children positive feedback about their unique skills and qualities. For example, you might say to a child, “I noticed how kind you were to your friend when she fell down” or “You were very helpful with clean-up today—you are such a great helper” or “You were such a strong runner on the playground today.” [155]

Bias against Boys in Early Childhood Education Programs

There is an overall goodness-of-fit between girls and early childhood education programs. The early childhood education field reflects a female cultural orientation as “almost all early childhood teachers are women [and] most women seem to prefer behaviors and activities more often attributed to girls than boys.” [156] They also respond to the behavior of boys and girls differently. With girls, teachers tend to overlook behavior that is not appropriate, but with boys they tend to overlook behavior that is appropriate. The results in girls are seemingly more “good” than they may really be. By the same token, the teacher’s patterns of response imply that boys are more “bad” than they may really be. [157]

There is research that shows that early childhood education programs are not serving boys as well as they are girls. Here are some data showing less favorable outcomes for boys:

- While they represent 54% of the preschool population, boys make up 79% of those suspended once, and 82% of those suspended more than once
- Boys are almost five times more likely to be expelled from preschool
- 61% of kindergartners held back are boys [158]

There are differences from gender, both cultural and physical (such as hormonal influences on brain development) that result in boys and girls having different needs. This includes:

- In general, boys' brains and overall nervous systems develop more slowly than girls'.
- Boys being more physically active, engaging in more rough-and-tumble play, and showing more aggression than girls
- Boys tend to take up more space during both indoor and outdoor activities
- Boys tend to learn well through movement and hands-on activities, while struggling more than girls with memory and language (which results in more challenges with verbal instructions, literacy activities, and tore learning that many early childhood classrooms feature heavily) [159]

What Programs Can Do to Better Serve Boys

Programs can:

- Focus on true developmentally appropriate practices for each and every child; treat each child differently and recognize that developmental variability is natural.
- Have an environment and a curriculum that is play-based, hands-on, and whole-body that addresses the whole child.
- Don't use threats of withholding something a child enjoys as an incentive to complete a task that they do not enjoy or struggle with.
- Provide many opportunities for children to be successful.
- Destigmatize men in caregiving roles and increase the number of men in early childhood programs.
- Make programs more boy-friendly, including
- Provide a woodworking center
- Rework the dramatic play center to include props to support the common themes of boys' play (construction, community service workers, sports, etc)
- Make sure books that feature heroes, monsters, vehicles, messy activities, etc. are included in the classroom
- Have large blocks of time for outdoor activities every day [160]

Train staff on the unique needs of boys and how to meet these needs. This should include "instruction in woodwork, math and science projects, and typically 'male' experiences, since many women are uncomfortable or unfamiliar engaging in these activities." [161]

Create a Learning Environment that Encourages Healthy Gender Development

Children make sense of the world through imagination and play, by observing, imitating, asking questions, and relating to other children and adults (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Here are a few ways you can support these ways of learning:

- Offer a wide range of toys, books, and games that expose children to diverse gender roles. For example, choose activities that show males as caregivers or nurturers or females in traditionally masculine roles, such as firefighters or construction workers.
- Provide dramatic play props that give children the freedom to explore and develop their own sense of gender and gender roles. Recognize that this may feel uncomfortable for some providers, teachers, home visitors, and families. Be ready to have conversations to address the value of this kind of play.
- Avoid assumptions that girls or boys are not interested in an activity that may be typically associated with one gender or the other. For example, invite girls to use dump trucks in the sand table and boys to take care of baby dolls.
- Use inclusive phrases to address your class as a whole, like "Good morning, everyone" instead of "Good morning, boys and girls." Avoid dividing the class into "boys vs. girls" or "boys on one side, girls on the other" or any other actions that force a child to self-identify as one gender or another. This gives children a sense that they are valued as humans, regardless of their gender. It also helps all children feel included, regardless of whether they identify with a particular gender.
- Develop classroom messages that emphasize gender-neutral language, like "All children can . . ." rather than "Boys don't . . ." or "Girls don't . . ." Home visitors can encourage families to use similar messages.
- Help children expand their possibilities—academically, artistically, and emotionally. Use books that celebrate diversity and a variety of choices so that children can see that there are many ways to be a child or an adult. Display images around the room that show people in a wide variety of roles to inspire children to be who they want to be. [162]



Figure 12.2: This young boy is playing. What might happen if he is told that boys don't play with dolls? [163]

Demonstrate Support for Children's Gender Expression

Almost all children show interest in a wide range of activities, including those that some would associate with one gender or the other. Children's choices of toys, games, and activities may involve exploration of male and female genders. They may express their own emerging gender identity through their appearance, choice of name or nickname, social relationships, and imitation of adults. Show support for each child's gender expressions by encouraging all children to make their own choices about how to express themselves.

Regardless of whether they are boys or girls, children may act in ways that others categorize as feminine or masculine: they may be assertive, aggressive, dependent, sensitive, demonstrative, or gentle (Giles & Heyman, 2005).

Research has shown that when girls and boys act assertively, girls tend to be criticized as "bossy," while boys are more likely to be praised for being leaders (Martin & Halverson, 1981; Theimer, Killen, & Stangorm, 2001; Martin & Ruble, 2004, 2009). To avoid this kind of unintentional gender stereotyping, try to describe rather than label behavior. "I see you have a strong idea, and you need your friends to help with it. Could you let them choose what they want to do?" [164]

What Programs Can Do to Support Gender-Diverse Children

From the available research, gender is something we are born with. When children identify with a specific gender that is different from the gender assigned at birth (based on physical biology) or who do not identify with either gender, it's important that they receive gender affirmative care. [165] Some of the American Academy of Pediatrics tips for families can be adapted for early childhood educators:

- Respond in an affirming, supportive way to how children disclose their gender identity to you.
- Accept and love the child as they are.
- Stand up for the child when they are mistreated and ensure that their gender identity or sexual orientation are not made fun of.
- Include books and materials in your classroom that represent gender diverse people.
- Be supportive of the ways the child expresses themself.
- Be on the lookout for danger signs that may indicate a need for mental health support.
- Educate yourself about this form of diversity, just like you do other forms.

It is important to recognize that families will also go through a process of understanding and (hopefully) accepting the child's identity, thoughts, and feelings. [166]

Engage in Discussions about Healthy Gender Development

Different perceptions among adults, whether staff or families, of gender development can be used as a basis for discussion. Some staff and families may feel uncomfortable with a child's play when it explores a gender role the adult does not associate with that child's biological sex. It can be helpful to remember that play is the way that children explore and make meaning of their world. Be prepared to have conversations that honor a range of feelings, make space for questions, address concerns, discuss varied points of view, and offer resources.

You can also offer a developmental perspective on why it's important to let children explore different gender roles—once you have a sense that families seem open to this. For example, you could start by saying, "I understand that seeing Isaac playing house and wearing an apron in the kitchen makes you feel uncomfortable. Can you tell me a little more about that?"

After you've listened, you may decide that it would be helpful to offer some developmental information by saying, for example, "We see this kind of play as a way for Isaac to explore the world around him, try on different ideas, and mirror what he sees family members, community members, or media characters doing." [167]

Understand Developmentally Appropriate Curiosity about Bodies

Curiosity about people's bodies is natural for children as they begin to notice differences and think of themselves as a boy or girl. Yet some exploration is not appropriate in an early childhood development program. If questions come up in the bathroom or if children want to learn about their friends' bodies, let them know that most children have questions about their bodies and the differences between girls' and boys' bodies. That way they won't feel ashamed when you remind them that their bodies are private.

If children demonstrate this kind of natural curiosity in your setting, you can share your observations with the children's families and ask them if they want to talk more about it. Families may react differently, depending on their comfort level with you and this topic, and on what they've discussed with their children at home.

When your relationship with a family is strong and trusting, you might say, "I know this can be uncomfortable to talk about, but I wanted to share an observation I made today. I noticed your child and a friend were talking about their different body parts on the way to the bathroom. I'm wondering if you've seen the same kind of curiosity at home and if you've talked about it?" If they haven't, ask if they'd like some ideas about how to answer their children's questions when they do come up. Offer resources if they are interested in learning more. [168]

Note: if a teacher is ever suspicious of any type of abuse, they should always speak with a supervisor and parents.

Understanding Differences Between Gender and Sexual Orientation

Gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Gender identity is about who you feel you are as a person. Sexual orientation is about the gender of the people you are sexually attracted to. A young child's expression of gender-related preferences (in friends, activities, clothing choices, hairstyle, etc.) does not necessarily predict what their gender identity or sexual orientation will be later in life (American Psychological Association, 2015).

The age at which gender identity becomes established varies. Gender identity for some children may be fairly firm when they are as young as two or three years old (AAP, 2015; Balwin & Moses, 1996; Gender Spectrum, 2012; Zosuls et al., 2009). For others it may be fluid until adolescence and occasionally later.

The age at which an individual becomes aware of their sexual orientation, that is, their feelings of attraction for one gender or the other or both, also varies. Such feelings may emerge during childhood, adolescence, or later in life (Campo-Arias, 2010; Gender Spectrum, 2012). At present, child development experts say there is no way to predict what a child's sexual orientation or gender identity will be as an adult (Bryan, 2012).

If families or staff members have questions or are concerned about a child's gender expression, assure them that you and your program are available for ongoing discussions. Family acceptance of a child's gender identity is a critical factor in the child's development (AAP, 2015; Gender Spectrum, 2012; Ryan et al, 2010). Whatever a child's emerging gender identity, one very important message that caring adults can give to young children is that they are healthy, good human beings. Be prepared to share resources that can help family members learn more about gender in young children. [169]

Handling Gender Bias in the Classroom

Since young children learn by observing our words and actions, consider these strategies when dealing with children's feelings about their own and each other's gender expression:

- Share ideas with other providers about how to stop hurtful, gender-related teasing and redirect children to positive activities.
- Practice what you want to say and do. See the examples following this list for interacting with children and adults.
- Know your educational goals and how they are connected to social-emotional well-being in children.
- Help children choose kindness.
- Use instances of teasing as opportunities to help all the children understand other's feelings and their own.
- Help them understand how their words might make their friends feel.
- Help them to learn to say "I'm sorry" and to show that they really mean it.
- Talk one-on-one with children who have teased another child. They are often confused about the hurt they cause and may be frightened by their own actions. They need to understand that hurting other children is not allowed. But they also need to know that you have confidence that they can learn to control themselves. Be sure to let them know that you are ready to forgive them once they have made a sincere apology.
- Help children to become resilient. Help those who are hurt by teasing to find simple responses to put a stop to it and affirm their positive feelings about themselves.

When you hear children making comments similar to the following ones (in italics), you might consider these responses:

“You can’t play in the kitchen area. You’re a boy!”

- “We can all learn together how to make a recipe and clean up the kitchen.”
- “I’m going to play in the kitchen with any of the children who like to play there.”

“Why does Diego always want to dress like a girl?”

- “There are lots of different ways that boys can dress and lots of different ways that girls can dress.”
- “Clothes are clothes. He likes to wear the clothes that he feels comfortable in.”

“Why does she always play with the boys?”

- “Those are the games that she likes to play, just as there are different games that you like to play.”
- “She can play with whoever she wants to, just like you.”

“You’re a girl!” (said in an insulting tone to a child who identifies as a boy).

- “It’s not okay to call someone a ‘girl’ to make them feel bad.”

“Boys are better at sports than girls.”

- “Some boys and girls are good at sports, and some are not. All children have different things that they are good at.”

When an early childhood educator shares questions similar to the ones below (in italics), you might consider these responses:

“Mercedes uses a boy’s name when they play pretend. Her grandmother said not to let her do that. I can’t go against the grandmother.”

- “Let’s talk this over with her grandmother and learn more about her views on this, why this is important to her, and what she would suggest. We can share our observation that Mercedes seems to know she disapproves, yet still really seems intent on using a boy’s name right now in her pretend play. Maybe then we could share with her our view of this kind of play as a way to use creativity to learn about one’s self and other people. She may still disagree, but getting this dialogue going would be a good start.”

“Zach’s dad makes fun of him when he sees him playing with girls. Zach now gets nervous whenever his father comes to pick him up. What can I say to the dad?”

- “Zach enjoys playing with the other children in our program. We encourage the boys and girls to play together to learn from each other.”

“One of the other teachers punishes Taylor when she acts like a boy. What should I do?”

- “I noticed that you scolded Taylor when she acted like a boy. Can we talk more about why you did that? You might remember that our educational approach encourages all children to play pretend. We believe creativity is a part of learning and development.”

Sometimes families ask about other children. For example, a family member might say, ‘I heard that Diego calls himself Isabella now, and he wears dresses every day. Why would his family let him do that?’” How can I answer this question and discourage gossip?

- “Well, normally I would not discuss details about another child, but in this case I have talked with Diego’s dad about this and how he would like us to address these types of questions as they come up. Isabella identifies as a girl and uses female pronouns, such as “she” and “her.” As early educators, we know some children are very clear at young ages that their gender expression is not the one they were assigned at birth based on their biology. Isabella’s family loves her, and they are trying to do what is best for her— just as you are doing for your child.”

When an early childhood educator wants to talk with a child’s family about gender-related teasing, similar to the example below (in italics), you might consider this response:

“A child called a boy a ‘“girl”’ at school today. It seemed intended as an insult. What can I say?”

- “Your child usually gets along so well with the other children. So when your child called a boy a ‘girl,’ as if that were a bad thing, we wanted to be sure to talk this over with you. Your son is such a leader, and we know he can be a positive one. We want to make sure that the children know that the words ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ aren’t insults, and that this is a safe and secure

environment for all of them. Do you have some ideas about how we can work with your son as we work with all the children on this?" [170]

Simple Messages You Can Share with All Children

An essential part of children's school readiness is developing self-confidence and resilience. Research shows that, even in early learning settings, boys and girls perform less well when they have negative concepts about their gender. Comments like "Girls can't throw!" or "Boys always get into trouble!" can make them doubt their natural abilities (Hartley & Sutton, 2013; Del Rio & Strasser, 2013; Wolter, Braun, & Hannover, 2015).

Early learning environments are important places to teach children language and behavior that helps them all feel good about who they are and how to recover from the hurts they may cause each other.

Look for opportunities to help children practice positive language they can use with each other. Here are some examples that you can use to create your own:

- "Boys and girls can be good at sports/ writing/sitting still."
- "Girls and boys can be friends with each other."
- "Everybody can play in the kitchen/tool area/swing set."
- "Running games are for everyone."
- "Hair is hair. That is how she/he likes it."
- "Boys and girls can wear what they like at our school."
- "Colors are colors. There aren't boy colors or girl colors. All children like different colors." [171]

Chapter summary

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

14: Socioeconomic Status of Families

Learning Objectives

- Explain the following laws within the Ideal Gas Law

14.1: Socioeconomic status of families

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14.1: Socioeconomic status of families

Socioeconomic status (SES) is another form of diversity that has an impact on children's learning. SES is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a family's (or individual's) economic and social position in relation to others. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income. However, SES is more commonly used to depict an economic difference in society as a whole.

Socioeconomic status is typically broken into three levels (high, middle, and low) to describe the three places a family or an individual may fall into. When placing a family or individual into one of these categories, any or all of the three variables (income, education, and occupation) can be assessed.

Education in higher socioeconomic families is typically stressed as much more important, both within the household as well as the local community. [121] In various cultures, well-educated and higher-income parents have the information, the time, the financial resources, and the social connections to achieve family goals. [122]

In areas that are more impoverished, where food, shelter, and safety are priority, education can take a backseat. Children and youth in families and communities that are impoverished are particularly at risk for many health and social problems in the United States. [123]

Approximately 20 percent of children in California under the age of five live in families whose income is below the poverty level. Compared with other states, California ranks 20th in the nation in the number of children under age eighteen living in poverty. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, younger children (birth to six years) are more likely to live in an economically disadvantaged household. Young children of immigrant parents are 20 percent more likely to live in a household that is economically disadvantaged compared with children with native-born English-speaking parents. Young Black, Latino, and Native American children in California are also more likely to live in families that are impoverished compared with white children. [124]



Figure 10.1: Poverty is more likely to affect children of immigrant parents. [125]

Although early childhood educators cannot change the conditions of families in poverty, gaining an understanding of the challenges created by poverty makes it possible to take action to mitigate its negative effects. [126] And they should keep in mind that families want the best for their child and family and may be doing the very best they can in that moment. Using a strengths-based approach without negative assumptions or judgment increases the chances of developing a trusting relationship that a family finds helpful and supportive. [127]

Family Strains that Are Often Related to Socio-Economic Status

It is important to note that we are not trying to say that experiencing economic strain (often labeled as poverty or being poor) is bad. The message we are hoping to share is that it is difficult and often creates inequity. And most issues linking poverty and stressors for young children point to noncultural sources such as lack of health insurance and access to health care professionals. [128]

This means inadequate or no prenatal care and then insufficient well-baby care, since poor families often depend on hospital emergency care, sometimes travel long distances from home, and see less-experienced doctors after waiting for hours in crowded

emergency rooms. Studies have found that in poor neighborhoods food is often of inferior quality and more expensive. No matter how loving and skilled the family is, the reality of poverty creates sometimes insurmountable barriers to optimum child rearing.

Other factors may interact with poverty to add to these challenges. In the current political climate facing immigrants–especially undocumented immigrants—families may have no access to social services and health institutions that help support the family's quality of life. Families of all backgrounds, headed by a single mother, are more likely to live in poverty than are all other kinds of families. Poverty in rural areas is also an increasing reality, regardless of racial or ethnic background. [129]



Figure10.2: Program must understand the effects of poverty in order to mitigate them. [130]

Homelessness

Experiencing homelessness means being unable to acquire and maintain consistent, safe, secure, and adequate housing or lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. [131] People, including families, experiencing homelessness often live in temporary placements, such as hotels, shelters, parks, with family members, and in abandoned buildings. [132]



Pin It! Language Matters

"Homeless" describes a situation; it does not define the people in that situation. We show families respect by speaking of "children and families experiencing homelessness" rather than "homeless children and families." People-first language acknowledges the individual before the situation they may be experiencing. [133]

Homelessness is a circumstance that families may experience when they are faced with such challenges as extreme poverty and lack of affordable housing. It can also occur when a family's current living situation becomes unsafe or unstable. [134]

Homelessness is a reality for many families with young children in our country. In 2015, a third of all people who stayed in a shelter were in families with children and nearly half of children served by HUD-funded emergency/transitional housing providers in 2015 were age five or younger (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2016). Furthermore, children under age 1 comprise less than six percent of the overall child population in the United States, but more than 10 percent of the child population served by HUD-funded shelters (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; HUD, 2016). [135] In 2015, of the 3,007,598 children under age 6 in California, 220,940 experienced homelessness. That is one out of every 14 children.

Homelessness is also a state of vulnerability for children and families. It exposes families to physical, mental, and developmental risks. Families experiencing homelessness often keep their situation and circumstances hidden from friends, professionals, and others because they feel ashamed or embarrassed. [136]

What Programs Can Do to Support Families Experiencing Homelessness

It is important that families experiencing homelessness see your program as a source of support. Programs can partner with families to minimize the daily stress and uncertainty that may be a result of homelessness. Programs can create an environment where families are able to choose how they feel best valued and supported.



Figure 10.3: This father and daughter are at a holiday breakfast for families experiencing homelessness. [137]

Families experiencing homelessness and extreme poverty face challenges beyond the natural stressors associated with raising a family. Families experiencing homelessness may be focused on survival and urgent issues. They need to prioritize what should be addressed first so they can make progress toward a safe and healthy living environment. Families may appear distant. It can be lengthy, demanding, and challenging for families to access supports.

Families may be particularly concerned about the effects of homelessness on their child's wellbeing and learning. Programs can work with parents to create some stability and relief for children experiencing stress. [138]

Understanding Issues Facing Families

A group of teachers in a program providing service to children from low-income families complained about parents. “Some parents just don’t care about their children,” one said. They all agreed. A social worker overheard the conversation and asked them to elaborate on why they thought some parents did not care about their children. They were quick to reply: “They don’t come to open houses.” “They never volunteer in the classroom.” “They don’t volunteer for field trips, either.” “They skip meetings, even when it’s a parent–teacher conference.” The social worker asked, “So why do you think they behave that way?” Their answers were: “They just don’t care” or “they are too lazy.” The social worker asked another question: “How did you get to work today?” It turned out that almost all of them drove their cars except for a couple of them who lived close to each other and took turns driving.

The social worker’s next question was, “How many of those parents that you’re talking about have cars?” The teachers were silent. The social worker knew some facts that they were ignoring—(1) Few of the families owned a car, and the vehicles they owned were subject to frequent breakdowns; (2) the bus system was inadequate. The social worker had more questions. “How many of you can get off work during the day to go to your child’s school?” That started a big discussion among the teachers about the problem with coverage, issues with substitutes, and program policies. The conversation ended with the teachers reconsidering their earlier complaints. They had a greater understanding of some of the issues facing the families in the program. [139]



Think About It…

What other reasons might families have for not being able to volunteer or come to meetings in the middle of the day? What might programs consider to make these opportunities more inclusive of all families?

Other Family Strains May Contribute to Economic Hardship

While not necessarily related to socioeconomic status, families face other strains. Some, such as long-term parental absence, can make it harder for families to maintain economic stability and are stressors for families. It’s important to recognize the stressors have a cumulative effect or snowball effect. The effect of multiple stressors is more than just the sum effect of the individual stressors.

Long-Term Parental/Caregiver Absence

Many families experience the separation of a parent/caregiver from the home for periods long enough to have an impact on the child's life. These events can have an adverse effect on the parent/caregiver's meaningful involvement in the child's life and the parent/caregiver–child relationship and interfere with the parent/caregiver's connection to the family. The separation may be voluntary or involuntary and due to diverse causes:

- Incarceration
- Military deployment
- Hospitalization
- Migration for the purposes of employment

Children may experience confusion, sadness, loneliness, bereavement, and feelings of abandonment as a result of this separation. The nature of the impact will depend greatly on how the family interprets the separation to the child and the steps taken to maintain the connection to the missing parent. [140]

What Programs Can Do to Support Families Experiencing Long-Term Parental/Caregiver Absence

Child care programs can play a facilitative role in helping families to cope with long-term separation by providing the child with ways to reach out to the distant parent/caregiver. The first goal of such intervention would be to give the child multiple opportunities and venues through which to express feelings and beliefs about the separation. The child may have worries about the safety and well-being of the parent/caregiver and should be allowed to express them. Teachers can provide support in correcting misperceptions and providing reassurance that the child is loved, cherished, and will be protected. Through letters, drawings, or other means, children can be given opportunities to express their love and affection for the parent/caregiver.



Figure 10.4: A child separated from a parent or caregiver can use writing/drawing to express their feelings. [141]

The goal is to help the family maintain the child's connection with the parent and help the parent to remain a part of the child's life. This connection can be maintained by keeping the parent informed about the child's activities and newly acquired skills. The child's artwork and photographs could be sent to the parent along with notes that teachers help the child to "write." If more

sophisticated technology is available (such as digital audiotape and video recordings), the child could record messages, and videos of the child's activities could be made to keep the absent parent connected. [142]

Partnering with Families to Minimize Stress

To serve a child effectively, program staff members need to be aware of disruptions in the child's life due to economic conditions and other difficulties the family faces. In these situations, program staff members may need to go beyond the typical methods for reaching the family to make sure they establish contact with families who are difficult to reach. They should reach out to parents when they see changes in the child's behavior, fatigue level, grooming, and disposition. When the family is in distress, program staff members should do everything possible to keep the child in the program. The program may be the one place in the child's life that is free of turmoil and may make a significant contribution to the child's ability to cope with family distress.

Offering material help such as clothing, food, and transportation can be helpful for families experiencing stress related to poverty and homelessness. Demonstrating flexibility and understanding may remove additional stress and help families feel less isolated and overwhelmed. Depending on the availability of resources and the program's structure, professionals can connect families with community partners and help with access to services. [143]

Chapter summary

The socioeconomic status of families may affect their access to resources to support their families. Families with higher income parents/caregivers may have the resources and connections that help them meet their family goals, while families that are impoverished may need to focus on meeting the basic needs of their family. While poverty can cause inequity that affects access to and involvement within developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs and presents risks to children's health and safety, experiencing poverty is not bad.

Families may also experience stressors such as homelessness and long-term parental/caregiver absence. As these and other stressors have a cumulative effect on families, it's important that early childhood education programs offer whatever support they can to help minimize stress, or at least the effects of the stress they may be experiencing.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

15: Families of Children with Special Needs or Special Health Care Needs

Learning Objectives

- Explain the following laws within the Ideal Gas Law

15.1: Introduction
15.2: What Programs Can Do To Be Inclusive of All Children

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15.1: Introduction

Children with disabilities or other special needs refers to children with a specific diagnosis, as well as children who do not have a diagnosis but whose behavior, development, and/or health affect their family's ability to maintain child care services. The disability or special need may be as mild as a slight speech delay or as complex as a mixed diagnosis of motor challenges, vision impairment, and cognitive delays. [144] Special health care needs include a variety of conditions such as birth defects, neurological disorders, and chronic illnesses that can be life threatening or impact daily living (e.g., cancer, sickle cell disease [or anemia], cystic fibrosis, hemophilia, AIDS, diabetes, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis). [145]

Families of children with disabilities or other special needs have the same need for child care as do other families. However, families of children with disabilities or special needs often find the search for quality and affordable child care a greater challenge as they face the reluctance of many child care providers to enroll their children. This situation makes it all the more important that child care providers strive to include all children in their programs so as not to increase the immense challenges that such families already face. [146]

In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), children ages 3-21 are entitled to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). LRE requires that, to the extent possible, children with disabilities should have access to the general education curriculum, along with learning activities and settings that are available to their peers without disabilities. Corresponding federal legislation applied to infants and toddlers (children birth to 3) and their families specifies that early intervention services and supports must be provided in "natural environments," generally interpreted to mean a broad range of contexts and activities that generally occur for typically developing infants and toddlers in homes and communities. [147]

It is critical that children with disabilities or other special needs, and their families, are included in quality early childhood education programs that are the natural environments of their peers who are typically developing. Children learn from their interactions with other children and their surroundings while developing a sense of security and self-esteem from caring relationships with program providers and staff. Everyone benefits from quality early childhood education programs that provide inclusive care. Children who have a disability or special need get to know and interact with typically developing peers, while their families benefit from programs and services they need to achieve their parenting goals. Children who are typically developing benefit when they have the opportunity to get to know peers who are atypically developing in the classroom. Everyone has the opportunity to learn about other human beings in regard to their strengths and challenges.



Figure 11.1: Children of all abilities should be included in high quality ECE classrooms. [148]

Children and families want to be accepted and included in their community regardless of ability. They want to truly belong. But the kind of belonging they desire goes beyond simply "being together." They want full, unconditional membership in family and community. As Norman Kunc, a disability rights advocate, said so eloquently, "When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become 'normal' in order to contribute to the world. Instead, we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherent in all people. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community and, in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging."

Children with disabilities or other special needs may present unique challenges, but the care they need is very similar to that needed by any child. Children with special needs spend most of their time doing what other children do. They have the same curiosity, desire to play, and need to communicate as their peers do. Childcare providers who are providing developmentally appropriate

childcare, which is individualized to meet the needs of each and every child, already have many of the skills needed to serve children with disabilities or other special needs. [149]

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15.2: What Programs Can Do To Be Inclusive of All Children

Most children identified by special education professionals as having a disability have delays in learning and communication (over 70 percent of children from birth to age 14). What is more important is that learning disabilities are often not recognized or identified until children begin formal schooling. Children who learn differently or have delays in language commonly manifest special needs through their behavior in group settings. Early childhood educators can provide a language-rich environment and make accommodations based on knowledge of the individual child.

There are fewer children with more significant disabilities such as intellectual disabilities (formerly referred to as mental retardation), physical and mobility impairments, or multiple disabilities. When children do have significant disabilities, they are likely to be receiving specialized services that may support success in a child care setting. Children who are eligible for and who receive early intervention or special education services have individual plans with goals and strategies for caregivers and providers to use. For children under age three, the plans are called individualized family services plans (IFSPs); for children over age three, the plans are called individualized education programs (IEPs). Early childhood educators can be an important member of an IFSP or IEP team when these plans are being developed.

Learning about Individual Children

Information about a specific disability may give an early childhood educator ideas for how to support a child. When serving an individual child, however, the provider should focus on the child's needs, not the disability or its label. A child with cerebral palsy, for example, may walk with leg braces, use a wheelchair, have minor physical symptoms, or demonstrate a delay in using language. The possible variations within this one label are tremendous, demonstrating that no single label or diagnosis can provide enough information about a particular child. Early childhood educators need to learn beyond a textbook definition and ask questions with sensitivity and understanding—particularly in talks with parents.

Early childhood educators can go far toward setting a tone of welcome and understanding. When a family member shares a child's diagnosis, a good follow-up question is often "And how does that affect _____'s development?" This approach can help assure a family member that the child care provider is sincerely concerned about the success of the child and is interested in providing appropriate, individually tailored care. The response from the parent will help the child care provider determine what accommodations might be needed, what other questions may be appropriate to ask, and whether specialists are involved or needed.

Promoting Inclusive Practices

Even if children with disabilities are not currently enrolled in an early childhood education program, educators can still promote inclusive practices. One way is to have pictures, books, and materials that present children with disabilities in a general setting. How people are alike and different naturally arises in an early childhood education setting; a caregiver can take advantage of these opportunities to discuss them. Language use is also critical in developing an atmosphere of inclusion. The best practice is to use "person-first" language when one is talking about people with disabilities. This practice simply means putting the person before the disability: "a child with autism spectrum disorder" rather than "an autistic child."

The process of exploring inclusion with families, colleagues, and children will suggest other ways to expand inclusive practices. For example, planning staff discussions on specific changes in philosophy, attitudes, and practices goes far toward including children with special needs in a child care setting. Outside the immediate early childhood education program setting, adults with disabilities in a community might contribute to a care provider's expanding knowledge of issues related specifically to inclusion and to disabilities in general.

Successful Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

As each child is unique, so is each early childhood education program. There is no magic formula for making inclusion work beyond the creativity, energy, and interest that most early childhood educators already bring to their work. Their uniqueness notwithstanding, every program is able to successfully include children with disabilities. And each makes it work child by child, day by day. A "can-do" attitude among the teachers helps to provide the necessary energy for coming up with solutions to the inevitable challenges. It also helps to have an enthusiastic attitude on how to make inclusion work rather than to simply fulfill a legal obligation.

Some children need small changes to the curriculum or minor supports in order to get the most out of certain activities. These sorts of things may consist of fairly simple accommodations, such as providing a special place or quiet activity for a child who is unable

to participate in large-group activities or making available a special snack for a child who needs to eat more frequently than the typical meal or snack schedule.



Figure 11.2: Individual children's needs will help you decide what adaptations you need to make. [150]

Other children may require more specific adaptations that might not be readily apparent. A variety of community resources can be helpful in determining what those might be. The family, for example, is always the first and most important guide for what a child might need; after that, an area specialist or a local workshop might be. Beyond the immediate community, a world of literature in books, periodicals, and Web sites devoted to disabilities and inclusion can inform an early childhood educator about appropriate adaptations for a child with a particular condition or need.

Programs that begin with a high-quality, developmentally appropriate foundation; a positive attitude on the part of the care provider; appropriate adult–child ratios; supportive administrators; and adequate training for the provider will be in a good position to creatively solve problems for a child with disabilities or other special needs, exactly as it does for children who are typically developing. If a child already has an established diagnosis, trained intervention personnel may be available to assist in this process. One of the biggest roles for a care provider is to facilitate a sense of belonging and inclusion. Several helpful strategies are as follows:

- Start with the assumption that all children are competent.
- Adapt the environment so that it is developmentally appropriate, challenging, and fits the needs and interests of each child.
- While there may be a need to support a child's mastery of a specific skill, keep the whole child in mind, particularly the child's social-emotional experience.

Consider the following questions when adapting an activity for a child with special needs :

- Does the child have an opportunity to be in control of the learning experience?
- Is there a balance between adult-initiated learning and child-initiated learning?
- Can the child make choices while learning the skill?
- Is the child able to initiate his/her own efforts to practice the skill, with support given by the child care provider?
- Is the child gaining self-confidence and showing the joy of accomplishment while learning?
- Is there room in the activity for the child to make discoveries?

Collaborating for Inclusion

To effectively meet the needs of children with differing abilities and learning characteristics, early childhood educators may need to expand the way in which they reach out to families and link with specialists. These two groups of people have important information to share and can serve as resources to support children in a program. Their suggestions invariably enrich efforts at inclusion. Specialists themselves may even be able to visit a care facility and offer some on-site guidance.



Figure 11.3: Collaboration provides valuable support and insight. [151]

Providing inclusive early childhood education does not mean a teacher—or even a group of teachers—has to do the work alone. Everyone has a role to play. The primary role of an early childhood educator is to nurture and support the child's development in a loving and caring manner. Partnerships formed with other adults who are caring for the child—the parents, health-care providers, or specialists—can complement the efforts of all concerned, especially when everyone concentrates on a particular strength. When the expertise of many are combined, ideas develop and strategies emerge that are better than those any one person could have developed alone. The result is the essence of true collaboration.

For collaboration to be successful, the following elements are essential:

- Respect for family's knowledge and experience with the child. They are the first and best resource and should be included in planning and implemented care of their child.
- Clear and regular communication, both informal or planned meetings.
- Time reserved for collaboration, recognizing that everyone is likely going to be pressed for time.
- Everyone having an investment and active involvement.
- Collaborative efforts to provide the appropriate assessments and support services for the child.

More information about identifying children with special needs and providing inclusive care can be found in the publication Inclusion Works by the California Department of Education.

Chapter summary

Teachers will have children in their classrooms with diagnosed and undiagnosed special needs, including those related to their health. Early childhood programs have legal obligations to provide inclusive programs and inclusion benefits for everyone involved (children with special needs, their peers that do not have special needs, families, and teachers).

Having a solid foundation in developmentally appropriate practice, which includes the importance of learning about and meeting the needs of each individual child, goes a long way to providing inclusive early education. Support, accommodations, and collaboration are essential to providing inclusive early childhood education programming.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

16: Diverse Family Structures

Learning Objectives

- Explain the ways families can differ and the ways programs can make all families feel welcome and included.

16.1: Diverse family structures
16.2: The Diversity of Today's Families
16.3: Different ways of looking at families

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16.1: Diverse family structures

Learning Objectives

- Explain the ways families can differ;
- Describe the ways programs can make all families feel welcome and included.

In this chapter, we will explore diverse family structures and terms that will help build a culture of inclusivity and equity. It is important to consider two overarching premises regarding family structures. The first is that Parents refers to biological, adoptive, and step-parents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents. The second is that Families can be biological or non-biological, chosen, or circumstantial. They are connected through cultures, languages, traditions, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support. [114] You may notice that we have used families, often even when referring to parent/caregiver throughout this book in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible.



Figure 9.1: This is a family. [115]

A feeling of belonging is critical to every child and family's well-being. The drive to form relationships with others begins in infancy and continues throughout early childhood. These relationships help children fulfill their potential in all areas of development—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. Quality early childhood programs can expand children's experiences of forming relationships when the culture and core curriculum partners with families' and communities' central themes.

Many families have multiple identities and might include themselves in multiple family definitions. Most children see the caring adults who love and take care of them as their family and will refer to them in that way. It is important to recognize the complexity and variation amongst all families. It is recommended to connect with families to find out the language that they use to refer to their families to help respectfully answer questions that may arise. [116]

Understanding and conversations are important to gain insight into the structure of each family unit. It also assists in the individualization of the support offered to each child. Families come to an early childhood setting with distinct family structures and cultures that give meaning and direction to their lives. All families are complex and influenced by many factors: family traditions, countries of origin, geographic regions, ethnic identities, cultural groups, community norms, sexual orientation, gender identities, educational and other experiences, personal choices, and home languages.



Figure 9.2: Programs need to partner with all families. [117]

While every child and family are unique, many of our conversations with families involve common topics. We can anticipate that there will be discussions about learning and language, daily routines (such as sleeping, feeding, toileting), expectations, new skills, behavior, discipline, and relationships with peers and adults. We also know that each family will bring unique perspectives to these discussions. Ultimately, it is understanding the perspectives of families and seeing them as the experts on their children that helps create the best care and learning environment for their child. [118]

Below is a list of terms and definitions, many from the Welcoming Schools organization , intended to be a starting point for important conversations about family diversity. Many families have multiple identities and might include themselves in multiple family definitions.

- ADOPTION: When adults bring children into their families and legally become the parents of those children.
- ADOPTIVE PARENTS: The parents of children who have joined the family through adoption.
- BIRTH PARENT: A biological parent. People may also use the terms birth mother or birth father. Most often used in the context of adoption.
- DONOR OR SURROGATE: People who help other people have children.
- BLENDED FAMILY: Two families who come together to form a new family. This may include step-parents and step-siblings.
- CHOSEN FAMILY: People who you care about and consider family, such as friends or neighbors.
- CONDITIONALLY SEPARATED FAMILY: A family separated for a specific period of time; having a family member in jail, prison, a mental health care facility, the hospital, etc.
- DIVORCE: When people legally separate and end a marriage.
- EXTENDED FAMILY: All of your relatives, including your grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. In some families, this can include neighbors, friends and chosen family.
- FOSTER PARENT: People—other than a child's first family—who take children into their homes and take care of them for as long as their family needs help. Sometimes children will return to their first family, sometimes foster parents go on to become adoptive parents or permanent guardians and sometimes children will be adopted by other families.
- GUARDIAN: A person who has responsibility by law to care for a child; a person other than the biological parent who takes care of a child. The person may be biologically related to the child, such as a grandparent.
- INTERFAITH FAMILY: When people of different religious backgrounds are part of the same family. Some families choose to raise their children primarily in one faith, some choose to teach their children both faiths and others practice multiple faiths.
- HALF-SISTER or HALF-BROTHER: When siblings have one biological parent in common.
- LGBTQ FAMILY: A family in which some people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary or queer. This could include parents, guardians, foster parents, children, chosen family, siblings or grandparents who are LGBTQ.
- LESBIAN: Women who love women.
- GAY: People who love people of the same gender, typically men who love men.
- BISEXUAL: People who love people not exclusively of one particular gender.
- PANSEXUAL: People who love people regardless of their sex or gender.
- TRANSGENDER: When your gender identity (how you feel) is different than what doctors/midwives assigned to you when you were born (girl/boy or sex assigned at birth).
- NON-BINARY: People who do not feel like the words “girl” or “boy” fit. They may feel like both or neither. They sometimes use pronouns such as they, them, theirs.
- QUEER: People use this word as a way to identify with and celebrate people of all gender identities and all the ways people love each other. When used in a mean way, it is a word that hurts.
- MIXED FAMILY: When people of different racial and cultural backgrounds are part of the same family. People of different ethnic, religious or national backgrounds can also form families who are “mixed” in terms of culture, skin color, language and/or religious practices.
- MULTIGENERATIONAL FAMILY: When more than one generation of a family lives together.
- MULTIRACIAL FAMILY: When people of different racial backgrounds are part of the same family.
- MULTILINGUAL FAMILY: When people within a family speak more than one language.
- SIBLING: Children or adults who share a parent whether biologically or not.
- SINGLE-PARENT FAMILY OR SOLO-PARENT FAMILY: A family in which one parent cares for the child or children.
- STEP-SIBLINGS: If a divorced or solo parent forms a family with a new person and that person already has children, those children can become step-siblings to their children.
- STEPPARENT: When a divorced or solo parent forms a family with a new person, the new partner might become a stepparent to their children. [119]
- TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY: A family residing in two different countries.

What Programs Can Do

The family compositions represented in the populations served by early childhood programs are quite diverse. Staff members typically develop strategies for accommodating this diversity. Sometimes problems arise for staff members because the children and families they serve have not yet acclimated to the social changes this diversity represents. The problems can sometimes emerge in the interactions among the children who are puzzled by and react negatively to the differences or the stigmatizing comments

made by some parents about others. A situation in one program may be an example: Katie is overheard by staff members saying to Martin: “My mommy says I can’t play with you because you have two mommies living together at your house.” It is unclear whether Katie really understands what she is saying, but the situation represents a teachable moment for the children and the staff.

A series of books may be read in circle time that introduce children to different types of families and point out what is common to all (i.e., adoptive families, foster families, single-parent families, multigenerational families, and families led by a grandparent or a gay or lesbian couple). These families represent different ways that adults come together to take care of and love the children they have the responsibility to raise. For some families and staff members, this may represent a complex issue in which they are caught between creating a safe and supportive environment for children who have two mommies and respecting the concerns of parents who, for religious or other reasons, promote a different view at home. In such cases, staff members may need to check with families and meet with them before circumventing what is said at home.

Two Mommies

This scenario involves an openly lesbian couple who enroll their child in an infant/toddler care program. It focuses on differences of beliefs and attitudes among staff members concerning the definition of a legitimate family unit. It opens up the thorny issue of a teacher judging a family as engaging in “wrong” or unacceptable behavior because that behavior contradicts the teacher’s personal beliefs. What do you think is the responsibility of a culturally responsive professional in such a situation?

The Scenario

For the first time, a family consisting of two female parents—both of whom are open about being lesbians—joins the infant/toddler care center. During the intake session, both women make it clear that they want to be acknowledged as the parents of the infant. They cross out “father” on the admission form and substitute “mother,” so that there is a place for each woman to write down her name. They also ask permission to contribute a poster that shows “two-mommy families” and a few picture books with images of two-mommy and two-daddy families.

The center director consents to their requests. However, when she informs the staff about the family, conflicting responses to having openly lesbian parents in the program necessitates a staff discussion. Christine, the teacher in whose room the infant will be placed, is uncomfortable with the situation. She tells other staff members that she thinks it is wrong to encourage homosexuality, since she believes it is a sin. She wants the director to tell the family that only one parent can be considered the infant’s mother, and that person is the only family member who should interact with the program. She also refuses to use the poster or picture books the family wants to contribute.

Marie, an assistant teacher, agrees with Christine. She even suggests that, to avoid problems, the director not admit the family into the program. She explains that since homosexuals cannot properly raise a child, she does not think the program should encourage homosexuality by accepting the infant.

Rachel explains that she has no problem with a two-mommy family, but she is worried that admitting this family into the program will cause problems with other families. In the interests of keeping the peace, she reluctantly supports Christine’s suggestion to identify only one person as the infant’s mother and that no materials show two-mommy families.

Carrie disagrees with the others. She takes the position that, as professionals, they have a responsibility to support all families equally and to make sure that all the infants and toddlers have their family visible in the program. She reminds her colleagues that the family composition and members’ roles within families vary widely. Carrie further explains that she is not questioning her colleagues’ personal beliefs, but argues that professionals need to act according to professional ethics and not just according to their personal beliefs.

Sarah agrees with Carrie. She reminds her colleagues of the following excerpt from the California Early Childhood Educator Competencies publication: “Cultural perspectives of children, families, staff, and colleagues vary widely on issues such as differences in individual children’s learning, strengths, and abilities; gender identity and gender-specific roles; family composition and member roles” (CDE 2011, 21).

Sarah reminds staff that there was a time when many people considered all single mothers to be immoral and bad parents. Sarah further states that it is equally prejudicial to automatically assume that all two-mommy families are “bad.” Carrie adds to Sarah’s point, declaring that child-rearing problems arise in families of all kinds of cultural backgrounds and configurations. [120]



Think About It…
How is this scenario about cultural responsiveness?
How do you feel each of the staff (Christine, Marie, Rachel, Sarah, and Carrie) on their cultural responsiveness? Why?

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16.2: The Diversity of Today's Families

The landscape of families has changed considerably over the last few decades. It is not that diverse families have never existed; it is that in today's society, we are making places at the table for this diversity. Today, we elevate and value diverse families. Following are definitions of many of the family structures today. On the previous page, you saw the definitions of several terms that relate to family structure. Here, you see how definitions of several family structures that are not "traditional" yet are often represented in schools and classrooms.

Table 1.1: Family Structures

Family Structure	Description
Dual parent family	This is often referred to as a mother and father raising children. However, if we think about the diversity of families this could include same sex caregivers as they are also raising children together.
Single parent (either by choice or through divorce)	This could be a male or female caregiver who either wants to be a parent and doesn't have a partner to create a child with or is raising children on their own due to divorce. Often, we think of single parents as female, but today as we continue to form acceptance of family structures, there are males who are also choosing to form a family on their own or raise their children (from divorce) on their own. As families immigrate or migrate to other parts of the U.S. or world, we might find single parents by default, as not all members of a family unit may move at the same time.
Grandparents or other relatives raising children (relatives can also be non-related family members who are close to the child(ren))	Children whose caregivers are not able to care for them (for whatever reason), may be raised by their maternal or paternal grandparents or may be raised by extended family members including those family members that are not related biologically.
Teen parents	Today it is more acceptable for teens who become pregnant to raise a child. Sometimes they may do this together or separate. Sometimes they may do this with the help of their families. Teens who become pregnant while still in high school are often able to return to school and there are programs on high school campuses where teens may bring their child. They may receive parenting classes in addition to their high school curriculum.
Adoptive families	Families who are not able to conceive a child on their own may choose adoption. While this tends to be most common, there are families who consciously choose adoption over procreation as well as decide to add to their family through adoption. In any case, forming a family through adoption is a choice that is not taken lightly. There are many options in forming your family through adoption. You can choose to have an open or closed adoption. Open adoption refers to having a continued relationship with the birth parent(s) to just knowing who the birth parents are and everything in between. Closed adoption means that the family does not have access to birth parent(s) information. In addition, families may choose to adopt a child of the same race or of another race. They may choose to adopt nationally or internationally.

Family Structure	Description
Resource Families (formerly referred to as Foster Families)	Children placed in temporary care due to extenuating circumstances involving their family of origin are often placed in homes licensed to care for children. The adults who care for these children must go through strict protocols in order to provide the support and care that these vulnerable children will need. The most common name for this arrangement is fostering, but you may also hear them described as resource families. In these cases, it is the intent to reunite the children with their family of origin whenever possible. When this is not possible, the children are placed in the system to be adopted. The foster family may decide to adopt the children or another family may adopt the children. It is always the intent to find a permanent arrangement for children whenever possible, as we know that stability has better outcomes for children.
Families with Same Sex Parents	Same sex couples, whether two men or two women, may choose to form a family and raise the children together. There are many ways in which they may decide to form their family. They may adopt, they may use reproductive technology, or they may use egg or sperm donors. In the case where two women are choosing to form a family, they may decide to have one of them become pregnant and give birth to their child.
Bi-racial/Multi-racial families	These are children who are raised by parents from two different races, including parents who may be bi-racial themselves. This also includes multi-racial families.
Families with Multi-Religious/Faith Beliefs	There are children today raised in multi-religious homes. This means that each parent may have different faiths/religions. They may choose one faith/religion or both in raising their children.
Children with an incarcerated parent(s)	Sometimes children are raised by one caregiver while the other parent is incarcerated. This can be complicated for the family as the parent may spend some time away and then return home. While the parent who is incarcerated is away, the family structure changes.
Unmarried parents who are raising children	Today, many caregivers are deciding not to marry but to raise children. The only difference is that they do not have a legal marriage license; however, their family structure is the same as dual parent families whether opposite sex or same sex.
Transgender parents raising children	This refers to two ways in which children may be raised by a transgender caregiver(s). A parent may transition after already having children with someone of the opposite sex or they may transition prior to having a child and decide they want to parent.
Blended families	A blended family can be two different caregivers that come together each bringing their children from a previous relationship with them. Sometimes the caregivers that come together with children from a previous relationship may also decide to have a child together.

Family Structure	Description
Families formed through reproductive technology	Today we have sophisticated medical advances to help parents who are infertile to become pregnant and give birth to their biological child as well as to use the biological material from someone else and carry that fertilized embryo to term. There are a variety of reproductive technologies that are available to families. This is often at a huge financial cost to the families, as most medical insurance companies do not cover the medical expenses of becoming pregnant.
First time older parents	Today it is becoming more common for men and women to have children in their 30's, 40's, and even older. There are many reasons why men and women may wait to become parents. It may be due to infertility. It may be that the man and/or woman want to establish themselves in a career prior to having children. It may be that they wanted to have financial security before starting a family. What is important is to not assume why someone is parenting at an older age.
Families who experience homelessness	We know that some children are raised without a stable home. The family may be living in their car, living in a hotel, a homeless shelter, or living in multiple dwellings also known as couch surfing. Families experiencing homelessness may be due to the loss of a job/steady income, being employed by making minimal wages that do not provide the means necessary to sustain housing (and other basic necessities), or other issues that may complicate the family's ability to sustain a stable place to live. Families do not always share their homeless status as there is often shame and embarrassment that society places on these families.
Families with children who have developmental delays and disabilities	This refers to families who have a child or children with developmental delays and/or disabilities. These delays/disabilities are varied. There also may be children without delays/disabilities in the family as well. This often places a burden on families, not only because of the time needed to care for a child who is not typically developing, but because society often misinterprets children who display behaviors that may be viewed as inappropriate.
Families raising their children in a culture not their own and in which English is not the primary language	This refers to families who may have immigrated here and whose children were either born in their country of origin or born in the United States. This duality of cultures can create problems for the child and their family if societal expectations are that the family acculturate to the dominant culture. This results in children feeling shame about their family when they should feel pride in their family of origin.

Children experience different family structures. Those structures may change as a child grows. We must provide supportive and inclusive interactions, relationships and environments for each and every family. This can be accomplished through our ability to be open, inviting, and listening to what the families in our program need from us to feel a sense of belonging.

Pause to Reflect!

Discuss the following questions.

1. After reviewing all of the families above, were there family structures that you were not previously familiar with?
2. How do the family structures above challenge the traditional social construct of “family”?
3. Imagine that you are working with families in a school or community setting. What level of comfort do you have in working with diverse families? What may be challenging for you? What are some strategies that you could use to help you in working on the biases that you may have?

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16.3: Different ways of looking at families

The United States' Census Bureau defines family as "…a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together; all such people (including related subfamily members) are considered as members of one family." While this definition provides a framework for understanding family configurations in the United States over a period of time, it may not accurately represent the social and cultural factors that contextualize how we define "family" in our personal networks. It is restrictive and does not integrate the diversity of the modern family in the United States.

Paul R. Amato, Ph.D., former President of the National Council on Family Relations, asks us to expand our definition of "family". Amato states, "Most current research is based on objective definitions of families—definitions that are not shared by the majority of individuals that we study. Viewing families as overlapping networks that extend across multiple households, with each network having at its nucleus a reference person, might yield new insights, especially in an era when families are becoming more complex and difficult to classify." Amato points to the complexity of "family" within a social construct. Amato's perspective incorporates the idea of "fictive kinship." "Fictive kinship" recognizes the important bonds and relationships of individuals outside of the boundaries of the traditional definition of "family." The idea that an individual cannot pick their relatives does not apply to fictive kinship. Rather, fictive kinship honors the diversity of the definition of "family" in that it extends to friend groups, resource families, mentors, etc. The individual is at the center of the relationship and their "family" is self-defined based on their own social and cultural criteria.

Case Study (A)



Ella, a divorced mother lives with her child, Grace. Ella considers her ex-husband, Robert, to be a family member even though they do not live together and are divorced. Robert is Grace's biological father. Grace spends every weekend with Robert, and oftentimes, Robert picks Grace up from school and has dinner with Ella and Grace during the week. Robert is important in Grace's life and Ella supports his presence in her life.

- **U.S. Census Bureau**

A researcher who adopts the U.S. Census Bureau definition would say that Grace is in a single-parent family.

- **Modern Families**

A researcher who adopts a definition more consistent with an understanding of modern families would say that Grace would claim to be in a two-parent family.

Case Study (B)



Adam and Georgia are divorced parents of Allyson. Adam was recently remarried to Frank. They purchased a home together. Allyson lives with them and visits Georgia on the weekends and during school vacations. Allyson does not accept Frank as her parent and refuses to allow Frank to attend parent-teacher conferences at her school. She only wants Adam and Georgia to attend.

- **U.S. Census Bureau**

A researcher who adopts the U.S. Census Bureau definition would say that Allyson is in a two-parent family with Adam and Frank.

- **Modern Families**

A researcher who adopts a definition more consistent with an understanding of modern families would say that Allyson would claim to be in a two-parent family with Adam and Georgia.

Case Study (C)



Jordan and Aaron have been best friends since second grade. They are now 22 years old and are considering renting an apartment together while they attend the local community college. Growing up, Jordan spent more time at Aaron's home than their own because it felt safer and supportive. Jordan currently lives with their mom and dad, but does not have a close relationship with them. Jordan considers Aaron's parents their "real" family.

- **U.S. Census Bureau**

A researcher who adopts the U.S. Census Bureau definition would say that Jordan is in a two-parent family with their biological parents.

- **Modern Families**

A researcher who adopts a definition more consistent with an understanding of modern families would say that Jordan would claim to be in a two-parent family with Aaron's family, or might claim to be an independent person getting ready to move out on their own.

? Pause to Reflect!

Discuss the following questions

1. What does family mean to you? Who do you think of when you define family?
2. Do you see your family represented in the “dominant culture”?
3. Identify a minimum of three concrete examples of ways that the idea of “fictive kinship” connects to your professional or personal life.

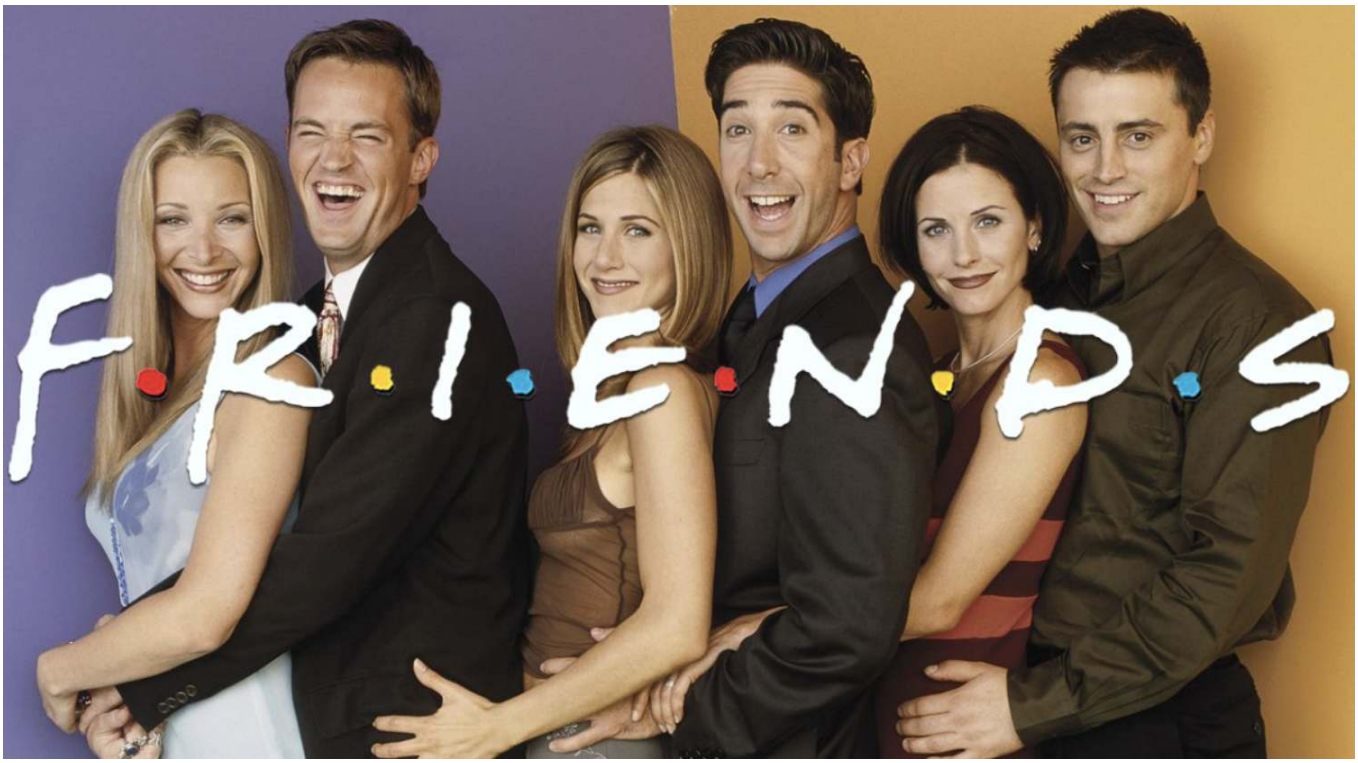
A social construction is a mutual understanding and accepted reality created by members of a society: something that is not determined by biology or the natural world. Is there anything that humans have created that holds no real value in the natural world, yet we have assigned a great deal of value to it? If you are thinking of cash, you’re right on the money. Humans have determined that certain pieces of paper and metal objects are worth an agreed-upon value. For example, in the United States, a one-dollar bill is worth 100 times the value of a penny. One of the ways that we can tell money is a social construction is that it varies from culture to culture and over time. When you visit another country, the United States dollar bill has to be “exchanged” for money that has a different appearance and value. Compare money with another thing of value to human beings: air. Air is needed by all human beings to survive. The need for air and its value do not change over time or from culture to culture. Air is not a social construction. Money is.

What does this have to do with families? While studying families, we must continually remind ourselves that the idea of the family, and in particular the internalized belief that there is a “traditional family,” is a social construction. What is a “traditional family”? I suspect that we can each paint a picture in our heads, based on the years each of us has been exposed to portrayals of families in institutions such as the media, schools, government, and health care.



Generally, the traditional American family has been identified as the nuclear family, most often represented as a male and female heterosexual married couple who is middle class, White, and with several children. When society or the individuals within a society designate one kind of family to be “traditional”, this may imply a value, or a preference, for this kind of family structure with these particular social characteristics. This is sometimes called the *Leave it to Beaver* family after the popular sitcom television show that ran from 1957 until 1963.

Friends, which concluded its 10th season in 2004, exemplifies a fictive kinship. The comedy presents a peer group of individuals in their 20s who live in New York City. The six main characters are best friends who enjoy holidays together, date each other, and remain close friends with one another as they age into their 30s. While they do not all live together in the same apartment, they consider themselves a family.



New Girl, which concluded its 7th season in 2018, also exemplifies a fictive kinship. The comedy presents a peer group of individuals in their 20s who live in Los Angeles. Like in Friends, the five main characters are best friends who enjoy holidays together, date each other, and remain close friends with one another as they age into their 30s. With the exception of one character, they all live together in the same apartment, they consider themselves a family. In fact, two of the five characters marry one another.



Modern Family, which concluded its 11th season in 2020, also features this “traditional” family, but includes two other families which feature people of other ethnic groups, and a same-sex couple. Together they form an extended family who all live in the same town.



This is Us, which concluded its 6th season in 2022, also features this “traditional” family, but includes two adopted children and a mixed-race, multigenerational family. It also extends its story to include adoption, death, divorce, separation, and remarriage.



It is important to note, however, that the primacy of the upper-middle-class, White family image continues to be emphasized as the "norm". Our role is to look at how this social construct impacts the way in which children, families, schools, and communities interact with one another in respectful ways that are culturally responsive, honor the diversity of the family structure, and include a vision of fictive kinship in their collaborations.

The traditional definition of family has been criticized as being too narrow. Modern families, especially those in industrialized societies, exist in many forms, including (but not limited to) the single-parent family, resource families, same-sex couples, child-free families, and many other variations from traditional norms. Common to each of these family forms is commitment, caring, and the close emotional ties that are increasingly the defining characteristics of family (Benokraitis, 2015). The changing definition of family has come about, in part, because of many factors that include divorce and remarriage. In many cases, people do not grow up with their family of origin but become part of a step-family or blended family. Whether a single-parent, joint, or two-parent family, a person's family of origin, the family into which he or she is born, or a fictive kinship generally acts as the social context for young children learning about relationships.

As we study families, we must keep in mind that this idea of the "traditional" family is not representative of all families, yet it is continually reinforced by the social processes and institutions in our society. Media, in particular, continually reminds us of what families are "supposed to" look like. Whether you consume big-budget films, social media platforms, video games, and/or books and magazines, take a look. What kind of people and families do you see represented? While the representation of women, people of color, and people of differing sexualities and gender expressions has increased in media, they still predominantly play less consequential characters within the plot lines. Government, schools, medical institutions, businesses, and places of worship all reinforce a typical view of family through the forms, activities, requirements, and processes that are shared with the public. How many times have you tried to fill out a form with checkboxes only to find that you did not "fit" into one of the boxes? Typical examples include giving parental choices of "mother" and "father," couple status choices such as "married" or "single," and gender choices such as "male" or female," all of which reinforce a binary view of individuals and families. The preference for an idealized traditional family type contributes to less social support for families who don't fit this type: for example, single-parent families, LGBTQ+ families, rural families, or families with a member who is disabled, unemployed, or who has a criminal record.

Pause to Reflect!

Research and discuss the following questions.

1. Identify two official forms that a family member may fill out on behalf of a child. Examples might include a school district enrollment form, Head Start enrollment form, or a form for a pediatrician or other medical professional.
2. Examine the forms for inclusive language. Do they include the parental choices of “mother” and “father” or are they more flexible in their labels of parents, guardians, and/or other caregivers?
3. If the forms are not inclusive, edit them.

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