

A CHILD IN CONTEXT



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Child, Family and Community

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1: DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES

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Learning Objectives

- Identify developmental theories and their influences on how children develop.
- Define socialization
- Understand socialization theories and their influences on child development
- Identify agents of socialization
- Understand methods of socialization
- Discuss Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Theories

The evolving idea of how we become members of a society, develop behaviors, values and beliefs, and follow and create norms and expectations happens through a process called socialization. There is a growing and profound body of research that describes socialization, and the process in which humans are socialized through agents, which we call agents of socialization. Environments such as home, school, and community, are major contributors to the autonomy of who we are as individuals, and a collective group. The methods in how we experience socialization can determine how we experience the different environments we navigate through. This describes how two individuals who navigate through the same environment can have different outcomes.

In addition to socialization, theories on socialization explains the impacts socialization can have on our cognitive and moral development, social-emotional development, physical development, and language development. There are very strong links between socialization and behavioral outcomes. Once we understand socialization, and theories such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, we will come to understand how individuals become who they are, and how to help children navigate through their environments.

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1.1: Developmental Theory

Socialization

Socialization is a part of child development, children learn about their social world within the context of their culture. The intent is for new generations of a society to learn societies way of life, in order to continue to exist. Whatever is distinctive about a cultural society must be transmitted- this process is socialization. For U.S. culture to continue, for example, children in the United States must learn cultural values related to living in a "democracy". One example of this is that children are taught to say the 'Pledge of Alliance' every day in school. Additionally to shape this value children learn about the norms of voting, and how to use material objects such as voting machines. This value impacts their schooling, their community participation and how their parent interact with them.

This text focuses on the myriad of ways society shape children and their behaviors, attitudes and values. Attempting to understanding children begins with a knowledge about development. In this text we will look at the theories, social institutions, cultural norms, interactions with others to understand human behavior.

Developmental Overview

This section will introduce human development for some and review human development foundations for others. Human development is divided into 3 main areas: Physical, Cognitive, and Affective. Together, these areas address the development of the whole child.

- Physical-motor development – this includes our gross motor, fine motor, and perceptual-motor development.
- Cognitive or intellectual development – this includes our thoughts and how our brain processes information, as well as how we utilize language so that we can communicate with one another.
- Affective development – this includes our emotions, social interactions, personality, creativity, spirituality, and the relationships we have with ourselves and others.

All three areas of development are of critical importance in how we support the whole child. For example, if we are more concerned about a child's cognitive functioning we may neglect to give attention to their affective development. We know that when a child feels good about themselves and their capabilities, they are often able to take the required risks to learn about something new. Likewise, if a child is able to use their body to learn, that experience helps to elevate it to their brain. Below is a image of a child who is learning to walk. All areas of development is being impacted during this task. Additionally, as a society we value independence and caregivers work to facilitate the acquisition of these skills.



Figure 1.1.1: Walking addresses cognitive, physical, and social emotional development. (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0; sean dreilinger via WordPress)

Quoteable

"If it isn't in the body, it can't be in the brain."

- Bev Bos

Developmental Theories

Theories help us to understand behaviors and recognize developmental milestones so that we can organize our thoughts and consider how to best support a child's individual needs. With this information, we can then plan and implement learning experiences that are appropriate for the development of that child (called, "developmentally appropriate practice or DAP", which is discussed more later on in this chapter), set up engaging environments, and most importantly, we can develop realistic expectations based on the child's age and stage of development.

A theory is defined as "a supposition, or a system of ideas intended to explain something, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained, a set of principles on which the practice of an activity is based."

The theories we chose to include in this text form the underlying "principles" that guide us in the decisions we make about the children in our care, as well as provide us with insight on how to best support children as they learn, grow, and develop. The theories that have been selected were proposed by scientists and theorists who studied human development extensively. Each, with their own unique hypothesis, set out to examine and explain development by collecting data through observations/experiments. The theorists we selected, strived to answer pertinent questions about how we develop and become who we are. Some sought to explain why we do what we do, while others studied when we should achieve certain skills. Here are a few of the questions developmental theorists have considered:

- Is development due to maturation or due to experience? This is often described as the *nature versus nurture debate*. Theorists who side with nature propose that development stems from innate genetics or heredity. It is believed that as soon as we are conceived, we are wired with certain dispositions and characteristics that dictate our growth and development. Theorists who side with nurture claim that it is the physical and temporal experiences or environment that shape and influence our development. It is thought that our environment - our socio-economic status, the neighborhood we grow up in, and the schools we attend, along with our parents' values and religious upbringing - that impact our growth and development. Many experts feel it is no longer an "either nature OR nurture" debate but rather a matter of degree; which influences development more?
- Does one develop gradually or does one undergo specific changes during distinct time frames? This is considered the continuous or discontinuous debate. On one hand, some theorists propose that growth and development are continuous; it is a slow and gradual transition that occurs over time, much like an acorn growing into a giant oak tree. While on the

other hand, there are theorists that consider growth and development to be discontinuous; which suggests that we become different organisms altogether as we transition from one stage of development to another, similar to a caterpillar turning into a butterfly.

- Is behavior shaped by individual internal processes or by the role of society in shaping behavior?

Critical Reflection

Socialization is the means by which human infants begin to acquire the skills necessary to perform as functioning members of their society.

-What skills did you acquire to become a successful adult? Who and what was instrumental in shaping you to fit into society?

As suggested earlier, not only do theories help to explain key components of human development, theories also provide practitioners with valuable insight that can be utilized to support a child's learning, growth, and development. At this time, we would like to mention that although theories are based on notable scientific discoveries, it is necessary to emphasize the following:

- No one theory exclusively explains everything about a child's development.
- Theories are designed to help us make educated guesses about children's development
- Each theory focuses on a different aspect of human development
- Theories often build on previous theoretical concepts and may seek to expand ideals or explore new facets.
- Theories may not be generally applied to all diverse experiences

Developmental theories give us a framework for understanding the importance of socialization. The most common developmental theories are outlined here. Later, their application to socialization will be explained in specific chapters.

We will see that different theories cover different aspects of growth. Several developmental psychologists have laid the foundation to provide a framework to examine, explain and interpret human behavior. Some theories focus on socialization of children within their culture and community. For example, Rogoff suggested cultural communities expect and shape children differently. It is important to understand the role culture plays in socialization given the changing demographics and issues impacting children (later discussed in chapter 8). Theories and theorists which focus on the diverse cultural context of socialization include:

- Bronfenbrenner
- Vygotsky
- Rogoff
- Cultural Framework Theories

In addition, other theories and theorists will be highlighted. Such as:

- Piaget
- Erikson
- Bandura
- Behaviorism

Currently, the last theories identified are considered foundational to the field of child development. Yet, it is critical to note these theories have been generally researched on middle class western cultural norms and generalized to all children. Their validity is greatly debated. It is important to keep this research limitation in mind when applying to all children.

Attribution

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1.2: Bronfenbrenner

Bioecological Systems Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner was one of the first psychologists to adopt a holistic perspective on human development via his Bioecological Systems Theory, which had a widespread influence on the way psychologists and other social scientists approach the study of human beings and their environments (New World Encyclopedia, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of the social environments in which children are raised, and saw the breakdown of the family as the leading cause of the ever-growing rates of alienation, apathy, rebellion, delinquency, and violence among American youth. His work led to new directions in research and the design of programs and policies affecting the well-being of children and families.

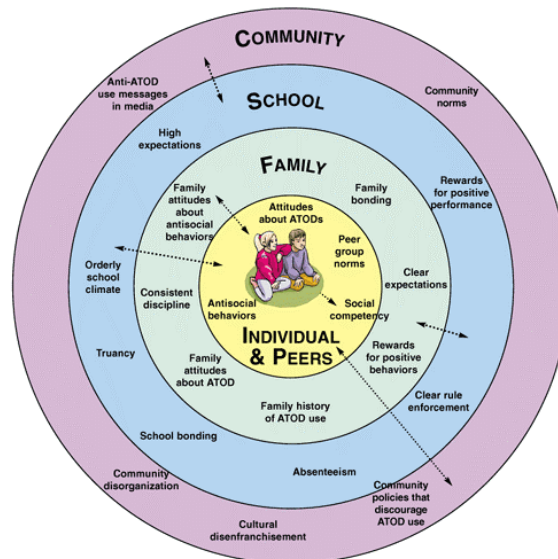


Figure 1.2.1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory diagram. (CC BY SA; Alyla.K via Wikimedia)

Bronfenbrenner's primary theoretical contribution was his Bioecological Systems Theory, in which he identified four types of nested systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). Bronfenbrenner recognized that it is necessary to understand how not only the family or school influences human development, but how broader influences do as well.

The four systems are:

- **Microsystem:** Immediate environments such as family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and childcare environments.
- **Mesosystem:** A system comprised of connections between immediate environments (i.e., a child's home and school).
- **Exosystem:** External environmental settings which only indirectly affect development, such as parent's workplace.
- **Macrosystem:** The larger cultural context (Eastern vs. Western culture, national economy, political culture, subculture).

Later a fifth system was added:

- **Chronosystem:** The patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of life.

Each system contains roles, norms, and rules that can powerfully shape development (See Table 1.). For example, in order to understand the issues a learner is having with math, we can't simply look at that individual and what challenges they face directly with the subject. We have to look at the interactions that occur between the teacher and the child. Perhaps the teacher needs to make modifications as well. The teacher may be responding to regulations made by the school, such as new expectations for students in math or constraints on time that interferes with the teacher's ability to instruct. These new demands may be a response to national efforts to promote math and science deemed important by political leaders in response to relations with

other countries at a particular time in history.

Table 1. Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Model

Name of System	Description of System
Microsystems	Microsystems impact a child directly. These are the people with whom the child interacts such as parents, peers, and teachers. The relationship between individuals and those around them need to be considered. For example, to appreciate what is going on with a student in math, the relationship between the student and teacher should be known.
Mesosystems	Mesosystems are interactions between environments closely surrounding the individual. The relationship between parents and schools, for example, will indirectly affect the child.
Exosystem	Larger institutions such as the mass media or the healthcare system are referred to as the ecosystem. These have an impact on families, peers, and schools that operate under policies and regulations found in these institutions.
Macrosystems	We find cultural values and beliefs at the level of macrosystems. These larger ideals and expectations inform institutions that will ultimately impact the individual.
Chronosystem	All of this happens in a historical context referred to as the chronosystem. Cultural values change over time, as do the policies of educational institutions or governments in certain political climates. Development occurs at a point in time.

According to the Bioecological theory, if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of his environment. Children looking for the affirmations that should be present in the child/parent (or child/other important adult) relationship look for attention in inappropriate places. These deficiencies tend to show themselves in adolescence as anti-social behavior, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction (Addison, 1992).

The major assumptions of *The (Bio)Ecology of Human Development*, have had widespread influence on the way psychologists and other social scientists approach the study of human beings and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1981). It has been said that before Bronfenbrenner, child psychologists studied the child, sociologists examined the family, anthropologists the society, economists the economic framework of the times, and political scientists the political structure.

As a result of Bronfenbrenner's groundbreaking work in human ecology, these environments, from the family to economic and political structures, have come to be viewed as part of the life course from childhood through adulthood. The "bioecological" approach to human development broke down barriers among the social sciences and built bridges between the disciplines that have allowed findings to emerge about which key elements in the larger social structure, and across societies, are vital for optimal human development.

The Human Ecology Framework



Figure 1.2.2: Protests for gun reform in the United States. (CC by SA 2.0; Lorie Shaull via Flickr)

The human ecology framework assumes that families interact within multiple environments that mutually influence each other. These environments include the biophysical (personal variables), the microsystem (the systems in immediate surroundings, such as family, neighborhood, church, work, or school), the mesosystem (the ways in which these immediate systems connect, such as the relationships between family and work), the exosystem (the larger social system, such as the stress of another family member's job), and the macrosystem (the cultural values and the larger social system, such as immigration policy that influences admission and social system access) (Ballard et al., 2019).

In the context of a refugee family, the family might be influenced by their biophysical (e.g., whether or not members were injured as they fled persecution), their microsystem (e.g., parental conflict while fleeing), their mesosystem (e.g., teachers and school personnel who are struggling with their own trauma from fleeing conflict and thus their ability to provide robust services is impaired), their exosystem (e.g., local leaders who do not consult with women living in shelters regarding their resources needs and don't provide feminine hygiene products or children's toys), and countless other environments (Hoffman, M. A., & Kruczek, T., 2011). The family may have access to and be able to directly influence their mesosystem and at the same time feel powerless to make changes in the exosystem. Each of these environments will contribute to their coping.



Figure

: Child protesting for immigrants. (
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With its focus on interaction within multiple environments, the human ecology framework is an incredibly useful lens to employ cross-cultural contexts such as when considering immigrant families. For example, a researcher could ask, “How do Hmong immigrant families manage financial resources in their new environment in the United States?” and “How did Hmong families manage their financial resources while still living in Laos?” The assumptions and central concepts of human ecology theory would apply equally in either culture. The needs, values, and environment would be sensitively identified within each culture (Solheim, C. A., & Yang, P. N. D., 2010).

Additionally, human ecology theory assumes that families are intentional in their decision-making and that they work toward biological sustenance, economic maintenance, and psychosocial function. As patterns in the social environment are more and more threatening to the family's quality of life in these three areas, the system will be more and more likely to seek change, possibly by a move to a new country.

The family system has certain needs, including physical needs for resources and interpersonal needs for relationships. If their current situation is not meeting these needs, the family system will engage in management to meet these needs within their value system.

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1.3: Vygotsky

Vygotsky: Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky believed that a person has both a set of abilities and a set of potential abilities that can be reached if given the proper guidance from others (Paris et al., 2019).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of culture and interaction in the development of cognitive abilities. He concentrated more on children's immediate social and cultural environment and their interactions with adults and peers. He saw a child as an apprentice, learning through a social environment with others who had more experience and were sensitive to the child's needs and abilities.

Vygotsky theorized that through guided participation with a teacher or a more capable person, also known as scaffolding, a child can learn cognitive skills within a certain range known as the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, development occurs first through children's immediate social interactions and then moves to the individual level as they began to internalize their learning.



Figure 1.3.1: One child showing another child how to tie their shoes. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Allison Shelley via EDUimages)

Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Have you ever taught children how to perform a task? Maybe it was brushing their teeth or tying their shoestrings. Chances are you spoke to them and described what you were doing while you demonstrated the skill and let them work along with you throughout the process. You provided them assistance when they seemed to need it, but once they knew what to do, you stood back and let them perform the task alone. This is an example of scaffolding (Leon, n.d.)

Examples of scaffolding, the temporary support that parents, peers or teachers give a child to perform a task, can be seen throughout the world in an unlimited number of situations. Vygotsky's theory contends that instead of assessing what people are doing, people should be understood in terms of what they are capable of doing with the proper guidance. This approach to teaching has also been adopted by educators as seen here.

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between a child's *potential to learn* and the *actual learning* that takes place. Vygotsky hypothesized that a "quality teacher" first identifies a child's ZPD and then helps the child learn beyond their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). After this, the teacher (or any person with more advanced skills) gradually withdraws support until the child can perform the task without assistance. It is all about providing the right level of challenge and support to gradually support new skills without making the new skills seem undoable for the learner. A practical example is a child engaging in a puzzle. A child

will have a current level of competence of completing a 50 piece puzzle without support. A 25 piece puzzle is too easy and a 200 piece puzzle maybe too challenge even with support from a teacher. The ZPD for this child's next growth may be 100 piece puzzle with support.

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Cultural Consideration

Vygotsky's theory promotes a learning model in which children play an active role in learning. Roles of teachers and students are therefore transformed into a reciprocal collaborative process in which teachers help facilitate meaning construction in students. Thus learning becomes a reciprocal experience for students and educator (Rogoff, 2003). In this framework educators must sometimes accept differences of behavior in children and accommodate these differences in the classroom. Speech and language development played an influential role in Vygotsky's theories of language acquisition and learning in general. Children develop language skills individually, but they do so within a cooperative learning context as peers, family members, teachers, and others engage, support, and teach them. Supporting multi-language learners in their home language is an example of using (ZPD) of learning through a reciprocal and dialogic interaction. The ZPD is a level of development obtained when children engage in social interactions with others; it is the distance between a child's *potential* to learn and the *actual learning* that takes place. This practice demonstrates respect for a family's primary language and communicates that the educator values the family and child's culture. NAEYC recommends for educators to encourage and assist all parents in becoming knowledgeable about the cognitive value for children of knowing more than one language and provide them with strategies, support, maintain and preserve home language learning (NAEYC, 1996).

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1.4: Barbara Rogoff

The Relationship of Collaboration

Building on Vygotsky's Sociocultural theories is Barbara Rogoff. Rogoff's theory focuses on the relationship between the child and society. Rogoff's ideas did not focus on the child and their individual processes but on the child's cognitive skills which derive from engagement in sociocultural activities. The theory does not focus on a child's own innate ability, but rather indicates that skills are developed in specific contexts and learned through specific cultural activities. Her research findings are based on children and families in Mexican and Indigenous cultures. Additionally, Rogoff's theory highlights the interaction of nature vs nurture as discussed earlier in this chapter. She suggests biology and culture work in concert with each other. For example, breastfeeding is biologically based but there are different ways breast feeding is practiced based within cultural societal norms and standards.

Reflection

Learning to speak or learning to read...

Consider which on is biologically based and culturally influenced?



Figure 1.4.1: A first-grade boy reads a book to his kindergarten friend while sitting outside. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Allison Shelley via EDUimages)

Guided Participation

Rogoff developed the theory of guided participation, adding to Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. Consider a time when you learned something new in a relationship between yourself and an adult or caregiver, such as making tortillas with your grandfather or learning how to change a tire of a car. This is the collaborative transfer of knowledge between a guide and apprentice. The idea that children on their developmental path use cultural tools with skilled mentors shape their development (Rogoff, 2003). As highlighted in the video below, the theory involves people bridging meaning and interactions with learners in a synchronous way. Children and mentors (e.g. caregivers and more skilled peers) structure learning opportunities through choice, observation, and listening while participating in the activities and share understanding both verbally and non- verbally.

Learning opportunities can occur through choice, observation, and listening while participating in these activities and everyday routines. For example, caregivers who engage in game playing and singing during diapering are actually helping children learn to cooperate with the routine. These skills and interactions become more complex as children learn other self-help adaptive skills such as eating with a fork and spoon and learning how to help with clean up.

Dr. Barbara Rogoff highlights the following ideas:

- Collaboration- Notice how the children are collaborating with each other. Children should be encouraged to collaborate with each other, adults, caregivers and communities.
- Learning through Observation- Notice how the children are observing each other and making meaning to guide their own engagement.
- Prioritize Children's Interest- Notice how knowledge is accrued while engaging in a task in which that child has genuine interest. The activity is engaging and fueled by curiosity and enjoyment.
- Role of Adults- The caregivers and adults are needed in many tasks. Caregivers and adults should be available for collaborative support based on the needs of the child.

The process of bridging sharply differentiates guided participation from giving information as the approach to teaching and learning. The intention of bridging is to support a learner in making connections between what is known or unknown or misconstrued and in need of revision or reconstruction (Rogoff, 1990). Bridging is a function of experience, recalled, simulated, or relived, similar to watching a video playback of the interaction with the child. Bridging supports learners in reflecting on how things were, are now, or could be with new ways of thinking and behaving. Wondering with the learner is a strategy teachers may use to facilitate reflection and make connections; for example, wondering with a parent what her child was saying when he behaved, the way he was observed behaving, or what she might have been feeling when her child behaved that way (Slade, 2005).

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Cultural Considerations

Rogoff's theories have particular considerations for children with special needs. This theory can be particularly impactful considering the growing number of children with special needs in the U.S. who may be experiencing a phenomena called learned helplessness, which is discussed later in the book. Learned helplessness may occur when a child impacted by a diverse ability is either personally or socially not able to join in typical guided participation experiences which may cause them to begin to withdraw or lose motivation to change circumstances (2015). Think about children who are unable to engage in eye contact or social reference caregivers- social referencing is when children look to others to give information and meaning in a social situation. A child may begin to withdraw from a rich and beneficial relationship and thus will suffer the loss of growth that takes place within these participatory experiences. This can cause many parents and teachers to feel helpless, not knowing how to support the child with special needs, and leading them to reciprocally disengage in the relationship as well.

In a 2015 study, Hobson et al. observed that when a caregiver who supported a neuro-atypical child were asked to focus on the guided participation relationship, noticed a reduction in the severity of symptoms of the the child. When caregivers focused on having high quality guided relationships with children, the children were able to regulate and learn critical developmental skills (Hobson et al., 2015).

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1.5: Cultural Frameworks

Cultural Frameworks

There are frameworks that look at diverse cultural interactions resulting in the formation of values, behaviors, and skills as asset. These frameworks include Funds of Knowledge, Community Cultural Wealth and Cultural Capital.

Cultural Capital

Pierre Bourdieu's (1930-2002) theory of cultural capital or “the cultural knowledge that serves as currency that helps us navigate culture and alters our experiences and the opportunities available to us.”

Sociologists find cultural capital or the social assets of person (including intellect, education, speech pattern, mannerisms, and dress) promote social mobility (Harper-Scott and Samson, 2009). People who accumulate and display the cultural knowledge of a society or group may earn social acceptance, status, and power. Bourdieu (1991) explained the accumulation and transmission of culture is a social investment from socializing agents including family, peers, and community. People learn culture and cultural characteristics and traits from one another; however, social status effects whether people share, spread, or communicate cultural knowledge to each other. A person's social status in a group or society influences their ability to access and develop cultural capital.

Cultural capital provides people access to cultural connections such as institutions, individuals, materials, and economic resources. Status guides people in choosing who and when culture or cultural capital is transferable. Bourdieu (1991) believed cultural inheritance and personal biography attributes to individual success more than intelligence or talent. With status comes access to social and cultural capital that generates access to privileges and power among and between groups. Individuals with cultural capital deficits face social inequalities (Reay, 2004). If someone does not have the cultural knowledge and skills to maneuver the social world she or he occupies, then she or he will not find acceptance within a group or society and access to support and resources. Consider how children from low resourced income families without insurance have increased health issues such as low birth weight or higher incidence of asthma (Waterston et al., 2004).

Cultural Wealth



Figure 1.5.1: Dual-language class at UCLA Community School. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Allison Shelley for EDUimage)

Yosso (2005) describes cultural wealth as “an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by marginalized group that is often unrecognized and unacknowledged”, countering the cultural deficit model which focuses on deficiencies in

the home life of children.

Yosso's six forms of cultural capital are:

1. Aspirational- children develop social emotional perseverance despite educational inequities
2. Linguistic- children develop language and communication skills as dual language and dialectical learners
3. Familial- children develop a sense of community history and memory
4. Social- children draw from personal human resources within family and community
5. Navigational- children develop the ability to get needs met in unresponsive environments
6. Resistance- children develop the knowledge and skills to challenge inequality

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of Knowledge is a similar concept in early childhood from Velez- Ibanez and Greenberg (1992) made popular by Gonzales, Moll, and Amanti (2005). This is the idea that information learned in the home and family is knowledge that stays with children their whole lives. Funds of knowledge are the historically accumulated and culturally developed skills essential for an household, community, and individual to function well. Funds of knowledge help explain how culture shapes each child's skills, behaviors, and abilities. For children funds of knowledge can be built from:

- Family occupations
- Family activities
- Home language
- Family outings
- Household chores
- Caregiving experiences
- Entertainment

Funds of knowledge encompass families' traditions, experiences, information, and practices. When educators and supportive adults establish a relationship founded on the common goal of successful and healthy development of the child, it supports the aims of cultural responsiveness, equity, and inclusion. For example, when a child shares their enthusiasm for a television program their family is watching together, it draws upon many of the child's own funds of knowledge. While the child is drawing on a shared family and cultural experience in the show itself, the child is also engaging with notions of occupations and outings, values, chores and activities and vocabulary. A child's experience shopping at the grocery store is another example of funds of knowledge. A child may learn about quantity, money, shopping practices, cultural norms around food, and patterns of interacting, all while learning and practicing signs and symbols. Drawing on socio-cultural perspectives, educators embrace the funds of knowledge children possess utilizing these resources and skills to build productive pedagogy. In this way, educators acknowledge that every child comes to school with previous experiences that influence their interactions with language and support their emerging knowledge base.

The home environment of each family is complex and personal, and includes economic, social, and cultural influences. The complexity of home and community environments explains the diversity we see amongst school readiness nationwide. Using the Funds of Knowledge teachers can be seen as anthropologist investigating a child's knowledge base that originated in their home and community. Teachers can then design educational experience that pull from overlooked funds of knowledge to ensure culturally relevant learning experiences that honors a child's culture as opposed to focusing on what the child does not know leading to stereotypical and deficit thinking of the child.

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1.6: Erikson

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erikson suggested that our relationships and society's expectations motivate much of our behavior in his theory of psychosocial development. Erikson believed that we are not driven by unconscious urges. He is considered the father of developmental psychology because his model gives us a guideline for the entire life span and suggests certain primary psychological and social concerns throughout life (Paris et al., 2019).

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Erikson emphasized the importance of culture in parenting practices and motivations. He also added three stages of social and emotional domains regarding adult development. He believed that we are aware of what motivates us throughout life and people make conscious choices in life and these choices focus on meeting certain social and cultural needs rather than purely biological ones. His theory notes that humans are motivated, for instance, by the need to feel that the world is a trustworthy place, that we are capable individuals, that we can make a contribution to society, and that we have lived a meaningful life. These are all psychosocial issues.

Erikson divided the lifespan into eight stages. In each stage, we have a major psychosocial task to accomplish or crisis to overcome. Successful completion of each developmental task results in a sense of competence and a healthy personality. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy. Erikson believed that our personality continues to take shape throughout our lifespan as we face these challenges in living (Erikson, 1959).

These eight stages form a foundation for discussions on emotional and social development during the life span. However, these stages or crises can occur more than once and can occur at different ages (Erikson, 1968). For instance, a person may struggle with a lack of trust beyond infancy under certain circumstances. Erikson's theory has been criticized for focusing so heavily on stages and assuming that the completion of one stage is a prerequisite for the next development crisis (Marcia, 1980). His theory also focuses on the social expectations that are found in some cultures, but not in others. For instance, the idea that adolescence is a time of searching for identity might translate well in the middle-class culture of the United States, but not as well in cultures where the transition into adulthood coincides with puberty through rites of passage and where adult roles offer fewer choices. Here is a brief overview of the eight stages (Lumen Learning, n.d.):

Table 1. Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Name of Stage and Age	Description of Stage
Trust vs. mistrust (0-1 year)	The infant must have basic needs met in a consistent way in order to feel that the world is a trustworthy place.
Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (1-2 years)	Mobile toddlers have newfound freedom that they like to exercise and by being allowed to do so, they learn some basic independence.
Initiative vs. guilt (3-5 years)	Preschoolers like to initiate activities and emphasize doing things "all by myself."
Industry vs. inferiority (6-11 years)	School-aged children focus on accomplishments and begin making comparisons between themselves and their classmates.

Name of Stage and Age	Description of Stage
Identity vs. role confusion (adolescence)	Teenagers try to gain a sense of identity as they experiment with various roles, beliefs, and ideas.
Intimacy vs. isolation (young adulthood)	In our 20s and 30s, we make some of our first long-term commitments in intimate relationships.
Generativity vs. stagnation (middle adulthood)	In the 40s through the early 60s we focus on being productive at work and home and are motivated by wanting to feel that we've made a contribution to society.
Integrity vs. Despair (late adulthood)	We look back on our lives and hope to like what we see — that we have lived well and have a sense of integrity because we lived according to our beliefs.

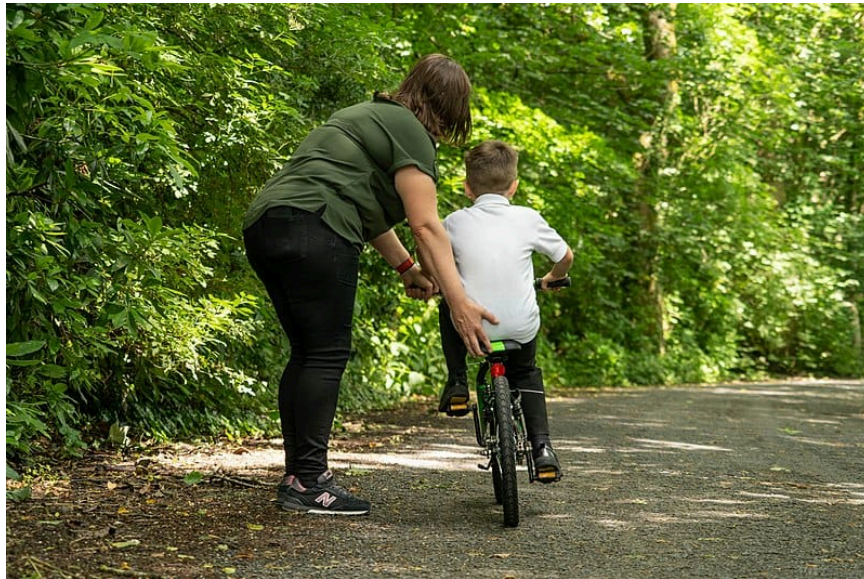


Figure 1.6.1: Initiative vs. Guilt. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Alextredz via flickr)

Cultural considerations of Erikson's Theory

As discussed throughout this reading, culture is a main component of socialization and, thus, identity formation. According to Erikson, social identity is developed through the experience of socialization. The ultimate goal of identity formation is achievement that gives a person a consistent and integrated personality. Erikson notes that this occurs through identity individuation, as children begin to see themselves as separate persons from a group. In the U.S., this idea can be challenging to apply to children raised in cultures that rely on collectivist and interdependent frameworks versus individualism and independent orientations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). In a majority of cultures around the world, children think of themselves as a part of a group before they think of themselves as an individual. The concept of a child thinking independently is not rewarded and may make identity achievement, as Erikson outlines, not generalizable to all cultures.

Additionally, children's developing sense of self is influenced by how others- parents, caregivers, teachers, friends see them. For many children the bias around race and ethnicity will directly impact a sense of psychological well being (Kaiser & Wilkins, 2010). As noted above, group membership, or being apart of a collective, is the experience of many people. When group experiences and expectations are not taken into account it can often be framed as negative identity within Erikson's construct.

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1.7: Clarks-Cross Cultural Issues

Cross Cultural Issues

There is a risk that theories and data derived from White, European American settings could be assumed to apply to children and social groups from other cultures and this is unlikely to be true (Betancourt & López, 1993). For example, a study of characteristics of individuals seeking treatment for a binge eating disorder in Hispanic American, African American, and Caucasian American individuals found significant differences between groups (Franko et al., 2012). The study concluded that results from studying any one of the groups could not be extended to the other groups, and yet potential causes of the differences were not measured.

In 1920, Francis Cecil Sumner was the first African American to receive a PhD in psychology in the United States. Sumner established a psychology degree program at Howard University, leading to the education of a new generation of African American psychologists (Black et al., 2004). Much of the work of early psychologists from diverse backgrounds was dedicated to challenging intelligence testing and promoting innovative educational methods for children. George I. Sanchez contested such testing with Mexican American children. As a psychologist of Mexican heritage, he pointed out that the language and cultural barriers in testing were keeping children from equal opportunities (Guthrie, 1998). By 1940, he was teaching with his doctoral degree at University of Texas at Austin and challenging segregated educational practices (Romo, 1986).



Figure 1.7.1 Drs. Kenneth and Mamie Clark. (Public Domain, Wikimedia)

In the previous section, Erikson discussed obstacles to the development of identity. One of these obstacles is negative identity which is when a person rejects the roles expected by one's family, community, and society. Negative identity is the basis for the work of Mamie and Kenneth Clark's valuable research. Extending this idea, it stands to reason that identity formation may be particularly problematic for minoritized communities such as females, people of color and children with atypical development as they tend to believe the societal norms related to their value and worth. For more information on these minoritized groups, see chapter 8.

Kenneth and Mamie Clark designed studies to investigate children's sense of identity, including tests using dolls, coloring, and drawings. The Drs. Clark, researched the development of consciousness of self in young children. In one test, Black preschool children were shown a series of line drawings of a White boy and a Black boy, a lion, a clown, and a hen and were asked to identify themselves or others. The results showed that, more often than not, the children selected the drawing of the Black boy to identify themselves rather than the drawing of the White boy (or any of the animals). The outcome of that research indicated that young Black children developed a consciousness of their race between 3 to 4 years of age. In another test, when given a variety of brown crayons to choose from, the children in the study used a crayon lighter than their own shade to color in their skin. This research laid the foundation for the groundbreaking research and for a myriad of racialized identity formation theories.

With additional questions emerging such as why are children using lighter shaded crayons to represent themselves, Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted experiments known as “The Doll Test”. The premise was to understand the role of segregation and its impact on Black children; however, the research ended up providing information about all children as discussed later. To understand racial identity development, the Drs. Clark used identical dolls with the only variable being the color of the doll's skin. The researchers found that:

1. Black children often chose to play with the White dolls more than the Black ones.
2. The children gave the color 'white' positive attributes like good and pretty; moreover, the 'black doll' was attributed to being bad and ugly.

Using Black and White dolls, some of the young Black children actually cried when asked to point to the doll they looked most like (Clark & Clark, 1947). The Clarks concluded that “prejudice, discrimination, and segregation” created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and damaged their self-esteem. The original results by Drs. Clark can still be replicated with today's children.

This video is not closed captioned. However, viewing the video you can capture the main understanding of the video. The children accurately point to the White doll when asked and the Black doll when asked. They are then asked which doll is the pretty doll and point to the White doll. They are asked, “which doll is the nice doll” and point to the White doll. They are then asked “which doll is the bad doll” and they point to the Black doll. Finally they are asked “why is that doll bad” and they respond “Because it is Black”. This indicates even at an early age children have been socialized to equate a negative meaning with being “Black”. Although this particular video uses only Black children. It has been replicated many times with children of all racialized backgrounds.

YouTube Video

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The above video is a replication of the original doll test study. The doll test was instrumental in the landmark ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. This testimony changed the trajectory of public education for all children. The Supreme Court cited Clark's 1950 paper in its *Brown* decision and acknowledged it implicitly in the following passage: “To separate [African-American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” Although this was an accomplishment for his research, Dr. Kenneth Clark was dismayed that the court failed to cite two other conclusions he had reached: that racism was an inherently American institution and that school segregation inhibited the development of white children, too. (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Listen to the [podcast below describing the Clarks' research and impact on the Supreme Court decision](#).

Doll Test Implications for All children

Dr. Clark's last conclusion, as noted above, that racism “is an inhibition in development of White children too” was not cited in the *Brown vs Board of Education* ruling, but it is important to understand the full implications of the research. The Drs. Clark hypothesized that racialized identity and White preference is not only an issue for Black American children but for most children. Most children have been socialized to prefer whiteness and to associate blackness with negativity. To corroborate this, the doll test has been replicated in many countries with shocking results. According to Gibson, Robbins & Rochat (2015), there is an even stronger White preference bias in five to seven-year-old Indian, Polynesian, and Melanesian children tested in their native island nations. These results are consistent with the idea that, during the preschool years, children are sensitive and attracted to signs of higher social status that, for historical reasons and across cultures, tends to be associated with lighter skin color. The research done by the Clarks is no longer being used as evidence for the need for integration but points to the outcomes of all children living in racist and discriminating social world.

Take a look at these videos to see how children of diverse ethnic and racialized identities responded similarly to the original

experiments. These videos include captioning in the section of importance.

Replicated Doll Test Italian Children

YouTube Video

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Replicated Doll Test in Japan Children

Not fully closed captioned; however, the captions are not needed. At minute 3:15 captions are embedded. The children are asked "which do you prefer" the children point to the "White doll". Noting a clear White preference.

YouTube Video

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After all of the Drs. Clark research and irrefutable evidence of the dangers of racism and prejudice, a recent report by UCLA (2014) notes we have lost much of the ground on segregating schools. In fact, that report finds that schools are segregated by race, language, and socio-economic status, and that Latinx children are the most segregated of any group. To read more about our national statistics and changing demographics read the [UCLA report in full](#).

Reflection

Given the changing landscape outlined in the report above, what impact do you anticipate an increase segregation will have on all children, their self-esteem, and identity?

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1.8: Piaget

Piaget: Cognitive Development Theory

Overview

Jean Piaget studied how children and youth gradually become able to think logically and scientifically, resulting in his Cognitive Development Theory. Cognition refers to thinking and memory processes, and cognitive development refers to long-term changes in these processes. He was one of the first to recognize and map out the ways in which children's thought differs from that of adults. His interest in this area began when he was asked to test the IQ of children and began to notice that there was a pattern in their wrong answers (Paris et al., 2019).

Piaget believed that children's intellectual skills change over time based on biological predispositions and their own individual interactions with the world. He was very critical of teacher-directed instruction, believing that teachers or caregivers who take control of the child's learning place the child into a passive role (Crain, 2005). According to Piaget, children of differing ages interpret the world differently; therefore, he divided this learning into four stages. His stages assumed a sequence of thinking patterns with these key features:

1. They always happen in the same order.
2. No stage is ever skipped.
3. Each stage is a significant transformation from the stage before it.
4. Each later stage builds upon and incorporates the earlier stages.

Sensorimotor Stage

Piaget described intelligence in infancy as sensorimotor, or based on direct, physical contact via the use of their senses. Infants taste, feel, pound, push, hear, and move in order to experience the world.



Figure 1.8.1: Baby exploring the world using motor skills and senses. (CC BY 2.0; Ricardo Yubal via Wikimedia)

Preoperational Stage

Piaget's stage that coincides with early childhood is the preoperational stage. The word operational means logical, so these children were thought to be illogical. However, they learn to use language and to think of the world symbolically.



Figure 1.8.2: A child pretending to buy items at a toy grocery store. (CC BY SA 4.0; Ermalfaro via Wikimedia)

Pretend Play

Pretending is a favorite activity during the preoperational stage. A toy has qualities beyond the way it was designed to function and can now be used to stand for a character or object unlike anything for which it was originally intended. A teddy bear, for example, can be a baby or the queen of a faraway land!

Note that children in the Preoperational Stage exhibit symbolic play, egocentrism, lack of understanding conservation tasks, and inability to understand reversibility.

Egocentrism

Egocentrism in early childhood refers to the tendency of young children to think that everyone sees things in the same way as them. This trait is particularly common in the preoperational stage.

Concrete Operational Stage



Figure 1.8.3: Children using their fingers to count. (CC BY-SA 3.0; Sengai Podhuvan via Wikimedia)

This stage takes place from around 7 years old to 11 years of age and is characterized by the development of organized and rational thinking. The child is now mature enough to use logical thought or operations (e.g., rules) but can only apply logic to physical or “concrete” objects and events (hence the name “concrete operational”). Children gain the abilities of conservation (number, area, volume, orientation) and understand that when concrete objects change in appearance, they still contain the same volume, area, number, and orientation and can return to their original state (reversibility) (Lally, & Vlentine-French, 2017).

Their rules of thinking still seem very basic by adult standards and usually operate unconsciously, but they allow children to solve problems more systematically than before, and therefore to be successful with many academic tasks. For example, a child may unconsciously follow the rule: “If nothing is added or taken away, then the amount of something stays the same.” This simple principle helps children to understand certain arithmetic tasks, such as adding or subtracting zero from a number.

Formal Operational Stage

During this stage, adolescents are able to understand abstract principles. They are no longer limited by what can be directly seen or heard and are able to contemplate constructs such as beauty, love, freedom, and morality. Adolescents demonstrate hypothetical-deductive reasoning, which is developing hypotheses based on what might logically occur. They are able to think about all the possibilities in a situation beforehand, and then test them systematically because they are able to engage in scientific thinking.

Table 1. Jean Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development

Name of Stage	Description of Stage
Sensorimotor Stage	During the sensorimotor stage, children rely on the use of the senses and motor skills. From birth to about 2 years the infant learns by tasting, smelling, touching, hearing, and moving objects around. This is a hands-on type of knowledge.
Preoperational Stage	In the preoperational stage, children from ages 2 to 7 years become able to think about the world using symbols. A symbol is something that stands for something else. The use of language, whether it is in the form of words or gestures, facilitates knowing and communicating about the world. This is the hallmark of preoperational learning and it typically occurs in early childhood. However, these children are preoperational or pre-logical. They still do not understand how the physical world operates. They may, for instance, fear that they will go down the drain if they sit at the front of the bathtub, even though they are too big.
Concrete Operational Stage	Children in the concrete operational stage, ages 7 to 11 years, develop the ability to think logically about the physical world. Middle childhood is a time of understanding concepts such as size, distance, and constancy of matter, and cause and effect relationships. A child knows that a scrambled egg is still an egg and that 8 ounces of water are still 8 ounces no matter what shape of glass contains it.
Formal Operational Stage	During the formal operational stage children, at about 12 years of age, acquire the ability to think logically about concrete and abstract events. The teenager who has reached this stage is able to consider possibilities and to contemplate ideas about situations that have never been directly encountered. More abstract understanding of religious ideas, morals, or ethics, and abstract principles such as freedom and dignity can be considered.

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Cultural Considerations of Piaget’s Theory

Critics have discovered considerable variation in what children are able to do at various ages in different parts of the world and in different cultures. Further, many contend that Piaget may have underestimated what children are capable of given the right

circumstances (Lumen Learning, n.d.). For instance, he believed that learning peaked around the age of 12 years, designated by his last stage—formal operational stage.

Because learning appears to be highly contextual, meaning dependent on the environment, Piaget's belief that learning must be sequential has been challenged. Berry's (1976) eco-cultural model highlights that people value and develop those skills and concepts that are useful in the daily activities related to their daily lives, thus, on conservation tasks the ages of skill acquisition may be different. For example, the Baoule community on the Ivory Coast, who produce vegetable food, store it and exchange it in markets, tend to value quantitative concepts (reflected in Piaget's conservation of liquids task), while hunter-gatherers communities traditionally show little interest in precise quantitative comparisons.

Cross-cultural testing has challenged emerging cognitive theorists to incorporate cultural and environment into Piaget's ideas original ideas, but the succession of stages in cognitive development appears to be generalizable. Timing, ages, and capabilities during each stage appear to vary according to cultural context and enculturation patterns.

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1.9: Behaviorism

Behaviorist Theories

Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of human behavior. In defining behavior, behaviorist learning theories emphasize changes in behavior that result from stimulus-response associations made by the learner. Several social psychologists studied behavior and identified different theories on how behaviors can be learned and/or changed through reinforcement. They called this conditioning.

John B. Watson (1878-1958) and B. F. Skinner (1904-1990) are the two principal originators of behaviorist approaches to learning. Watson believed that human behavior resulted from specific stimuli that elicited certain responses. Watson's basic premise was that conclusions about human development should be based on observation of overt behavior rather than speculation about subconscious motives or latent cognitive processes (Shaffer, 2000). He hypothesized that behavior could be dependent on the environment (culture). Watson's basic premise was that conclusions about human development should be based on observation of overt behavior rather than speculation about subconscious motives or latent cognitive processes (Shaffer, 2000). Through this experiment, he conditioned a little boy to fear a white rat by repeatedly showing the boy the rat, then introducing a scary, loud, clanking sound. In time, the young boy feared all white furry objects because he associated them with a scary, loud noise.

Watson's theories were built upon the work of Ivan Pavlov. Pavlov was well known for his research on a learning process called classical conditioning. Classical conditioning refers to learning that occurs when a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a stimulus that naturally produces a behavior. Pavlov earned the 1904 Nobel Prize in Physiology for his work on the theory of classical conditioning. In Watson's case, Little Albert became afraid of furry, white objects because he associated them with a scary noise. Similar to the work of Watson but more developed, in Pavlov's case, dogs drooled when they heard a ringing bell because they associated the sound with food.

For the purposes of our work with children, we can see how neutral stimulus become associated with naturally produces a behavior. Advertisements are a prime example of classical conditioning. Food advertisements are a great example of classical conditioning. We are conditioned to desire foods that look good. That's why we salivate when we see a commercial for our favorite steakhouse!

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B.F. Skinner: Operant Conditioning

Psychologist B.F. Skinner saw that classical conditioning is limited to existing behaviors that are reflexively elicited, and doesn't account for new behaviors such as riding a bike.^[1] He proposed a theory about how such behaviors come about. Skinner believed that behavior is motivated by the consequences we receive for the behavior: reinforcements and punishments. His idea that learning is the result of consequences is based on the law of effect, which was first proposed by psychologist Edward Thorndike. According to the law of effect, behaviors that are followed by consequences that are satisfying to the organism are more likely to be repeated, and behaviors that are followed by unpleasant consequences are less likely to be repeated (Thorndike, 1911). Essentially, if an organism does something that brings about a desired result, the organism is more likely to do it again. If an organism does something that does not bring about the desired result, the organism is less likely to do it again. An example of the law of effect is employment. One of the reasons (and often the main reason) we show up for work is because we get paid to do so. If we stop getting paid, we will likely stop showing up—even if we love our job.

Table 1. Classical and Operant Conditioning Compared

Type of Approach	Classical Conditioning	Operant Conditioning
Conditioning approach	An unconditioned stimulus (such as food) is paired with a neutral stimulus (such as a bell). The neutral stimulus eventually becomes the conditioned stimulus, which brings about the conditioned response (salivation).	The target behavior is followed by reinforcement or punishment to either strengthen or weaken it so that the learner is more likely to exhibit the desired behavior in the future.
Stimulus timing	The stimulus occurs immediately before the response.	The stimulus (either reinforcement or punishment) occurs soon after the response.

Working with Thorndike's law of effect as his foundation, Skinner began conducting scientific experiments on animals (mainly rats and pigeons) to determine how organisms learn through operant conditioning (Skinner, 1938). He placed these animals inside an operant conditioning chamber, which has come to be known as a "Skinner box" (See Figure 1.). A Skinner box contains a lever (for rats) or disk (for pigeons) that the animal can press or peck for a food reward via the dispenser. Speakers and lights can be associated with certain behaviors. A recorder counts the number of responses made by the animal.

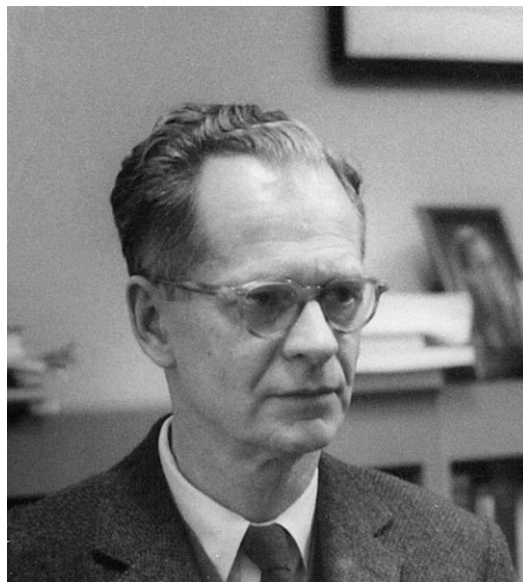


Figure 1.9.1: B. F. Skinner developed operant conditioning for systematic study of how behaviors are strengthened or weakened according to their consequences. (CC BY-3.0; Silly rabbit via Wikimedia)

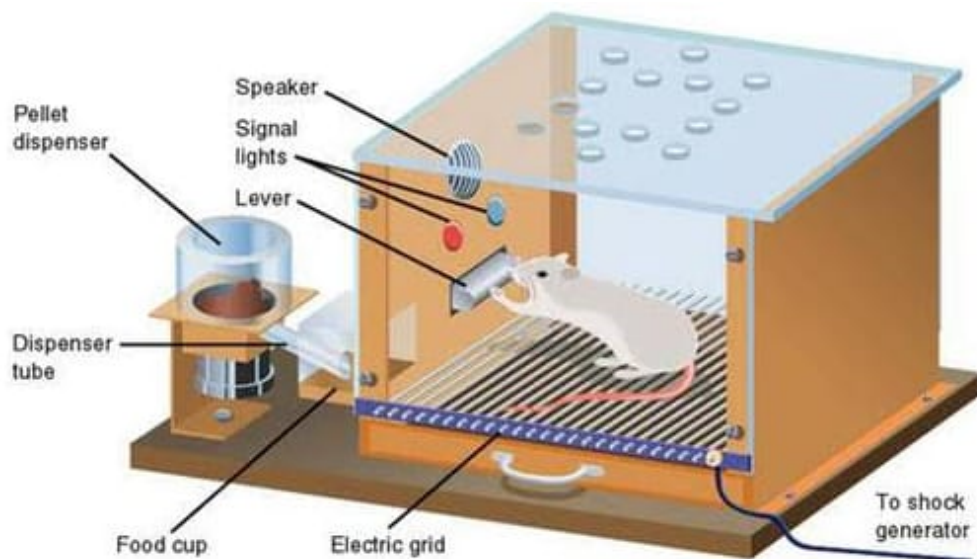


Figure 1.9.2: In a Skinner box, a rat presses a lever in an operant conditioning chamber to receive a food reward. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Wikimedia)

In discussing operant conditioning, we use several everyday words—positive, negative, reinforcement, and punishment—in a specialized manner. In operant conditioning, positive and negative do not mean good and bad. Instead, *positive* means you are adding something, and *negative* means you are taking something away. Reinforcement means you are increasing a behavior, and punishment means you are decreasing a behavior. Reinforcement can be positive or negative, and punishment can also be positive or negative. All reinforcers (positive or negative) *increase* the likelihood of a behavioral response. All punishers (positive or negative) decrease the likelihood of a behavioral response. Now let us combine these four terms: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment (Table 2).

Table 2. Positive and Negative Reinforcement and Punishment

	Reinforcement	Punishment
Positive	Something is <i>added</i> to <i>increase</i> the likelihood of a behavior.	Something is <i>added</i> to <i>decrease</i> the likelihood of a behavior.
Negative	Something is <i>removed</i> to <i>increase</i> the likelihood of a behavior.	Something is <i>removed</i> to <i>decrease</i> the likelihood of a behavior.

Reinforcement

The most effective way to teach a person or animal a new behavior is with positive reinforcement. In positive reinforcement, a desirable stimulus is added to increase a behavior.

For example, let's say you tell your five-year-old son, Jerome, that if he cleans his room, he will get a toy. Jerome quickly cleans his room because he wants a new art set. Some people might say, "Why should I reward my child for doing what is expected?" However, we are constantly and consistently rewarded in our lives. Our paychecks are rewards, as are high grades or acceptance into our preferred schools. Being praised for doing a good job or for passing a driver's test are also rewards. Positive reinforcement as a learning tool is extremely effective. It has been found that one of the most effective ways to increase achievement in school districts with below-average reading scores was to pay the children to read.

An example of this can be seen in Dallas, where second-grade students in Dallas were paid \$2 each time they read a book and passed a short quiz about the book. The result was a significant increase in reading comprehension (Fryer, 2010). What do you think about this program? If Skinner were alive today, he would probably think this was a great idea. He was a strong proponent of using operant conditioning principles to influence students' behavior at school. In fact, in addition to the Skinner box, he also invented what he called a teaching machine that was designed to reward small steps in learning—an early forerunner of computer-assisted learning (Skinner, 1961). His teaching machine tested students' knowledge as they worked through various school subjects. If students answered questions correctly, they received immediate positive reinforcement and could continue; if they answered incorrectly, they did not receive any reinforcement. The idea was that students would spend additional time studying the material to increase their chance of being reinforced the next time.



Figure 1.9.3: A child winning an award. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Anuj Nagar via Wikimedia)

In negative reinforcement, an undesirable stimulus is removed to increase a behavior. For example, car manufacturers use the principles of negative reinforcement in their seatbelt systems, which go “beep, beep, beep” until you fasten your seatbelt. The annoying sound stops when you exhibit the desired behavior, increasing the likelihood that you will buckle up in the future. Negative reinforcement is also used frequently in horse training. Riders apply pressure—by pulling the reins or squeezing their legs—and then remove the pressure when the horse performs the desired behavior, such as turning or speeding up. The pressure is the negative stimulus that the horse wants to remove.

Punishment

Many people confuse negative reinforcement with punishment in operant conditioning, but they are two very different concepts. Remember that reinforcement, even when it is negative, always increases a behavior. In contrast, punishment always decreases a behavior. In positive punishment, you add an undesirable stimulus to decrease a behavior. An example of positive punishment is reprimanding a student to get the student to stop texting in class. In this case, a stimulus (the reprimand) is added in order to decrease the behavior (texting in class). In negative punishment, you remove a pleasant stimulus to decrease a behavior, such as something the child enjoys (e.g., a toy or a scheduled outing). One controversial and misunderstood discipline technique is time out. Depending on how it is applied, time-outs can be negative punishment or seen as removal from items that are positively reinforcing such access to something they enjoy like a toy (Allen et.al, 1964).

Punishment, especially when it is immediate, is one way to decrease undesirable behavior. For example, imagine your four-year-old son, Brandon, runs into a busy street to get his ball. You give him a time-out (positive punishment) and tell him never to go into the street again. Chances are he will not repeat this behavior. While strategies like time-outs are common today, in the past children were often subject to physical punishment, such as spanking. It’s important to be aware of some of the drawbacks of using physical punishment on children. Within the context of parenting, it is important to note that the term “punishment” doesn’t mean that the consequence should be harmful.

In fact, experts caution that punishments like spanking can cause more harm than good (Murphy, 2017). First, punishment may teach fear. Brandon may become fearful of the street, but he also may become fearful of the person who delivered the punishment—you, his parent. Similarly, children who are punished by teachers may start to fear the teacher and try to avoid school (Gershoff, 2013). Consequently, most schools in the United States have banned corporal punishment. Second, punishment may cause children to become more aggressive and prone to antisocial behavior and delinquency (Gershoff, 2002). They see their parents resort to spanking when they become angry and frustrated, so, in turn, they may act out this same behavior when they become angry and frustrated. For example, because you spank Brenda when you are angry with her for her misbehavior, she might start hitting her friends when they will not share their toys.

While positive punishment can be effective in some cases, Skinner suggested that the use of punishment should be weighed against the possible negative effects. Today’s psychologists and parenting experts favor reinforcement over punishment—they recommend that you catch your child doing something good and reward her for it.

Cultural Considerations



Figure 1.9.4: Teen experiencing anxiety. (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0; rima xaros via Flickr)

The socialization implications are evident when behavior is viewed within cultural practices. For example there has been a great deal of research related to anxiety levels for Asian Americans compared to western White Americans (Krieg and Xu 2018). Asian Americans consistently report higher social anxiety symptoms. The theory is that there is conflict navigating the high levels of interdependence in Asian American culture versus the low levels of interdependence in Western culture. This conflicts makes social situations "high stakes." Social situations trigger fears and anxiety as Asian Americans are concerned about how one's behavior impacts the group. This is important to keep in mind when working with children whose culture values the collective or group but the typical Western classroom values children demonstrating independence.

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1.10: Family Systems Theories

Family Systems Theory

Some theories are focused on a specific agent of socialization such as family. Family Systems Theory does just that, focuses on how the family socialized children. Family Systems Theory (from the work of Ackerman, Jackson, Minuchin, and Bowen) comes under the Functional Theory umbrella and shares the functional approach of considering the dysfunctions and functions of complex groups and organizations.

Family Systems Theory claims that the family is understood best by conceptualizing it as a complex, dynamic, and changing collection of parts, subsystems and family members. Much like a mechanic would interface with the computer system of a broken-down car to diagnose which systems are broken (transmission, electric, fuel, etc.) to repair it, a therapist or researcher would interact with family members to diagnose how and where the systems of the family are working and where they are in need of repair or intervention.

In the article entitled, “Understanding Families: Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice” by Linda Garris Christian, she states that family systems theory can explain why members of a family behave the way they do in a given situation. She identifies the six characteristics that make up the theory collectively.

The six characteristics are:

1. Boundaries – relates to limit, togetherness and separateness—what or who is “in” or “out of” the family.
2. Roles – in all families individuals members have roles, those roles may include – peacemaker, clown, rescuer, victim, these roles can be carried over into work, school, and social settings.
3. Rules – a set of standards, laws, or traditions that tell us how-to live-in relation to each other, they are often embedded in a cultural context; therefore, they can contribute to the feeling of cultural discontinuity that some children experience at school.
4. Hierarchy – this refers to who holds the decision making, control, and power in the family, each time the family composition changes, there is a shift in where family members are in their hierarchy.
5. Climate – this is about the emotional and physical environment of the family.
6. Equilibrium – the refers to the balance or imbalance that exists in the family, consistency in families can be difficult to maintain, but it is critical to children’s development that they have a sense of security and trust to maintain healthy development

The information uses ideas and concepts from the article " [Understanding Families: Applying Family Systems Theory](#)". After reviewing the article, you may want to reflect on the questions below.



Figure 1.10.1: A family enjoying the day together. (Public Domain; NARA)

Critical Reflection

1. How might you apply the six characteristics in this theory to your family of origin?
2. What more do you need to know about this theory to help you to support children and families in your early learning environment?

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Functionalism

When considering the role of family in society, functionalists uphold the notion that families are an important social institution and that they play a key role in stabilizing society. They also note that family members take on status roles in a marriage or family. The family—and its members—perform certain functions that facilitate the prosperity and development of society.

Sociologist George Murdock conducted a survey of 250 societies and determined that there are four universal residual functions of the family: sexual, reproductive, educational, and economic (Murdock 1949). According to Murdock, the family (which for him includes the state of marriage) regulates sexual relations between individuals. He does not deny the existence or impact of premarital or extramarital sex, but states that the family offers a socially legitimate sexual outlet for adults (Murdock, 1949)). This outlet gives way to reproduction, which is a necessary part of ensuring the survival of society.

Once children are born, the family plays a vital role in training them for adult life. As the primary agent of socialization and enculturation, the family teaches young children the ways of thinking and behaving that follow social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, in some families, parents teach their children manners and civility believing a well-mannered child reflects a well-mannered parent.

Parents also teach children gender roles. Gender roles are an important part of the economic function of a family. In each family, there is a division of labor that consists of instrumental and expressive roles. Men tend to assume the instrumental roles in the

family, which typically involve work outside of the family that provides financial support and establishes family status. Women tend to assume the expressive roles, which typically involve work inside of the family which provides emotional support and physical care for children (Crano and Aronoff 1978).

According to functionalists, the differentiation of the roles on the basis of sex ensures that families are well balanced and coordinated. When family members move outside of these roles, the family is thrown out of balance and must recalibrate in order to function properly. For example, if the father assumes an expressive role such as providing daytime care for the children, the mother must take on an instrumental role such as gaining paid employment outside of the home in order for the family to maintain balance and function.

Conflict Theory

The functional perspective assumes the family provides its members emotional comfort and support, many families do just the opposite and are far from the harmonious, happy groups depicted in the 1950s television shows. Instead, and as the news story that began this chapter tragically illustrated, they argue, shout, and use emotional cruelty and physical violence.

Conflict theory's emphases, the family may also produce several problems. In particular, it may contribute for several reasons to social inequality, and it may subject its members to violence, arguments, and other forms of conflict. The family also became more and more of a patriarchal unit (see earlier discussion), helping to ensure men's status at the top of the social hierarchy.

Conflict theorists are quick to point out that U.S. families have been defined as private entities, the consequence of which has been to leave family matters to only those within the family. Many people in the United States are resistant to government intervention in the family: parents do not want the government to tell them how to raise their children or to become involved in domestic issues. Conflict theory highlights the role of power in family life and contends that the family is often not a haven but rather an arena where power struggles can occur. This exercise of power often entails the performance of family status roles. Conflict theorists may study conflicts as simple as the enforcement of rules from parent to child, or they may examine more serious issues such as domestic violence (spousal and child), sexual assault, marital rape, and incest.

The first study of marital power was performed in 1960. Researchers found that the person with the most access to value resources held the most power. As money is one of the most valuable resources, men who worked in paid labor outside of the home held more power than women who worked inside the home (Blood and Wolfe 1960). Even today, with more fluid family roles, conflict theorists find disputes over the division of household labor to be a common source of marital discord. Household labor offers no wages and, therefore, no power. Studies indicate that when men do more housework, women experience more satisfaction in their marriages, reducing the incidence of conflict (Coltrane 2000). In general, conflict theorists tend to study areas of marriage and life that involve inequalities or discrepancies in power and authority, as they are reflective of the larger social structure.

Check-in Time!

How does the division of chores impact or not impact your household?

Symbolic Interactionism

Interactionists view the world in terms of symbols and the meanings assigned to them (LaRossa and Reitzes 1993). The family itself is a symbol. To some, it is a father, mother, and children; to others, it is any union that involves respect and compassion. Interactionists stress that family is not an objective, concrete reality. Like other social phenomena, it is a social construct that is subject to the ebb and flow of social norms and ever-changing meanings.

Consider the meaning of other elements of family: in the past, "parent" was a symbol of a biological and emotional connection to a child. With more parent-child relationships developing through adoption, remarriage, or change in guardianship, the word "parent" today is less likely to be associated with a biological connection than with whoever is socially recognized as having the responsibility for a child's upbringing. Similarly, the terms "mother" and "father" are no longer rigidly associated with the meanings of caregiver and breadwinner. These meanings are more free-flowing through changing family roles.

Interactionists also recognize how the family status roles of each member are socially constructed, playing an important part in how people perceive and interpret social behavior. Interactionists view the family as a group of role players or "actors" that come

together to act out their parts in an effort to construct a family. These roles are up for interpretation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a “good father,” for example, was one who worked hard to provide financial security for his children. Today, for some, a “good father” is one who takes the time outside of work to promote his children’s emotional well-being, social skills, and intellectual growth—in some ways, a much more daunting task.

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2: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIALIZATION

2.1: Socialization Factors

2.2: Media Influences on Children

Learning Objectives

- Identify developmental theories and their influences on how children develop.
- Define socialization
- Understand socialization theories and their influences on child development
- Identify agents of socialization
- Understand methods of socialization
- Discuss Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Theories

The evolving idea of how we become members of a society, develop behaviors, values and beliefs, and follow and create norms and expectations happens through a process called socialization. There is a growing and profound body of research that describes socialization, and the process in which humans are socialized through agents, which we call agents of socialization. Environments such as home, school, and community, are major contributors to the autonomy of who we are as individuals, and a collective group. The methods in how we experience socialization can determine how we experience the different environments we navigate through. This describes how two individuals who navigate through the same environment can have different outcomes.

In addition to socialization, theories on socialization explains the impacts socialization can have on our cognitive and moral development, social-emotional development, physical development, and language development. There are very strong links between socialization and behavioral outcomes. Once we understand socialization, and theories such as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, we will come to understand how individuals become who they are, and how to help children navigate through their environments.

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2.1: Socialization Factors

Introduction

The influences of family, society, culture, and community are all factors to take into consideration when understanding socialization. How are childhoods influenced by nature and nurture? In this section, we will consider how family, society and culture influence the lives of children. You will explore how the natural sciences (biology) and social sciences (anthropology, psychology, social work, and sociology) study these influences on children.

Defining Socialization

In the summer of 2005, police detective Mark Holste followed an investigator from the Department of Children and Families to a home in Plant City, Florida. They were there to look into a statement from the neighbor concerning a shabby house on Old Sydney Road. A small girl was reported peering from one of its broken windows. This seemed odd because no one in the neighborhood had seen a young child in or around the home, which had been inhabited for the past three years by a woman, her boyfriend, and two adult sons. Who was the mystery girl in the window? Entering the house, Detective Holste and his team were shocked. It was the worst mess they'd ever seen, infested with cockroaches, smeared with feces and urine from both people and pets, and filled with dilapidated furniture and ragged window coverings. Detective Holste headed down a hallway and entered a small room. That's where he found the little girl, with big, vacant eyes, staring into the darkness. A newspaper report later described the detective's first encounter with the child: "She lay on a torn, moldy mattress on the floor. She was curled on her side . . . her ribs and collarbone jutted out . . . her black hair was matted, crawling with lice. Insect bites, rashes and sores pocked her skin . . . She was naked—except for a swollen diaper. . . . Her name, her mother said, was Danielle. She was almost seven years old" (DeGregory, 2008). Detective Holste immediately carried Danielle out of the home. She was taken to a hospital for medical treatment and evaluation.

Through extensive testing, doctors determined that, although she was severely malnourished, Danielle was able to see, hear, and vocalize normally. Still, she wouldn't look anyone in the eyes, didn't know how to chew or swallow solid food, didn't cry, didn't respond to stimuli that would typically cause pain, and didn't know how to communicate either with words or simple gestures such as nodding "yes" or "no." Likewise, although tests showed she had no chronic diseases or genetic abnormalities, the only way she could stand was with someone holding onto her hands, and she "walked sideways on her toes, like a crab" (DeGregory, 2008). What had happened to Danielle? Put simply: beyond the basic requirements for survival, she had been neglected. Based on their investigation, social workers concluded that she had been left almost entirely alone in rooms like the one where she was found. Without regular interaction—the holding, hugging, talking, the explanations, and demonstrations given to most young children—she had not learned to walk or to speak, to eat or to interact, to play or even to understand the world around her. From a sociological point of view, Danielle had not been socialized.

Socialization is the process through which people are taught to be proficient members of a society. It describes the ways that people come to understand societal norms and expectations, to accept society's beliefs, and to be aware of societal values. Socialization is not the same as socializing (interacting with others, like family, friends, and coworkers); to be precise, it is a sociological process that occurs through socializing. As Danielle's story illustrates, even the most basic of human activities are learned. You may be surprised to know that even physical tasks like sitting, standing, and walking had not automatically developed for Danielle as she grew. And without socialization, Danielle hadn't learned about the material culture of her society (the tangible objects a culture uses); for example, she couldn't hold a spoon, bounce a ball, or use a chair for sitting. She also hadn't learned its nonmaterial culture, such as its beliefs, values, and norms. She had no understanding of the concept of "family," didn't know cultural expectations for using a bathroom for elimination, and had no sense of modesty."

Socialization is the manner used to internalize the norms and ideas of a society, and helps maintain social and cultural continuity. It is the way children learn about and begin to understand the world they live in. This develops as children interact with various "agencies" in their lives. Some of the strongest agents of socialization Will be discussed in this chapter.

The COVID-19 pandemic truly altered the way we socialized as a nation. The United States as well as abroad went into lockdowns for periods of time which made us rely on technology more than we may have in the past. Daily routines which may have included going to school, participating in activities outside the home (ex. sports, clubs, community service) and interacting with one's peer group changed and led to more screen time and minimal interactions with people face to face for families, but especially children

of all ages. (Ranjbar, K., Hosseinpour, H., Shahriarirad, R.*et al.*,2021). No one could have imagined that a virus would impact the way we socialized and understood the importance of social-emotional development. This leads us to understanding how traits we may have inherited or learned assist in our overall development.

Nature vs Nurture

Nature vs nurture is all about genes and heredity, how your genes interact with your environment, and how your environment interacts with your genes. What is nature vs nurture? Nature refers to our genes, and nurture refers to our environment. They are the sources that create individual differences in development. We tend to know more about genes than we do about how we are impacted by environment because environment has countless factors that play a part in impacting our development.

Two of the most important terms to understand when looking in to nature vs nurture is genotype and phenotype. Genotype is simply the genetic constitution (or the unchangeable makeup) of an individual organism. Phenotype is the set of observable characteristics of an individual resulting from the interaction of its genotype with the environment. Now that we defined genotype and phenotype, let's look at the different ways our genetics interacts with our environment.

Passive genotype-environment correlation occurs when children passively inherit the genes and the environments their family provides. Certain behavioral characteristics, such as being athletically inclined, may run in families. The children have inherited both the genes that would enable success at these activities and given the environmental encouragement to engage in these actions.

Evocative genotype-environment correlation refers to how the social environment reacts to individuals based on their inherited characteristics. For example, whether one has a more outgoing or shy temperament will affect how he or she is treated by others.

Active genotype-environment correlation occurs when individuals seek out environments that support their genetic tendencies. This is also referred to as niche picking. For example, children who are musically inclined seek out music instruction and opportunities that facilitate their natural musical ability.

Genetic research has consistently shown heritable influence in many traditional areas of psychological research such as mental illness, personality, cognitive disabilities and abilities, and drug use and abuse. Some areas showing strong genetic influence may be more surprising, such as self-esteem, interests, attitudes, and school achievement (Plomin & Asbury, 2005).

There are many studies done on siblings to show what influence is stronger, genes or environment. Siblings are often similar, but their similarity is rooted in their genes rather than in the environment they share. Environment is hugely important to human development, but genetic research has shown beyond doubt that the most effective environmental influences are those that operate to make children in the same family different, not similar. These environmental influences are called non-shared because they are not shared by children growing up in the same family (Plomin & Asbury, 2005). In non-shared environments, children can experience differences in parents, peers, teachers, health and wellness practices, attitudes, beliefs, and religious practices. These differences in non-shared environmental influences can lead to differences in behaviors.

Throughout the lifespan of a child's development, children may experience genetic change. Genetic change simply means that genetic effects at one age differ from genetic effects at another age; that is, the same genes could have different effects in the brains of eight-year-olds and eighteen (Plomin & Asbury, 2005). For example, developmental change in genetic effects is likely to be responsible for the fact that it is difficult to find behavioral markers in childhood for individuals who later become schizophrenic. Although it is possible that "schizophrenia genes" are not turned on until after adolescence, it is more likely that these genes operate the same way before and after adolescence but that they only express their hallucinatory and paranoid effects after adolescent brain development (Plomin & Asbury, 2005).



Figure 2.1.1: The genetics of these twins are identical to one another, just like their appearance. (CC BY-ND 2.0; ethermoon via Flickr)

Temperament

What are the origins of human personality? Are they chiefly the result of the child's reinforcement history? The child's learned attributions about the social world? The child's genes? Or is there more to understand than would result from a simple choice between nature and nurture (Rothbart, 2007)? Through genetics, we develop temperament.

Temperament is made up of the innate characteristics that determine an individual's sensitivity to various experiences and responsiveness to patterns of social interaction. Are there links between a child's temperament and personality development? Understanding temperament is central to our understanding of development, and temperament constructs are linked to individual differences in both personality and underlying neural function (Rothbart, 2007). Temperament and experience combine to "grow" a personality, which will include the child's developing cognitions about self, others, and the physical and social world, as well as his or her values, attitudes, and coping strategies (Rothbart, 2007).

From early infancy, children show considerable variability in their reactions to the environment. One child is fearful, has only a brief attention span, and cries even at moderately stimulating play; another child enjoys vigorous play, is not easily distracted, and seeks out exciting events. These reactions, together with the mechanisms that regulate them, constitute the child's temperament (Rothbart, 2007). Early temperament development can lead to behavioral problems in adolescence. Starting at birth, children are developing temperament, and through temperament, children are developing other social behaviors such as conscience and empathy. For an example, in a study, more fearful children developed greater conscience during the preschool years than less fearful children did. Fear provides internal cues of discomfort that can be attributed to conscience rather than to external reward or coercion (Rothbart, 2007). In that same study, it was noted that the relation between temperament and conscience was also affected by parenting. Fearful children who received gentle and non-punitive socialization developed greater conscience than did fearful children whose parents were punitive.

Family

Family is the first and most important agent of socialization. Mothers and fathers, siblings and grandparents, plus members of an extended family, all teach a child what he or she needs to know. For example, they show the child how to use objects (such as clothes, computers, eating utensils, books, bikes); how to relate to others (some as "family," others as "friends," still others as "strangers" or "teachers" or "neighbors"); and how the world works (what is "real" and what is "imagined"). As you are aware, either from your own experience as a child or from your role in helping to raise one, socialization includes teaching and learning about an unending array of objects and ideas.

Part of the reason we turn out much like our parents, for better or worse, is that our families are such an important part of our socialization process. When we are born, our primary caregivers are almost always one or both of our parents. For several years, we have more contact with them than with any other adults. Because this contact occurs in our most formative years, our parents'

interaction with us and the messages they teach us can have a profound impact throughout our lives.

Keep in mind, however, that families do not socialize children in a vacuum. Many social factors affect the way a family raises its children. For example, we can use our imagination to recognize that individual behaviors are affected by the historical period in which they take place. Sixty years ago, it would not have been considered especially strict for a father to hit his son with a wooden spoon or a belt if he misbehaved, but today that same action in some places might be considered child abuse.

Sociologists recognize that race, social class, religion, and other societal factors play an important role in family socialization. Families may socialize for obedience and conformity, judgment, creativity, and problem-solving, depending on the values they hold. Children may also be socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviors. For example, poor families usually emphasize obedience and conformity when raising their children, while wealthy families emphasize judgment and creativity (National Opinion Research Center, 2008). This may occur because working-class parents have less education and more repetitive-task jobs for which it is helpful to be able to follow rules and conform. Wealthy parents tend to have better educations and often work in managerial positions or careers that require creative problem solving, so they teach their children behaviors that are beneficial in these positions. This means children are effectively socialized and raised to take the types of jobs their parents already have, thus reproducing the class system (Kohn, 1977). Likewise, children are socialized to abide by gender norms, perceptions of race, and class-related behaviors. In Sweden, for instance, stay-at-home fathers are an accepted part of the social landscape. A government policy provides subsidized time off work—480 days for families with newborns—with the option of the paid leave being shared between mothers and fathers. As one stay-at-home dad says, being home to take care of his baby son “is a real fatherly thing to do. I think that’s very masculine” (Associated Press, 2011). Close to 90 percent of Swedish fathers use their paternity leave (about 340,000 dads); on average they take seven weeks per birth (The Economist, 2014). How do U.S. policies—and our society’s expected gender roles—compare? How will Swedish children raised this way be socialized to parental gender norms? How might that be different from parental gender norms in the United States?



Figure 2.1.2: Black father playing with infant. (Public Domain; NappyStock via Nappy)

Check-in Time!

What are your thoughts.... Should parents get the credit when their children turn out to be “good” kids and even go on to accomplish great things in life? Should they get the blame if their children turn out to be “bad”?

Understanding Racial Socialization

In a society that is still racially prejudiced, African American parents continue to find it necessary to teach their children about African American culture and to prepare them for the bias and discrimination they can expect to encounter. Scholars in sociology and other disciplines have studied this process of racial socialization. One of their most interesting findings

is that African American parents differ in the degree of racial socialization they practice: some parents emphasize African American identity and racial prejudice to a considerable degree, while other parents mention these topics to their children only minimally. The reasons for these differences have remained unclear.

Sociologist Jason E. Shelton (2008) analyzed data from a national random sample of African Americans to determine these reasons, in what he called “one of the most comprehensive analyses to date of racial socialization strategies among African Americans” (p. 237). Among other questions, respondents were asked whether “in raising your children, have you done or told them things to help them know what it means to be Black.” They were also asked whether “there are any other things you’ve done or told your children to help them know how to get along with White people.”

In his major results, Shelton found that respondents were more likely to practice racial socialization if they were older, female, and living outside the South; if they perceived that racial discrimination was a growing problem and were members of civil rights or other organizations aimed at helping African Americans; and if they had higher incomes.

These results led Shelton to conclude that “African Americans are not a culturally monolithic group,” as they differ in “the parental lessons they impart to their children about race relations” (2008, p. 253). Further, the parents who do practice racial socialization “do so in order to demystify and empower their offspring to seize opportunities in the larger society” (p. 253).

Shelton’s study helps us to understand the factors accounting for differences in racial socialization by African American parents, and it also helps us understand that the parents who do attempt to make their children aware of U.S. race relations are merely trying, as most parents do, to help their children get ahead in life. By increasing our understanding of these matters, Shelton’s research has helped make a difference.

The ways in which our parents socialize us depend on many factors, two of the most important of which are our parents’ social class and our own biological sex. Melvin Kohn (1965, 1977) found that working-class and middle-class parents tend to socialize their children very differently. Kohn reasoned that working-class parents tend to hold factory and other jobs in which they have little autonomy and instead are told what to do and how to do it. In such jobs, obedience is an important value, lest the workers be punished for not doing their jobs correctly. Working-class parents, Kohn thought, should thus emphasize obedience and respect for authority as they raise their children, and they should favor spanking as a primary way of disciplining their kids when they disobey. In contrast, middle-class parents tend to hold white-collar jobs where autonomy and independent judgment are valued and workers get ahead by being creative. These parents should emphasize independence as they raise their children and should be less likely than working-class parents to spank their kids when they disobey.

If parents’ social class influences how they raise their children, it is also true that the sex of their children affects how they are socialized by their parents. Many studies find that parents raise their daughters and sons quite differently as they interact with them from birth. Parents help their girls learn how to act and think “like girls,” and they help their boys learn how to act and think “like boys.” That is, they help their daughters and sons learn their gender (Wood, 2009). For example, they are gentler with their daughters and rougher with their sons. They give their girls dolls to play with, and their boys guns. Girls may be made of “sugar and spice and everything nice” and boys something quite different, but their parents help them greatly, for better or worse, turn out that way. To the extent this is true, our gender stems much more from socialization than from biological differences between the sexes, or so many sociologists assume. If theorist Carol Gilligan is right that boys and girls reach moral judgments differently, perhaps socialization matters more than biology for how they reach these judgments.

Peers

When you were a 16-year-old, how many times did you complain to your parent(s), “All of my friends are [doing so and so]. Why can’t I? It isn’t fair!” As this all-too-common example indicates, our friends play a very important role in our lives. This is especially true during adolescence, when peers influence our tastes in music, clothes, and so many other aspects of our lives, as the now-common image of the teenager always on a cell phone reminds us. But friends are important during other parts of the life course as well. We rely on them for fun, for emotional comfort and support, and for companionship. That is the upside of friendships.

The downside of friendships is called *peer pressure*, with which you are undoubtedly familiar. Suppose it is Friday night, and you are studying for a big exam on Monday. Your friends come by and ask you to go with them to get a pizza and a drink. You would probably agree to go with them, partly because you really dislike studying on a Friday night, but also because there is at least some subtle pressure on you to do so. As this example indicates, our friends can influence us in many ways. During adolescence, their interests can affect our own interests in film, music, and other aspects of popular culture. More ominously, adolescent peer influences have been implicated in underage drinking, drug use, delinquency, and hate crimes (Agnew, 2007).

After we reach our 20s and 30s, our peers become less important in our lives, especially if we get married. Yet even then our peers do not lose all their importance, as parents with young children still manage to get out with friends now and then. Scholars have also begun to emphasize the importance of friendships with coworkers for emotional and practical support and for our continuing socialization (Elsesser & Peplau, 2006; Marks, 1994).



Figure 2.1.3: Peers playing cards. (CC BY 2.0; Zackary Drucker via Genderphotos.Vice)

Check-in Time!

How did peers play an important role in your life? How did “peer pressure” impact decisions that you made as a teenager?

School

Most U.S. children spend about seven hours a day, 180 days a year, in school, which makes it hard to deny the importance school has on their socialization (Livingston and Wirt, 2004). Students are not in school only to study math, reading, science, and other subjects—the manifest function of this system. Schools also serve a latent function in society by socializing children into behaviors like practicing teamwork, following a schedule, and using textbooks.

School and classroom rituals, led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what society expects from children. Sociologists describe this aspect of schools as the hidden curriculum, the informal teaching done by schools.

For example, in the United States, schools have built a sense of competition into the way grades are awarded and the way teachers evaluate students (Bowles and Gintis 1976). When children participate in a relay race or a math contest, they learn there are winners and losers in society. When children are required to work together on a project, they practice teamwork with other people in cooperative situations. The hidden curriculum prepares children for the adult world. Children learn how to deal with bureaucracy, rules, expectations, waiting their turn, and sitting still for hours during the day. The latent functions of teamwork and dealing with bureaucracy are features of U.S. culture. Schools in different cultures socialize children differently in order to prepare them to function well in those cultures.



Figure 2.1.4: What hidden curriculum might be at play in this elementary classroom? (CC BY 2.0; USAG- Humphreys via Flickr)

Schools also socialize children by teaching them about citizenship and national pride. In the United States, children are taught to say the Pledge of Allegiance. Most school districts require classes about U.S. history and geography. As academic understanding of history evolves, textbooks in the United States have been scrutinized and revised to update attitudes toward other cultures as well as perspectives on historical events; thus, children are socialized to a different national or world history than earlier textbooks may have done. For example, information about the mistreatment of African Americans and Native American Indians more accurately reflects those events than in textbooks of the past.

Check-in Time!

What are some examples of “hidden curriculum” that you experienced? How did it impact you then and now? Share any books that you read (either assigned or personal choice) that might have influenced any thoughts or ideas that you had as a child or teenager. How did they impact you now and then?

Controversial Textbooks

On August 13, 2001, twenty South Korean men gathered in Seoul. Each chopped off one of his own fingers because of textbooks. These men took drastic measures to protest eight middle school textbooks approved by Tokyo for use in Japanese middle schools. According to the Korean government (and other East Asian nations), the textbooks glossed over negative events in Japan’s history at the expense of other Asian countries.

In the early 1900s, Japan was one of Asia’s more aggressive nations. For instance, it held Korea as a colony between 1910 and 1945. Today, Koreans argue that the Japanese are whitewashing that colonial history through these textbooks. One major criticism is that they do not mention that, during World War II, the Japanese forced Korean women into sexual slavery. The textbooks describe the women as having been “drafted” to work, a euphemism that downplays the brutality of what actually occurred. Some Japanese textbooks dismiss an important Korean independence demonstration in 1919 as a “riot.” In reality, Japanese soldiers attacked peaceful demonstrators, leaving roughly 6,000 dead and 15,000 wounded (Crampton 2002).

Although it may seem extreme that people are so enraged about how events are described in a textbook that they would resort to dismemberment, the protest affirms that textbooks are a significant tool of socialization in state-run education systems.

The Community

The community a child resides in can provide the child with real experiences that will impact their views and perspective on

the world. Aspects of the community such as whether it's a diverse community, access to resources, exposure to violence, extracurricular activities and programs, and the day to day behaviors of community members can impact the child. Other components of the community to take in to consideration is whether it's an individualistic (those that stress the needs of the individual over the needs of the group as a whole) or collectivistic community (emphasize the needs and goals of the group as a whole over the needs and desires of each individual), and if the community is child centered.



Figure 2.1.5: Girl Scouts help to build a rain garden. (CC BY 2.0; USAG-Humphreys via Wordpress)

Religion

While some religions are informal institutions, here we focus on *practices followed* by formal institutions. Religion is an important avenue of socialization for many people. The United States is full of synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, and similar religious communities where people gather to worship and learn. Like other institutions, these places teach participants how to interact with the religion's material culture (like a mezuzah, a prayer rug, or a communion wafer). For some people, important ceremonies related to family structure—like marriage and birth—are connected to religious celebrations. Many religious institutions also uphold gender norms and contribute to their enforcement through socialization. From ceremonial rites of passage that reinforce the family unit to power dynamics that reinforce gender roles, organized religion fosters a shared set of socialized values that are passed on through society.



Figure 2.1.6: Two men from the Hasidic Jewish Community. (CC BY-ND 2.0; leibtroppe via Openverse.)

The Workplace

Just as children spend much of their day at school, many U.S. adults at some point invest a significant amount of time at a place of employment. Although socialized into their culture since birth, workers require new socialization into a workplace, in terms of both material culture (such as how to operate the copy machine) and nonmaterial culture (such as whether it's okay to speak directly to the boss or how to share the refrigerator).



Figure 2.1.7: A woman speaks on discrimination in the workplace. (CC BY-ND 2.0; DG EMPL via Flickr)

Different jobs require different types of socialization. In the past, many people worked a single job until retirement. Today, the trend is to switch jobs at least once a decade. This means that people must become socialized to, and socialized by, a variety of work environments.

Government

Although we do not think about it, many of the rites of passage people go through today are based on age norms established by the government. In mainstream America, to be defined as an “adult” usually means being eighteen years old, the age at which a person becomes legally responsible for him- or herself. And sixty-five years old is the start of “old age” since most people become eligible for senior benefits at that point.

Each time we embark on one of these new categories—senior, adult, taxpayer—we must be socialized into our new role. Seniors must learn the ropes of Medicare, Social Security benefits, and senior shopping discounts. When U.S. males turn eighteen, they must register with the Selective Service System within thirty days to be entered into a database for possible military service. These government dictates mark the points at which we require socialization into a new category.

Mass Media

Mass media distribute impersonal information to a wide audience, via television, newspapers, radio, and the Internet. With the average person spending over four hours a day in front of the television (and children averaging even more screen time), media greatly influences social norms (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005). People learn about objects of material culture (like new technology and transportation options), as well as nonmaterial culture—what is true (beliefs), what is important (values), and what is expected (norms).^[5]

The Effect of "Princess Culture"

Pixar is one of the largest producers of children's movies in the world and has released large box office draws, such as Toy Story, Cars, The Incredibles, and Up. What Pixar has never before produced is a movie with a female lead role. This changed with Pixar's movie Brave, which was released in 2012. Before Brave, women in Pixar served as supporting characters and love interests. In Up, for example, the only human female character dies within the first ten minutes of the film. For the millions of girls watching Pixar films, there are few strong characters or roles for them to relate to. If they do not see possible versions of themselves, they may come to view women as secondary to the lives of men.

The animated films of Pixar's parent company, Disney, have many female lead roles. Disney is well known for films with female leads, such as Snow White, Cinderella, The Little Mermaid, and Mulan. Many of Disney's movies star a female, and she is nearly always a princess figure. If she is not a princess to begin with, she typically ends the movie by marrying a prince or, in the case of Mulan, a military general. Although not all "princesses" in Disney movies play a passive role in their lives, they typically find themselves needing to be rescued by a man, and the happy ending they all search for includes marriage.

Alongside this prevalence of princesses, many parents are expressing concern about the culture of princesses that Disney has created. Peggy Orenstein addresses this problem in her popular book, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*. Orenstein wonders why every little girl is expected to be a "princess" and why pink has become an all-consuming obsession for many young girls. Another mother wondered what she did wrong when her three-year-old daughter refused to do "non-princessy" things, including running and jumping. The effects of this princess culture can have negative consequences for girls throughout life. An early emphasis on beauty and sexiness can lead to eating disorders, low self-esteem, and risky sexual behavior among older girls.

Check-in Time!

What movies or tv shows impacted you as a child? How did they influence your social norms and values?

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2.2: Media Influences on Children

Media Technology and Socialization

Media's changing landscape has a profound affect on socialization. Media technology includes screen media (television & motion pictures), print (magazines & books) audio and multimedia inclusive of computers and phones. As discussed earlier in the chapter, it is an agent of socialization that impacts beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Media has the ability to influence our political views; our tastes in popular culture; our views of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ+ community; and many other beliefs, behavior and practices. This was evident in recent years during the chronosystem shift employing new technology utilized during COVID-19. Children and families became even more reliant on media technology for information, socialization and remote learning due to school closures. The proliferation of digital media platforms and apps became the lifeline to society for sharing news and connecting the global world.

Theories of Media Socialization

The primary theory regarding Media influence on children can be traced to the discussion of Bandura Social Learning Theory. According to his theory, children learn by observing models in media and all it's forms. Children will imitate and role play what they see, especially if the role model has prestige and social influence. This influence can be both positive and negative. For example, a child watching *Sesame Street* may learn about diversity, collaboration, and other valuable positive social skills. Conversely, a child actively engaging in violent video game content may also learn aggressive an antisocial behavior. More will be discussed on this subject later.

There are myriad theories about how society, and media will progress. Functionalism sees the contribution that technology and media provide to the stability of society, from facilitating leisure time to increasing productivity. Conflict theorists are more concerned with how technology reinforces inequalities among communities, both within and among countries. They also look at how media typically give voice to the most powerful, and how new media might offer tools to help those who are disenfranchised. Symbolic interactionists see the symbolic uses of technology as signs of everything from a sterile futuristic world to a successful professional life.

Because functionalism focuses on how media and technology contribute to the smooth functioning of society, a good place to begin understanding this perspective is to write a list of functions you perceive media and technology to perform. Your list might include the ability to find information on the Internet, television's entertainment value, or how advertising and product placement contribute to social norms.

Media Consumption



Figure 2.2.1: Children using tablets. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Allison Shelley, [EDUImages](#))

The current generation of children are digital natives- meaning they have never know a time without digital technology. Entertainment, education, and socialization opportunities have been literally at their fingertips 24 hours a day. Although media estimates vary, current research from Common Sense Media (Rideout & Robb, 2020), offer these insights on media consumption of children related to age, income, race, and type of preference media:

- Children from birth to age 8 use about two and a half hours (2:24) of screen media a day. Daily use ranges from 49 minutes among those younger than 2, to two and a half hours (2:30) among 2- to 4-year-olds, and more than three hours (3:05) among 5- to 8-year-olds.
- More than a third (34%) of children age 8 and younger watch online videos every day, up from 24% three years ago. Nearly half (46%) of 2- to 4-year-olds and more than two-thirds (67%) of 5- to 8-year-olds have their own mobile device (tablet or smartphone), making online viewing even more accessible.
- Children in lower-income households spend an average of nearly two hours a day more with screen media than those in higher income homes (3:48 vs. 1:52).
- Both the frequency and amount of time spent reading among children from lower-income households have increased. The proportion of children in lower-income households who are daily readers—that is, who read or are read to every day—has increased by 10 percentage points over the past three years, from 40% to 50%.
- For the first time since we began the census, online video viewing dominates kids' screen time. Our youngest kids are spending 39 minutes a day watching online videos on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, up from only 19 minutes in 2017. The growth in mobile device access is driving this increase, as nearly half of 2- to 4-year-olds and more than two-thirds of 5- to 8-year-olds have their own tablet or smartphone.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Types of Media

At the beginning of the 20th century, neither television nor the Internet existed. There were no commercial radio stations, no

roadside billboards, no feature films, and certainly no smartphones. People were dependent on newspapers and magazines for their knowledge of the outside world. In the last generation during the digital explosion, media saturates all aspects of life from children's bedrooms to schools to senior living communities. Mass media have allowed for more shared social experiences, but new media now create a seemingly endless amount of airtime for any and every voice that wants to be heard. Advertising has also changed with technology. New media allow consumers to bypass traditional advertising venues and cause companies to be more innovative and intrusive as they try to gain our attention.

Traditional Media

Traditional media encompasses all the means of communication that existed before the Internet and new media technology, including printed materials (books, magazines, and newspapers), broadcast communications (television and radio), film, and music. New media, on the other hand, includes electronic video games and entertainment, the Internet, and social media. Although different forms of mass media rise and fall in popularity, it is worth noting that despite significant cultural and technological changes, none of the media discussed throughout this text has fallen out of use completely.

The publishing industry has also suffered from the effects of new technology (although newspaper readership has been in decline since the introduction of television and radio). When newspapers began developing online versions in response to competition from cable television, they found themselves up against a new form of journalism: amateur blogging. Initially dismissed as unreliable and biased, blogs have gained credibility and large readerships over the past decade, forcing traditional journalists to blog and tweet in order to keep pace (which allows less time to check that sources are reliable or add in-depth analysis to a story). Traditional newspapers are also losing out to news aggregators such as Google News, which profit from providing links to journalists' stories at major newspapers without offering financial compensation to either the journalists or the news organizations. Many newspapers have adapted to the Internet out of necessity, fighting falling circulation figures and slumping advertising sales by offering websites, blogs, and podcasts and producing news stories in video form. Those that had the foresight to adapt to the new technology are breathing a sigh of relief; a 2010 Pew Research Center report found that more Americans receive their news via the Internet than from newspapers or radio sources, and that the Internet is the third most popular news source behind national and local television news.

New Media

Initially conceived as an attack-proof military network in the 1960s, the Internet has since become an integral part of daily life. With the development of the World Wide Web in the 1980s and the introduction of commercial browsers in the 1990s, users gained the ability to transmit pictures, sound, and video over the Internet. Since then, it is almost impossible to overstate the influence the Internet has had on media over the past four decades. Media has become a primary socialization factor utilizing cinema, radio, television, video, computer, Internet, mobile communication which has influenced a generational cohort during crucial developmental tasks. Different types of media matter at each stage, for example a teenager may feel excluded from their peer group without a smart phone. On the other hand, technology keeps evolving over time and offers increasing access to media and to a larger variety of media content to our youngest children. Novel forms of access through new digital devices shape the current media habits of new generations.

Advantages of Media

The availability of media for children provide them with access to formal and informal educational programming, low cost entertainment and leisure, and a fully connect life with peers and family. These benefits will be explored here.

The saturation of media technology for children has offered well-designed television programs, such as Sesame Street, which can improve cognitive, literacy, and social outcomes for children 3 to 5 years of age. Evaluations of apps from Sesame Workshop and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) also have shown efficacy in teaching literacy skills to preschoolers. These high quality programs can be learning tools (Santomero, 2018). Digital books, which are books that can be read on a screen, often come with interactive enhancements that, research suggests, may decrease child comprehension of content or parent dialogic reading interactions when visual effects are distracting. Parents should, therefore, be instructed to interact with children during eBook reading, as they would a print book (Radesky, J., & Christakis, D., 2016).



Figure 2.2.2: A computer screen shows a second-grade teacher leading a lesson for her remote learning students. (CC BY-NC 4.0; Allison Shelley via [EDUimages](#))

In the era of COVID -19, access to computers and technology supported informal and formal learning for most children. In a 2021 Census Bureau survey (McElrath, 2020), 93% of households had a child learning online. As a result, education has changed dramatically, with the rise of online learning where teachers provide instruction to students remotely using various digital platforms. A growing number of research studies suggests that online learning has been shown to increase retention of information, take less time, and has helped keep children in school.

In addition to speed, reach, and cost, online media delivery enables a wider range of voices and perspectives on any subject. Through nontraditional media such as blogs and Twitter, people can put their own personal slant on current events, popular culture, and issues that are important to them without feeling obliged to remain neutral. A study by the Pew Research Center (2010) found that nontraditional media sources report on a wider variety of stories than traditional media, enabling individual sites to develop their own personality and voice. The study also discovered that these online sources focus on highly emotional subject matter that can be personalized by the writers and shared in the social forum. By opening up blogs and social media sites to online discussion or debate, bloggers enable readers to generate their own content, turning audiences from passive consumers into active creators. In this way, knowledge becomes a social process rather than a one-way street—the blogger posts an opinion, a reader comments on the blogger’s opinion, the blogger then evaluates the reader’s comment and revises his or her perspective accordingly, and the process repeats itself until an issue has been thoroughly explored. Many bloggers also provide links to other blogs they support or enjoy reading, enabling ideas with merit to filter through various channels on the Internet.

Challenges of Media

Disparity and Digital Divide

Although media technology use has become ubiquitous in our culture, some children do not have access to the opportunities of media, causing them to miss out on educational and economic opportunities. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (Radesky, J., & Christakis, D., 2016), approximately 37% of lower income households do not have a computer. This is significant, at time when remote learning has become essential, and given the achievement gaps for low income children, disproportionately comprised of Black and Brown children, this failure to stem the divide could be devastating. Society not addressing this gap between people who can afford personal computers and access to the web and people who cannot is known as the digital divide. These disparities mean that people with lower incomes and educational levels are at a disadvantage when it comes to accessing educational opportunities, information, news, and computer-related skills that might help them navigate society.

The 2020 pandemic demonstrated how access to technology and use of technology influences the ability of children to acquire to learning virtual settings. Some teachers held synchronous video-conference sessions. Yet, accessibility to learning experience for children was not equitable. Some children may not have had the opportunity to participate in the synchronous sessions with their classmates and viewed recordings of the read aloud experience. Other students might not have access to an appropriate device

or wifi. A family's economic capacity to mitigate and successfully utilize technology varied greatly, and resulted in uneven access to educational opportunities throughout the pandemic. For example, some students may have access to a device, but might be sharing this access with siblings or other family members who also need them. Parents might be able to allow a child to use their cell phone for a portion of the day, but few adults can navigate a whole day without access to their own cell phone. The younger the age of the child, the less likely they might be to have access to their own device.

The digital divide is even more prominent between developed and developing countries. In nations such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, the government permits little or no access to the Internet. In other countries, such as Mexico, Brazil, and Columbia, poor telecommunications infrastructure forces users to wait extremely inconvenient lengths of time to get online (Bahia & Delaporte, 2020). As discussed, socio economic status and race intersect with the digital divide, and so does gender. According to the same report, girls and women are less likely to have access to internet and computers as well. To learn more about the global digital divide visit United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to see which countries are most affected.

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Health Factors

In an ongoing controversy, the media is often blamed for youth violence, mental health issues, obesity and many other of society's ills. The average child sees thousands of acts of violence in media platforms. Media often seemingly extol sex violence, including violence against women. Advertising can greatly influence our choice of soda, shoes, and countless other products. The mass media may also reinforce racial and gender stereotypes, including the belief that women are sex objects and suitable targets of male violence. Here is a review of recent data on the health impact of media on children.

- In 2021, internal research from Facebook suggested social media made mental health issue increase (Wells et al., 2021).
- Common Sense Media's (Rideout & Robb, 2020), research indicates that people of color are underrepresented in movie and TV roles across platforms, and when they are represented, they're often stereotyped. For example, despite being 18% of the population, Latinos only make up 5% of speaking film roles. Characters of color in shows most watched by children age 2 to 13 are more likely to be depicted as violent, and women of all ethnic-racial groups in adult programming are more likely to appear in sexualized roles. Moreover, watching the gender stereotypes embedded in video increased boys' and girls' stereotype confirmation (Wille et al., 2018).
- Zillmann et al. (1994) found the average child sees 12,000 violent acts on television annually, including many depictions of murder and rape. More than 1000 studies confirm that exposure to heavy doses of television violence increases aggressive behaviour, particularly in boys.
- Television viewing makes a substantial contribution to obesity because prime time commercials promote unhealthy dietary practices (Ostbye et al., 1993)
- Today, media has become a leading sex educator for children. Between 1976 and 1996, there has been a 270% increase in sexual interactions during the family hour of 2000 hours to 2100 hours (Crespo et al., 2001).

Digital Literacy

Advertising

Advertising to children and teenagers via various forms of media has occurred for decades, with expenditures of \$3.2 billion for non-digital and \$900 million for digital advertising in the United States in 2018. Children and teenagers encounter advertising through television, radio, print media, the Internet, and their mobile phones. Advertising can take many forms, including images, videos, and games that advertise specific brands. Along with a growing number of online predators misrepresenting themselves on social networking sites, the Internet is responsible for a lot of other types of misinformation circulating the web. Unless children are able to distinguish between reliable, unbiased sources and factual information, they may find themselves consuming

inaccurate news reports or false encyclopedia entries. Even so-called reliable news sources are subject to occasional errors with their source material.

Teaching children digital literacy is crucial. Children and parents need to understand how technology influences and sometimes exploits them. These mechanisms often are invisible, so digital citizenship curricula will need to help children understand. According to Rideout & Robb (2020) the concerns around digital literacy are listed below.

- Free digital products aren't really "free" unless they are made by a nonprofit group.
- Cookies (browser data trackers that follow our "crumbs" as we go from site to site) and device identifiers (IDs hardwired into smartphones and tablets, which can be traced back to users) often are collected by platforms and sold to companies that collect data on purchases, gameplay or browsing histories.
- Individuals' video viewing behavior on sites like YouTube can indicate aspects of users' mental health, race, sexuality, political leaning or other characteristics.
- Platforms used by schools (such as Google Classroom, ClassDojo) collect children's data about test scores and behavior, which need to be protected.
- Algorithms that sort people into categories of consumers carry bias and can reinforce disparities.
- Users are more complicated than these algorithm categories, and they need to be aware of what tech platforms know about them and how this informs what messages they get (e.g., anti-vaccine misinformation to anxious new parents; alcohol and marijuana marketing to minority and low-income populations).

Research on children's understanding of television advertising suggest that children have limited ability to understand the intent of advertisers, consider Piaget's developmental stages. Marketers use many approaches such as the use of animated characters, [interactive games for product using reinforcement strategies](#), which can be seen here with Barbie. Marketers also embedded products in TV, video games and movies (think of the Coke cup next to American Idol).

The proliferation of advertising and misinformation based on media companies algorithm is makes children particularly vulnerable which is why some countries, such as Sweden and Brazil, have laws banning advertising to children younger than 12 years. US advocates for children urge stricter regulations to protect children and ban commercials and misinformation targeted to young children. Regulations on television advertising have not yet been updated for the modern digital environment.

While Tumblr and Facebook encourage us to check in and provide details of our day through online social networks, corporations can just as easily promote their products on these sites. Even supposedly crowd-sourced sites like Yelp (which aggregates local reviews) are not immune to corporate shenanigans. That is, we think we are reading objective observations when in reality we may be buying into one more form of advertising.

Facebook, which started as a free social network for college students, is increasingly a monetized business, selling you goods and services in subtle ways. But chances are you don't think of Facebook as one big online advertisement. What started out as a symbol of coolness and insider status, unavailable to parents and corporate shills, now promotes consumerism in the form of games and fandom. For example, think of all the money spent to upgrade popular Facebook games like Candy Crush. And notice that whenever you become a "fan," you likely receive product updates and special deals that promote online and real-world consumerism.

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Note

With the fast pace changes occurring in media, what macrosystem policy changes would you advocate for to protect children in a vulnerable developmental stage? What about in the microsystem level, what should parents or caregivers do to protect children?

Media Regulations

Privacy

Within Bronfenbrenners Macrosystem is the idea regulations related to media. Regulations have been focused on advertisement as discussed above and privacy concerns. Online privacy concerns also extend from individuals to their dependents. In accordance with the Child Online Privacy Protection Act, school districts must consider and control certain elements of privacy on behalf of students, meaning they cannot require or encourage students under age thirteen to provide personal information. Likewise, online platforms such as Instagram do not let children under the age of thirteen register for their sites. And where children are registered by their parents, sites like YouTube and, more recently, TikTok issue controls to prevent inappropriate portrayals by children or inappropriate behavior by other members. For example, YouTube often disables comments on videos produced by children (Moreno, 2020). TikTok added privacy and protection methods in 2020, but in early 2021 was hit with allegations of violating child safety and privacy guidelines.

Although schools and companies are required to take steps to lower risks to children, parents and guardians are free to make their own choices on behalf of their children. Some parents avoid showing their children on social media; they do not post pictures, and ask family members to refrain from doing so (Levy, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, some parents run social media accounts for their children. Sometimes referred to as "sharents," they may share entertaining videos, promote products through demos or try-ons, or post professionally produced photos on behalf of clothing companies or equipment makers. A child's (even a toddler's) role as an influencer can be financially lucrative, and companies making everything from helmets to dancewear have taken notice (Allchin 2012).

The responsibility for regulating children's media is traditionally been the responsibility of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Communications Act of 1934 replaced the Radio Act and created a more powerful entity to monitor the airwaves—a five-member Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to oversee both radio and telephone communication. It has no jurisdiction over print media, mainly because print media are purchased and not broadcast. The FCC requires TV and radio stations to apply for licenses, granted only if stations follow rules about limiting advertising.

There has always been marketing to young children, even prior to 1980, but the amount was very limited and confined. With the growing purchase power of children restrictions on advertisers and companies to protect children has lessen in the past 50 years. Between 1975 and 1985, deregulation public policy removed limitations on advertising to children and stripping congress' power to protect children from marketers, leaving companies free to advertise to children as they see fit, and allowing them to use the strategies above. At the same time, children's media inclusive of TV shows has expanded. There are upwards of 500 channels running at a 24 hour cycle providing entertainment content to children such as Nickelodeon, Disney, Netflix, Disney streaming, Sprouts and more. As a result of deregulation, society witnessed media content created for the sole purpose of selling a toy, essentially turning kids' shows into program-length toy commercials.

Net Neutrality

The issue of net neutrality, the principle that all Internet data should be treated equally by Internet service providers, is part of the national debate about Internet access and the digital divide. On one side of this debate is the belief that those who provide Internet service, like those who provide electricity and water, should be treated as common carriers, legally prohibited from discriminating based on the customer or nature of the goods. Supporters of net neutrality suggest that without such legal protections, the Internet could be divided into "fast" and "slow" lanes. A conflict perspective theorist might suggest that this discrimination would allow bigger corporations, such as Amazon, to pay Internet providers a premium for faster service, which could lead to gaining an advantage that would drive small, local competitors out of business.

The other side of the debate holds the belief that designating Internet service providers as common carriers would constitute an unreasonable regulatory burden and limit the ability of telecommunication companies to operate profitably. A functional

perspective theorist might point out that, without profits, companies would not invest in making improvements to their Internet service or expanding those services to underserved areas. The final decision rests with the Federal Communications Commission and the federal government, which must decide how to fairly regulate broadband providers without dividing the Internet into haves and have-nots.

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Note

With the increased growth of media-linked toys and products, there has been a rapid growth in children's consumption. Do you think we should be concerned about this?

Do you think there is a link between the increasing frequency to use licensed characters to sell junk food and other products to children?

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3: WHY CULTURE IS IMPORTANT

3.1: Introduction

3.2: Cultural Schemas

3.3: Culture in the Classroom

3.4: Age

Learning Objectives

At the end of the chapter, you should be able to:

- Explore values and beliefs of culture
- Explore norms, symbols, language in culture
- Understand attitudes in culture
- Describe examples of how culture influences behavior.
- Define ethnocentric bias and cultural relativism.

The Importance of Culture

Culture is a large part of our Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem that describes the attitudes, values and beliefs we encompass throughout life. It is the nonbiological aspect to life that describes the idea of learned behaviors. There is a cultural nature to how humans develop. Many researchers would argue that much of our identity, our sense of self, perspectives and how we perceive the world comes from our culture. Many of our skills and abilities may come from our cultural practices as well. Culture explains the question "why do we behave the way we do?" Cultures have norms, rules, and expectations that comes with its punishments and rewards. The many different aspects of culture are driving forces to our behaviors. Attitudes may influence how we treat or receive others. Traditions, values and beliefs may stem from other aspects of our macrosystem such as political ideation, or religion. Each aspect has influences over our behavior.

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3.1: Introduction

Culture and Socialization

Culture is a key concept in socialization as it influences our beliefs and behaviors. Culture is a part of each person and is the foundation of a society. People in general absorb the rules, values, norms and beliefs of the culture they were born into (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Think about what are the informal unwritten rules when you pass an acquaintance at school, work, in the grocery store, or in the mall? Generally, we do not consider all of the intricacies of the rules of behavior. We may simply say, "Hello!" and ask, "How was your weekend?" or some other trivial question meant to be a friendly greeting. Rarely do we physically embrace or even touch the individual. In fact, doing so may be viewed with scorn or distaste, since as people in the United States we have fairly rigid rules about personal space. However, we all adhere to various rules and standards that are created and maintained in culture. These rules and expectations have meaning, and there are ways in which you may violate this negotiation. Culturally, we examine in what situation and context certain behavior is expected, and in which situations perhaps it is not. These rules are created and enforced by people who interact and share societal norms.

Critical Reflection

Think about the setting and environment of grocery stores in each culture. Would these differences change the way one interacts with others?



Figure 3.1.1: people shopping in middle eastern market (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; ninjawil via Wordpress)



Figure 3.1.2: people shopping in western market (CC BY-SA 2.0; blmurch via Wordpress)

In everyday conversation, people rarely distinguish between the terms culture and society, but the terms have slightly different meanings, and the distinction is important to educators. A society describes a group of people who share a community and a culture. By “community,” is a definable region—as small as a neighborhood (Brooklyn, or “the east side of town”), as large as a country (Ethiopia, the United States, or Nepal), or somewhere in between (in the United States, this might include someone who identifies with Southern or Midwestern society). To clarify, a culture represents the beliefs and practices of a group, while society represents the people who share those beliefs and practices. Neither society nor culture could exist without the other. In this section we examine the relationship between culture and society in greater detail and pay special attention to the elements and forces that shape culture, including diversity and cultural changes. A final discussion touches on the different theoretical perspectives from which sociologists research culture.

Almost every human behavior, from parenting, to bathing, to shopping to marriage to expressions of feelings, is learned. Children learning the behaviors make them apart of the group. The conduct and systems of the group is collectively called culture. In the United States, people tend to view marriage as a choice between two people, based on mutual feelings of love. In other nations and in other times, marriages have been arranged through an intricate process of interviews and negotiations between entire families. To someone raised in New York City, the marriage customs of a family from Nigeria may seem strange or even wrong. Conversely, someone from a traditional Kolkata family might be perplexed with the idea of romantic love as the foundation for marriage and lifelong commitment. In other words, the way in which people view marriage depends largely on what they have been taught.



Figure 3.1.3: A man presenting his sister, the bride, to her groom. (CC BY-SA 1.0; Wikimedia)

Behavior based on learned customs is not a bad thing. Being familiar with unwritten rules helps people feel secure and “normal.” Most people want to live their daily lives confident that their behaviors will not be challenged or disrupted. But even an action as seemingly simple as commuting to school evidences a great deal of cultural propriety.

Take the case of going to school on public transportation. Whether people are commuting in Dublin, Cairo, Mumbai, or San Francisco, many behaviors will be the same, but significant differences also arise between cultures. Typically, a passenger will find a marked bus stop or station, wait for his bus or train, pay an agent before or after boarding, and quietly take a seat if one is available. But when boarding a bus in Cairo, passengers might have to run, because buses there often do not come to a full stop to take on patrons. Dublin bus riders would be expected to extend an arm to indicate that they want the bus to stop for them. And when boarding a commuter train in Mumbai, passengers must squeeze into overstuffed cars amid a lot of pushing and shoving on the crowded platforms. That kind of behavior would be considered the height of rudeness in the United States, but in Mumbai it reflects the daily challenges of getting around on a train system that is taxed to capacity.

In this example of commuting, culture consists of thoughts (expectations about personal space, for example) and tangible things (bus stops, trains, and seating capacity). Material culture refers to the objects or belongings of a group of people. Metro passes and bus tokens are part of material culture, as are automobiles, stores, and the physical structures where people worship. Nonmaterial culture, in contrast, consists of the ideas, attitudes, and beliefs of a society. Material and nonmaterial aspects of culture are linked, and physical objects often symbolize cultural ideas. A metro pass is a material object, but it represents a form of nonmaterial culture, namely, capitalism, and the acceptance of paying for transportation.

Cultural Universals

Often, a comparison of one culture to another will reveal obvious differences. But all cultures also share common elements. Cultural universals are patterns or traits that are globally common to all societies. One example of a cultural universal is the family unit: every human society recognizes a family structure that regulates sexual reproduction and the care of children. Even so, how that family unit is defined and how it functions vary. In many Asian cultures, for example, family members from all generations commonly live together in one household. In these cultures, young adults continue to live in the extended household family structure until they marry and join their spouse’s household, or they may remain and raise their nuclear family within the extended family’s homestead. In the United States, by contrast, individuals are expected to leave home and live independently for a period before forming a family unit that consists of parents and their offspring. Other cultural universals include customs like funeral rites, weddings, and celebrations of births. However, each culture may view the ceremonies quite differently.

Cultural Iceberg

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There are many factors of culture, it is powerful it is obvious in many ways but imperceivable in other ways (Hall, 1989). Theorists explain that culture is visible and invisible. Culture is visible in a groups dress, food, gestures, systems, as an educator this is the easiest elements of culture. The most difficult element of culture is the the culture we do not see but still exist. This is invisible cultural elements such as emotional reactions and beliefs systems.



Figure 3.1.4: Native American people in traditional dress (CC BY 2.0; tm via Wikimedia)

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

The fact of cultural diversity raises some important but difficult questions of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. Cultural relativism refers to the belief that we should not judge any culture as superior or inferior to another culture. In this view, all cultures have their benefits and disadvantages, and we should not automatically assume that our own culture is better and “their” culture is worse. Ethnocentrism, the opposite view, refers to the tendency to judge another culture by the standards of our own and to the belief that our own culture is indeed superior to another culture. When we think of cow worship in India, it is easy to be amused by it and even to make fun of it. That is why anthropologist Marvin Harris’s (1978) analysis was so important, because it suggests that cow worship is in fact very important for the Indian way of life. Despite how much humans have in common, cultural differences are far more prevalent than cultural universals. For example, while all cultures have language, analysis of particular language structures and conversational etiquette reveal tremendous differences.



Figure 3.1.5: According to anthropologist Marvin Harris, cows are worshipped in India because they are such an important part of India's agricultural economy. (CC BY-SA 3.0; Bipin.cs37 via Wikimedia)

In the United States, if we make an “O” by putting our thumb and forefinger together, we mean “OK,” but the same gesture in certain parts of Europe signifies an obscenity. “Thumbs up” in the United States means “great” or “wonderful,” but in Australia it means the same thing as extending the middle finger in the United States. Certain parts of the Middle East and Asia would be offended if they saw you using your left hand to eat, because they use their left hand for bathroom hygiene.



Figure 3.1.6: OK. (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0; d Wang via Flickr)

The meaning of a gesture may differ from one society to another. This familiar gesture means “OK” in the United States, but in certain parts of Europe it signifies an obscenity. An American using this gesture might very well be greeted with an angry look.

In some Middle Eastern cultures, it is common to stand close to others in conversation. North Americans keep more distance and maintain a large “personal space.” Even something as simple as eating and drinking varies greatly from culture to culture. If your professor comes into an early morning class holding a mug of liquid, what do you assume she is drinking? In the United States, it's most likely filled with coffee, not Earl Grey tea, a favorite in England, or Yak Butter tea, a staple in Tibet.



Figure 3.1.7:(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0; Marie Anna Lee via [ScholarlyCommons](#)) & Figure 3.1.8: (Public Domain; NARA): It's not just what we eat, but where and how we eat that can differ

The way cuisines vary across cultures fascinates many people. Some travelers pride themselves on their willingness to try unfamiliar foods, like celebrated food writer Anthony Bourdain, while others return home expressing gratitude for their native culture's fare. Often, people in the United States express disgust at other cultures' cuisine and think that it's gross to eat meat from a dog or guinea pig, for example, while they don't question their own habit of eating cows or pigs. Such attitudes are an example of ethnocentrism, or evaluating and judging another culture based on how it compares to one's own cultural norms. Ethnocentrism, as sociologist William Graham Sumner (1906) described the term, involves a belief or attitude that one's own culture is better than all others. Almost everyone is a little bit ethnocentric. For example, Americans tend to say that people from England drive on the "wrong" side of the road, rather than on the "other" side. Someone from a country where dog meat is standard fare might find it off-putting to see a dog in a French restaurant—not on the menu, but as a pet and patron's companion. A good example of ethnocentrism is referring to parts of Asia as the "Far East." One might question, "Far east of where?"

A high level of appreciation for one's own culture can be healthy; a shared sense of community pride, for example, connects people in a society. But ethnocentrism can lead to disdain or dislike for other cultures and could cause misunderstanding and conflict. People with the best intentions sometimes travel to a society to "help" its people, because they see them as uneducated or backward—essentially inferior. In reality, these travelers are guilty of cultural imperialism, the deliberate imposition of one's own cultural values on another culture. Europe's colonial expansion, begun in the sixteenth century, was often accompanied by a severe cultural imperialism. European colonizers often viewed the people in the lands they colonized as uncultured savages who were in need of European governance, dress, religion, and other cultural practices. A more modern example of cultural imperialism may include the work of international aid agencies who introduce agricultural methods and plant species from developed countries while overlooking indigenous varieties and agricultural approaches that are better suited to the particular region (Scheuerman, 2010).

Ethnocentrism can be so strong that when confronted with all of the differences of a new culture, one may experience disorientation and frustration. In sociology, we call this culture shock. A traveler from Chicago might find the nightly silence of rural Montana unsettling, not peaceful. An exchange student from China might be annoyed by the constant interruptions in class as other students ask questions—a practice that is considered rude in China. Perhaps the Chicago traveler was initially captivated with Montana's quiet beauty and the Chinese student was originally excited to see a U.S.-style classroom firsthand. But as they experience unanticipated differences from their own culture, their excitement gives way to discomfort and doubts about how to behave appropriately in the new situation. Eventually, as people learn more about a culture, they recover from culture shock.

Critical Reflection

This section discussed the eating of dog meat in some other cultures. Many Americans and Europeans condemn this practice and look down upon non-western countries where these practices are typical.

Do you think it is appropriate to condemn eating dog meat, or do you think such criticism violates cultural relativism and is therefore inappropriate?

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3.2: Cultural Schemas

Cultural Schemas

Culture determines how groups understand rules and make meaning of their behavior, patterns, systems and experiences. These frameworks are called values, beliefs, attitudes and norms. These cognitive processes provide structure for our social patterns. The following video discusses values in more depth and highlights other related ideas such as symbols, and norms that govern our daily lives. Children are learning about these complex ideas in their interactions with adults and caregivers. Children are learning about these mental structures, what Piaget called schemas, in this case cultural schemas (Lally & Vlentine-French, 2017).

YouTube Video

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Values

The first, and perhaps most crucial, elements of culture we will discuss are its values and beliefs. Values are a culture's standard for discerning what is good and just in society. Values are deeply embedded and critical for transmitting and teaching a culture's beliefs. Beliefs are the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true. Individuals in a society have specific beliefs, but they also share collective values.

Values are qualities or beliefs that are viewed as desirable or important. Socializing agents in all Bronfenbrenners bio-ecological model influence the internalization of values. In the microsystem what message did your parents give you gender or beauty? Major global events in the macrosystem and chronosystem also affect values. For example, COVID- 19 pandemic in 2020 made people value security and reorganize their family and work lives (Bojanowska et al., 2021).

Values help shape a society by suggesting what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, sought or avoided. Consider the value that the United States places upon youth. Children represent innocence and purity, while a youthful adult appearance signifies sexuality. Shaped by this value, individuals spend millions of dollars each year on cosmetic products and surgeries to look young and beautiful. The United States also has an individualistic culture, meaning people place a high value on individuality and independence. In contrast, many other cultures are collectivist, meaning the welfare of the group and group relationships are a primary value.

Living up to a culture's values can be difficult. For parents in the U.S. we value children being independent but engage in helicopter parenting. It's easy to value good health, but it's hard to quit smoking. Marital monogamy is valued, but many spouses engage in infidelity. Cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all people are valued in the United States, yet the country's highest political offices have been dominated by white men.

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they don't accurately reflect how people do behave. Values portray an ideal culture, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from real culture, the way society actually is, based on what occurs and exists. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or repair those accidents, crimes, and injustices. American teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that not only is the ideal hard to live up to, but the value alone is not enough to spare teenagers the potential consequences of having sex.

One way societies strive to put values into action is through rewards, sanctions, and punishments, see the section on theories that outline Skinner's work. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy

who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a “thank you.” A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction certain behaviors by giving their support, approval, or permission, or by instilling formal actions of disapproval and nonsupport. Sanctions are a form of social control, a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions: good grades, for instance, may mean praise from parents and teachers. From a criminal justice perspective, properly used social control is also inexpensive crime control. Utilizing social control approaches pushes most people to conform to societal rules, regardless of whether authority figures (such as law enforcement) are present.



Figure 3.2.1: A Mangkong girl, caring for a younger sibling, stands outside a home. A norm in Laos have children playing a major role in helping to raise younger children. (CC BY-SA 3.0; BigBrotherMouse via Wikimedia)

When people go against a society's values, they are punished. A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label—lazy, no-good bum—or to legal sanctions, such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment.



Figure 3.2.2: In many parts of Africa and the Middle East, it is considered normal for men to hold hands in friendship. How would Americans react to these two soldiers? (CC BY 2.0; Geordie Mott via Wikimedia)

Values are not static; they vary across time and between groups as people evaluate, debate, and change collective societal beliefs. Values also vary from culture to culture. For example, cultures differ in their values about what kinds of physical closeness are

appropriate in public. It's rare to see two male friends or coworkers holding hands in the United States where that behavior often symbolizes romantic feelings. But in many nations, masculine physical intimacy is considered natural in public. This difference in cultural values came to light when people reacted to photos of former president George W. Bush holding hands with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2005. A simple gesture, such as hand-holding, carries great symbolic differences across cultures.

Reflection

What is a value you have as an adult that was fostered in your childhood?

In what ways was that instilled in you by society. Can you link to the methods of socialization practices?

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3.3: Culture in the Classroom

Cultural Identity and Responsiveness

Cultural Identity

Although the early childhood field has a long history of commitment to developing culturally appropriate approaches to educating young children, it still struggles with understanding the role of culture in the development of our youngest children (Maschinot, 2008; Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010). As educators we will notice culture in the classroom as children will experience and interpret interactions and events in different ways. To develop a culturally responsive approach, it is essential to understand that what children learn from families and teachers are an idea systems 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.

Early childhood educators must recognize the uniqueness of all cultures, languages, and communities by embracing the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of our society. All classrooms should be seen as diverse, inclusive, and promote equity by valuing and celebrating each family represented. This includes understanding the influence of multiple languages and dialects, ethnicities, abilities, genders and socioeconomic statuses.. These culturally responsive practices engage children and families through authentic home-school connections. As educators recognize and understand diverse social contexts, they are strengthening the effectiveness of instructional delivery. Academic progress takes place within the context of a child's ecosystems and their development is maximized when these ecosystems are considered and respected. Diversity of social contexts is an asset to educators, rather than a barrier to appropriate development, when culturally responsive practices are implemented in the classroom.

Note

According to Diller and Moule (2005) culture can be exhibited in these visible and invisible ways by children in the classroom:

Language Use

- Code switching
- Native Language Dominance
- Grammar
- Intonation

Emotions

- Expressions of fear, joy and happiness
- Reactions to conflict

Behaviors

- Gestures
- Body movement
- Physical Distance or proximity

Other

- Ways of dress
- Food preferences
- Routines and customs
- Parental engagement

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.



Figure 3.3.1: These dancers are participating in a celebration which works to build their cultural identity. (Public Domain; Pxhere)

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 one's religion, ancestry, skin color, language, class, education, profession, skill, family and political attitudes. These factors contribute to the development of one's identity.

Cultural Responsive

Culturally responsive practices, which include having high expectations and standards for learning, are indeed related to student success, even if few studies have been undertaken to make this connection explicit (Diller & Moule, 2005). 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.

YouTube Video

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3.4: Age

In middle-class U.S. families, children are often not regarded as capable of caring for themselves or tending another child until perhaps age 10 (or later in some regions). In the U.K., it is an offense to leave a child under age 14 years without adult supervision (Subbotsky, 1995). However, in many other communities around the world, children begin to take on responsibility for tending other children at ages 5–7 (Rogoff et al, 1975), and in some places even younger children begin to assume this responsibility. For example, among the Kwara'ae of Oceania, three year olds are skilled workers in the gardens and household, excellent caregivers of their younger siblings, and accomplished at social interaction. Although young children also have time to play, many of the functions of play seem to be met by work. For both adults and children, work is accompanied by singing, joking, verbal play and entertaining conversation. Instead of playing with dolls, children care for real babies. In addition to working in the family gardens, young children have their own garden plots. The latter may seem like play, but by three or four years of age many children are taking produce they have grown themselves to the market to sell, thereby making a significant and valued contribution to the family income. (Watson-Gegeo, 1990, p. 87)



Figure 3.4.1: In some cultures, it is the norm for the older siblings to raise the younger ones. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Basile Morin via Wikimedia)

When do children's judgment and coordination allow them to handle sharp knives safely? Although U.S. middle-class adults often do not trust children below about age 5 with knives, among the Efe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, infants routinely use machetes safely (Rogoff, 2003). Likewise, New Guinea infants handle knives and fire safely by the time they are able to walk (Rogoff, 2003). Parents of Central Africa teach 8- to 10-month-old infants how to throw small spears and use small pointed digging sticks and miniature axes with sharp metal blades: Training for autonomy begins in infancy. Infants are allowed to crawl or walk to whatever they want in camp and allowed to use knives, machetes, digging sticks, and clay pots around camp. Only if an infant begins to crawl into a fire or hits another child do parents or others interfere with the infant's activity (Rogoff, 2003). It was not unusual, for instance, to see an eight month old with a six-inch knife chopping the branch frame of its family's house. By three or four years of age children can cook themselves a meal on the fire, and by ten years of age, children know enough subsistence skills to live in the forest alone if need be. (Rogoff, 2003). This evidence shows that children's wide range of abilities are linked to cultural practices, and many of our cultural practices either put limitations on what we allow children to do, or enhance children's abilities. Rogoff & Chavajay discussed how cultural practices relate to the development of ways of thinking, remembering, reasoning, and problem solving. (1995). What children are learning from a young age can impact how they learn, develop, and determine their practical skills during their later ages.

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4: HOW DOES GENDER INFLUENCE CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES?

4.1: Understanding Sex and Gender

4.2: Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes

4.3: Socialization and Gender

4.4: Gender Identity and Gender Expression

4.5: Sexual Orientation

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate sex and gender.
- Describe how gender is a social construct.
- Explain the development of gender differences.
- Recognize gender as a socializing agent.
- Explain sexual orientation.
- Identify challenges that LGBT families and children may face.

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4.1: Understanding Sex and Gender

Although the terms *sex* and *gender* are sometimes used interchangeably and do in fact complement each other, they nonetheless refer to different aspects of what it means to be a woman or man in any society.

Sex refers to the anatomical and other biological differences between females and males that are determined at the moment of conception and develop in the womb and throughout childhood and adolescence. Females, of course, have two X chromosomes, while males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome. From this basic genetic difference spring other biological differences.

When babies are born, they are assigned a gender based on their biological sex—male babies are assigned as boys, female babies are assigned as girls, and intersex babies are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies, and are usually relegated into one gender category or another. Scholars generally regard gender as a social construct, meaning that it doesn't exist naturally but is instead a concept that is created by cultural and societal norms. From birth, children are socialized to conform to certain gender roles based on their biological sex and the gender to which they are assigned.[1]

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4.2: Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes

Gender roles, refers to a society's expectations of people's behavior and attitudes based on whether they are females or males. Understood in this way, gender, like race, is a *social construction*. How we think and behave as females and males is not etched in stone by our biology but rather is a result of how society expects us to think and behave based on what sex we are. As we grow up, we learn these expectations as we develop our gender identity, or our beliefs about ourselves as females or males.

These expectations are called *femininity* and *masculinity*. Femininity refers to the cultural expectations we have of girls and women, while masculinity refers to the expectations we have of boys and men. A familiar nursery rhyme nicely summarizes these two sets of traits:

What are little boys made of?

Snips and snails,

And puppy dog tails,

That's what little boys are made of.

What are little girls made of?

Sugar and spice,

And everything nice,

That's what little girls are made of.

As this nursery rhyme suggests, our traditional notions of femininity and masculinity indicate that we think females and males are fundamentally different from each other.



Figure 4.2.1: Infant girls traditionally wear pink, while infant boys wear blue. This color difference reflects the different cultural expectations we have for babies based on their (biological) sex.[1]

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. We engage in gender stereotyping when we do things like making the assumption that a teenage babysitter is female.

While it is somewhat acceptable for women to take on a narrow range of masculine characteristics without repercussions (such

as dressing in traditionally male clothing), men are rarely able to take on more feminine characteristics (such as wearing skirts) without the risk of harassment or violence. This threat of punishment for stepping outside of gender norms is especially true for those who do not identify as male or female.

Check-in Time!

As a child, what toys did you play with? Were these toy selections at all influenced by your parents, the media, or friends? Why or why not?

[1] Image by mgeejnr on Pixabay

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4.3: Socialization and Gender

Previous sections identified several agents of socialization, including the family, peers, schools, the mass media, and religion. While that chapter's discussion focused on these agents' impact on socialization in general, ample evidence of their impact on gender-role socialization also exists. Such socialization helps boys and girls develop their gender identity (Andersen & Hysock, 2009).

The Family

Socialization into gender roles begins in infancy, as almost from the moment of birth parents begin to socialize their children as boys or girls without even knowing it (Begley, 2009; Eliot, 2009). Many studies document this process (Lindsey, 2011). Parents commonly describe their infant daughters as pretty, soft, and delicate and their infant sons as strong, active, and alert, even though neutral observers find no such gender differences among infants when they do not know the infants' sex. From infancy on, parents play with and otherwise interact with their daughters and sons differently. They play more roughly with their sons—for example, by throwing them up in the air or by gently wrestling with them—and more quietly with their daughters. When their infant or toddler daughters cry, they warmly comfort them, but they tend to let their sons cry longer and to comfort them less. They give their girls dolls to play with and their boys “action figures” and toy guns. While these gender differences in socialization are probably smaller now than a generation ago, they certainly continue to exist. Go into a large toy store and you will see pink aisles of dolls and cooking sets and blue aisles of action figures, toy guns, and related items.

Peers

Peer influences also encourage gender socialization. As they reach school age, children begin to play different games based on their gender (see the “Sociology Making a Difference” box). Boys tend to play sports and other competitive team games governed by inflexible rules and relatively large numbers of roles, while girls tend to play smaller, cooperative games such as hopscotch and jumping rope with fewer and more flexible rules. Although girls are much more involved in sports now than a generation ago, these gender differences in their play as youngsters persist and continue to reinforce gender roles. For example, they encourage competitiveness in boys and cooperation and trust among girls. Boys who are not competitive risk being called “sissy” or other words by their peers. The patterns we see in adult males and females thus have their roots in their play as young children (King, Miles, & Kniska, 1991).

Gender Differences in Children's Play and Games

In considering the debate, discussed in the text, between biology and sociology over the origins of gender roles, some widely cited studies by sociologists over gender differences in children's play and games provide important evidence for the importance of socialization.

Janet Lever (1978) studied fifth-grade children in three different communities in Connecticut. She watched them play and otherwise interact in school and also had the children keep diaries of their play and games outside school. One of her central aims was to determine how complex the two sexes' play and games were in terms of such factors as number of rules, specialization of roles, and size of the group playing. In all of these respects, Lever found that boys' play and games were typically more complex than girls' play and games. She attributed these differences to socialization by parents, teachers, and other adults and argued that the complexity of boys' play and games helped them to be better able than girls to learn important social skills such as dealing with rules and coordinating actions to achieve goals.

Meanwhile, Barrie Thorne (1993) spent many months in two different working-class communities in California and Michigan observing fourth and fifth graders sit in class and lunchrooms and play on the school playgrounds. Most children were white, but several were African American or Latino. As you might expect, the girls and boys she observed usually played separately from each other, and the one-sex groups in which they played were very important for the development of their gender identity, with boys tending to play team sports and other competitive games and girls tending to play cooperative games such as jump rope. These differences led Thorne to conclude that gender-role socialization stems not only from practices by adults but also from the children's own activities without adult involvement. When boys and girls did interact, it was

often “girls against the boys” or vice versa in classroom spelling contests and in games such as tag. Thorne concluded that these “us against them” contests helped the children learn that boys and girls are two different and antagonistic sexes and that gender itself is antagonistic, even if there were also moments when both sexes interacted on the playground in more relaxed, noncompetitive situations. Boys also tended to disrupt girls’ games more than the reverse and in this manner both exerted and learned dominance over females. In all of these ways, children were not just the passive recipients of gender-role socialization from adults (their teachers), but they also played an active role in ensuring that such socialization occurred.

The studies by Lever and Thorne were among the first to emphasize the importance of children’s play and peer relationships for gender socialization. They also called attention to the importance of the traits and values learned through such socialization for outcomes later in life. The rise in team sports opportunities for girls in the years since Lever and Thorne did their research is a welcome development that addresses the concerns expressed in their studies, but young children continue to play in the ways that Lever and Thorne found. To the extent children’s play has the consequences just listed, and to the extent these consequences impede full gender inequality, these sociological studies suggest the need for teachers, parents, and other adults to help organize children’s play that is more egalitarian along the lines discussed by Lever, Thorne, and other scholars. In this way, their sociological work has helped to make a difference and promises to continue to do so.

Schools

School is yet another agent of gender socialization (Klein, 2007). First of all, school playgrounds provide a location for the gender-linked play activities just described to occur. Second, and perhaps more important, teachers at all levels treat their female and male students differently in subtle ways of which they are probably not aware. They tend to call on boys more often to answer questions in class and to praise them more when they give the right answer. They also give boys more feedback about their assignments and other school work (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). At all grade levels, many textbooks and other books still portray people in gender-stereotyped ways. It is true that the newer books do less of this than older ones, but the newer books still contain some stereotypes, and the older books are still used in many schools, especially those that cannot afford to buy newer volumes.

Mass Media

Gender socialization also occurs through the mass media (Dow & Wood, 2006). On children’s television shows, the major characters are male. On Nickelodeon, for example, the very popular SpongeBob SquarePants is a male, as are his pet snail, Gary; his best friend, Patrick Star; their neighbor, Squidward Tentacles; and SpongeBob’s employer, Eugene Crabs. Of the major characters in Bikini Bottom, only Sandy Cheeks is a female.



Figure 4.3.1: Women’s magazines reinforce the view that women need to be slender and wear many cosmetics in order to be considered beautiful.[1]

As for adults' prime-time television, more men than women continue to fill more major roles in weekly shows, despite notable women's roles in shows such as *The Good Wife* and *Grey's Anatomy*. Women are also often portrayed as unintelligent or frivolous individuals who are there more for their looks than for anything else. Television commercials reinforce this image (Yoder, Christopher, & Holmes, 2008).

Cosmetics ads abound, suggesting not only that a major task for women is to look good but also that their sense of self-worth stems from looking good. Other commercials show women becoming ecstatic over achieving a clean floor or sparkling laundry. Judging from the world of television commercials, then, women's chief goals in life are to look good and to have a clean house. At the same time, men's chief goals, judging from many commercials, are to drink beer and drive cars.

Women's and men's magazines reinforce these gender images (Milillo, 2008). Most of the magazines intended for teenaged girls and adult women are filled with pictures of thin, beautiful models, advice on dieting, cosmetics ads, and articles on how to win and please your man. Conversely, the magazines intended for teenaged boys and men are filled with ads and articles on cars and sports, advice on how to succeed in careers and other endeavors, and pictures of thin, beautiful (and sometimes nude) women. These magazine images again suggest that women's chief goals are to look good and to please men and that men's chief goals are to succeed, win over women, and live life in the fast lane.

Religion

Another agent of socialization, religion, also contributes to traditional gender stereotypes. Many traditional interpretations of the Bible yield the message that women are subservient to men (Tanenbaum, 2009). This message begins in Genesis, where the first human is Adam, and Eve was made from one of his ribs. The major figures in the rest of the Bible are men, and women are for the most part depicted as wives, mothers, temptresses, and prostitutes; they are praised for their roles as wives and mothers and condemned for their other roles. More generally, women are constantly depicted as the property of men. The Ten Commandments includes a neighbor's wife with his house, ox, and other objects as things not to be coveted (Exodus 20:17), and many biblical passages say explicitly that women belong to men, such as this one from the New Testament:

Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22–24)

Several passages in the Old Testament justify the rape and murder of women and girls. The Koran, the sacred book of Islam, also contains passages asserting the subordinate role of women (Mayer, 2009).

This discussion suggests that religious people should believe in traditional gender views more than less religious people, and research confirms this relationship (Morgan, 1988). To illustrate this, the figure below shows the relationship in the General Social Survey between frequency of prayer and the view that "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." People who pray more often are more likely to accept this traditional view of gender roles.

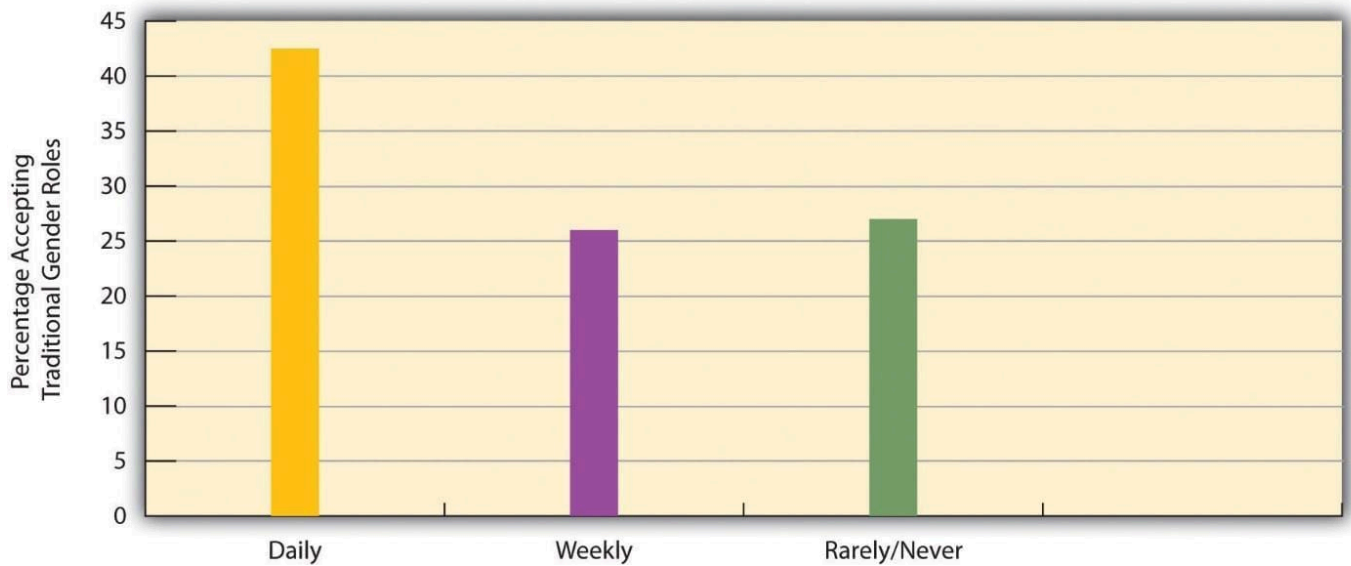


Figure 4.3.2: Percentage agreeing that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.”[2]

[1] Image by Photo Editing Services Tucia.com is licensed under CC BY 2.0

[2] Data from General Social Survey, 2008.

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4.4: Gender Identity and Gender Expression

A person's subjective experience of their own gender and how it develops, or gender identity, is a topic of much debate. It is the extent to which one identifies with a particular gender; it is a person's individual sense and subjective experience of being a man, a woman, or other gender. It is often shaped early in life and consists primarily of the acceptance (or non-acceptance) of one's membership into a gender category. In most societies, there is a basic division between gender attributes assigned to males and females. In all societies, however, some individuals do not identify with some (or all) of the aspects of gender that are assigned to their biological sex.

Those that identify with the gender that corresponds to the sex assigned to them at birth (for example, they are assigned female at birth and continue to identify as a girl, and later a woman) are called cisgender. In many Western cultures, individuals who identify with a gender that is different from their biological sex (for example, they are assigned female at birth but feel inwardly that they are a boy or a gender other than a girl) are called transgender. Some transgender individuals, if they have access to resources and medical care, choose to alter their bodies through medical interventions such as surgery and hormonal therapy so that their physical being is better aligned with their gender identity.

Recent terms such as “genderqueer,” “genderfluid,” “gender variant,” “androgynous,” “agender,” and “gender nonconforming” are used by individuals who do not identify within the gender binary as either a man or a woman. Instead they identify as existing somewhere along a spectrum or continuum of genders, or outside of the spectrum altogether, often in a way that is continuously evolving.

The Gender Continuum

Viewing gender as a continuum allows us to perceive the rich diversity of genders, from trans- and cisgender to gender queer and agender. Most Western societies operate on the idea that gender is a **binary**, that there are essentially only two genders (men and women) based on two sexes (male and female), and that everyone must fit one or the other. This social dichotomy enforces conformance to the ideals of masculinity and femininity in all aspects of gender and sex—gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex.

According to supporters of **queer theory**, gender identity is not a rigid or static identity but can continue to evolve and change over time. Queer theory developed in response to the perceived limitations of the way in which identities are thought to become consolidated or stabilized (for instance, gay or straight), and theorists constructed *queerness* in an attempt to resist this. In this way, the theory attempts to maintain a critique rather than define a specific identity. While “queer” defies a simple definition, the term is often used to convey an identity that is not rigidly developed but is instead fluid and changing.[1]

The Genderbread Person

In 2012, Sam Killerman created the Genderbread Person as an infographic to break down gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation.[2] In 2018, he updated it to version 2.0 to be more accurate, and inclusive.[3]

The Genderbread Person v2.0 by its pronounced METROsexual friend

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.

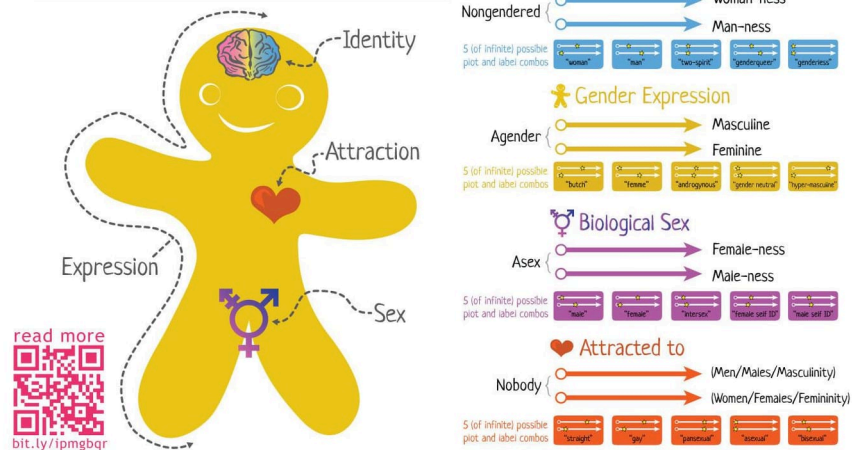


Figure 4.4.1: The Genderbread Person explains gender identity, gender expression, biological sex, and sexual orientation.[4]

Trans Parenting

There is little to no visibility or public support through pregnancy and parenting resources directed towards trans parents. In the case of trans individuals who desire to become parents and to be legally recognized as mothers or fathers of their children, courts often refuse to legally acknowledge such roles because of biological discrimination.[5]



Figure 4.4.2: Fernando Machado and Diane Rodriguez, who are both transgender, with their son Sununun.[6]

Transgender or Gender Non-Conforming Children

Children who do not feel that they are the gender they were assigned with birth, deserve a bit of special attention in this discussion about gender as. “Gender identity and expression are central to the way we see ourselves and engage in the world around us. This is certainly true of transgender and gender-expansive children and teens, for whom family support is absolutely critical” (Human Right Campaign, 2019).[7]

Transgender issues manifest at different times in life in different individuals. In most cases of gender dysphoria, the condition is often apparent in early childhood, when such a child may express behavior in-congruent with and dissatisfaction related to

their assigned gender. However, many of these children experience rejection as a result of their differences and quickly attempt to repress them. Therefore, people who see these children regularly may be unaware that they are unhappy as members of their assigned gender.

Family acceptance among transgender children predicts an increase in greater self-esteem, social support, and general health status. It also protects against depression, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation and behaviors. Parents' access to information is critical in aiding and advocating for transgender youth.

A safe school climate is essential for transgender, gender dysphoric, and gender non-conforming children, who likely experience stress and anxiety due to their desire to transition or display themselves as a different gender. While many schools have become more accepting and allow children to express their desired gender identity, current research shows that there is an increased amount of harassment, bullying, indifference by school staff, and antigay victimization towards transgender and gender non-conforming youth.[8]

[1] [Boundless Psychology - Gender and Sexuality](#) references Curation and Revision by Boundless Psychology, which is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

[2] [The Genderbread Person](#) by Sam Killermann is in the public domain

[3] [The Genderbread Person v2.0](#) by Sam Killermann is in the public domain

[4] [Image](#) by [it's pronounced METROsexual](#)

[5] [LGBT Parenting](#) by Wikipedia is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

[6] [Image](#) by [Ceoti](#) is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0

[7] The Human Rights Campaign (2019).Transgender Children & Youth: Understanding the Basics. Retrieved from <https://www.hrc.org/resources/transgender-children-and-youth-understanding-the-basics>

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4.5: Sexual Orientation

A person's sexual orientation is their emotional and sexual attraction to a particular sex or gender. A continuing pattern of romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of these) to persons of a given sex or gender. According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2016), sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors, and membership in a community of others who share those attractions. Some specific orientation is defined in many ways, including:

- Heterosexuality: attraction to the opposite sex/gender
- same-sex attraction: previously referred to as homosexuality, which is an outdated term that many people find offensive because it was previously classified as a mental illness
- bisexuality, polysexuality, or pansexuality: attraction to two, multiple, or all sexes/genders respectively
- asexuality: no sexual attraction to any sex/gender

Sexual Orientation on a Continuum

Sexuality researcher Alfred Kinsey was among the first to conceptualize sexuality as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy of gay or straight. To classify this continuum of heterosexuality and homosexuality, Kinsey et al. (1948) created a seven-point rating scale that ranged from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. Research done over several decades has supported this idea that sexual orientation ranges along a continuum, from exclusive attraction to the opposite sex/gender to exclusive attraction to the same sex/gender (Carroll, 2016).

A more contemporary look at sexual orientation as infinite variations of attraction. A closer examination of The Genderbread Person v2.0 introduced earlier in the chapter illustrates this:

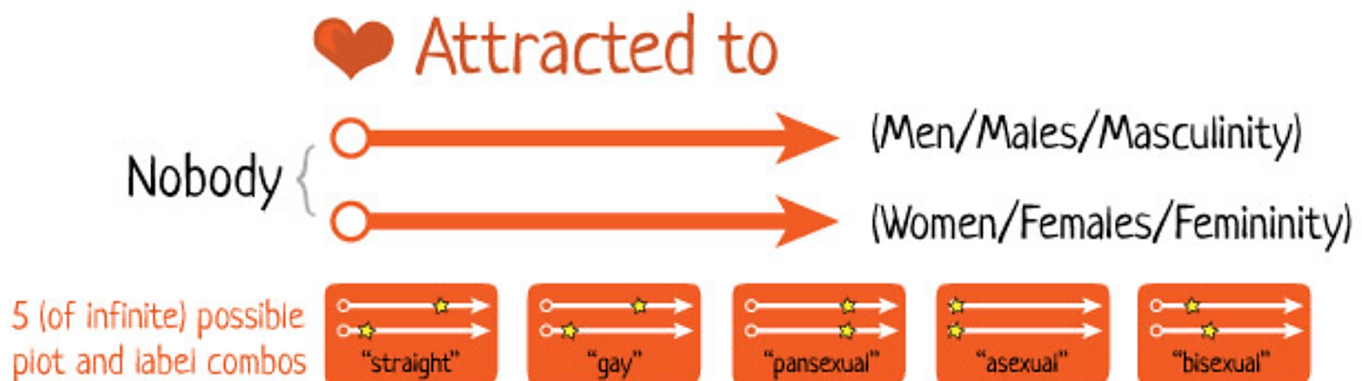


Figure 4.5.1: A spectrum of sexual orientation.[1]

Development of Sexual Orientation

According to current scientific understanding, individuals are usually aware of their sexual orientation between middle childhood and early adolescence. However, this is not always the case, and some do not become aware of their sexual orientation until much later in life. It is not necessary to participate in sexual activity to be aware of these emotional, romantic, and physical attractions; people can be celibate and still recognize their sexual orientation. Some researchers argue that sexual orientation is not static and inborn, but is instead fluid and changeable throughout the lifespan.

There is no scientific consensus regarding the exact reasons why an individual holds a particular sexual orientation. Research has examined possible biological, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, but there has been no evidence that links sexual orientation to one factor (APA, 2016). Biological explanations, that include genetics, hormones, and birth order, will be explored further. Excess or deficient exposure to hormones during prenatal development has also been theorized as an explanation for sexual orientation. One-third of females exposed to abnormal amounts of prenatal androgens, a condition called

congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), identify as bisexual or lesbian (Cohen-Bendahan, van de Beek, & Berenbaum, 2005). In contrast, too little exposure to prenatal androgens may affect male sexual orientation (Carlson, 2011).

Sexual Orientation Discrimination

The United States is heteronormative, meaning that society supports heterosexuality as the norm. Consider, for example, that homosexuals are often asked, "When did you know you were gay?" but heterosexuals are rarely asked, "When did you know you were straight?" (Ryle, 2011). Living in a culture that privileges heterosexuality has a significant impact on the ways in which non-heterosexual people are able to develop and express their sexuality.

Open identification of one's sexual orientation may be hindered by homophobia, which encompasses a range of negative attitudes and feelings toward homosexuality or people who are identified or perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). It can be expressed as antipathy, contempt, prejudice, aversion, or hatred; it may be based on irrational fear and is sometimes related to religious beliefs (Carroll, 2016). Homophobia is observable in critical and hostile behavior, such as discrimination and violence on the basis of sexual orientations that are non- heterosexual. Recognized types of homophobia include institutionalized homophobia, such as religious and state-sponsored homophobia, and internalized homophobia in which people with same-sex attractions internalize, or believe, society's negative views and/or hatred of themselves.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people regularly experience stigma, harassment, discrimination, and violence based on their sexual orientation (Carroll, 2016). Research has shown that gay, lesbian, and bisexual teenagers are at a higher risk of depression and suicide due to exclusion from social groups, rejection from peers and family, and negative media portrayals of homosexuals (Bauermeister et al., 2010). Discrimination can occur in the workplace, in housing, at schools, and in numerous public settings. Much of this discrimination is based on stereotypes and misinformation. Major policies to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation have only come into effect in the United States in the last few years.[2]

LGBT Parenting

LGBT parenting refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people raising one or more children as parents or foster care parents. This includes: children raised by same-sex couples (same-sex parenting), children raised by single LGBT parents, and children raised by an opposite-sex couple where at least one partner is LGBT. LGBT people can become parents through various means including current or former relationships, coparenting, adoption, donor insemination, reciprocal IVF, and surrogacy.

Many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are parents. In the 2000 U.S. Census, for example, 33 percent of female same-sex couple households and 22 percent of male same-sex couple households reported at least one child under the age of 18 living in the home. As of 2005, an estimated 270,313 children in the United States live in households headed by same-sex couples.



Figure 4.5.2: Here is an example of the 33% of female same-sex families that choose to become parents[3]

Scientific research consistently shows that gay and lesbian parents are as fit and capable as heterosexual parents, and their children are as psychologically healthy and well-adjusted as those reared by heterosexual parents despite the reality that considerable legal discrimination and inequity remain significant challenges for these families. Major associations of mental health professionals in the U.S., Canada, and Australia have not identified credible empirical research that suggests otherwise.

Children of LGBT parents do not have any differences in their gender role behaviors in comparison to those observed in heterosexual family structures. In fact, a study by Bos and Sandfort (2009) also revealed that children raised by same-sex couples felt less pressured to follow gender stereotypes. But children may struggle with negative attitudes about their parents from the harassment they may encounter by living in society.

Check-in Time!

What challenges might LGBT families face? What role might early childhood educators and their programs play in supporting these families?

[1] Image by [it's pronounced METROsexual](#)

[2] [Lifespan Development: A Psychological Perspective](#) by Martha Lally and Suzanne Valentine-French is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 3.0;

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5: FAMILIES AND PARENTING

5.1: Diversity of Families

5.2: Parent Development

5.3: Influences on Child Rearing Practices

5.4: Styles of Parenting

5.5: Child Abuse and Neglect

5.6: Mandated Reporting

Learning Objectives

In this chapter you will:

- Explore the complexity of families
- Explore various theories that impact the way in which we view children
- Explore different styles of parenting within a cultural context
- Investigate various ideas about child rearing
- Identify the four types of child abuse and the legal and ethical responsibilities of early childhood professionals
- Explore how trauma impacts young children (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Family Development

It is often said that humans are social creatures. We make friends, live in communities, and connect to acquaintances through shared interests. In recent times, social media has become a new way for people to connect with childhood peers, friends of friends, and even strangers. Perhaps nothing is more central to the social world than the concept of family. Our families represent our earliest relationships and—often—our most enduring ones. In this chapter, you will investigate the following topics as they inform our professional work with families and culture in early childhood settings:

- the definition of family
- the diversity of families
- how parents develop
- theories that inform influence our concepts of parenting
- the various styles of parenting
- child abuse and neglect
- trauma informed care
- our legal and ethical responsibilities to children and families

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5.1: Diversity of Families

Contemporary Families

Pause to reflect

What does family mean to you? Whom do you think of when you define family? Do you see your family represented in the "dominant culture"? Think about how that may influence your ideas and shape the ways in which you interact with families that are served in early learning environments as the role of an early learning professional is to ensure that all children and families are valued and supported in the early learning environment.

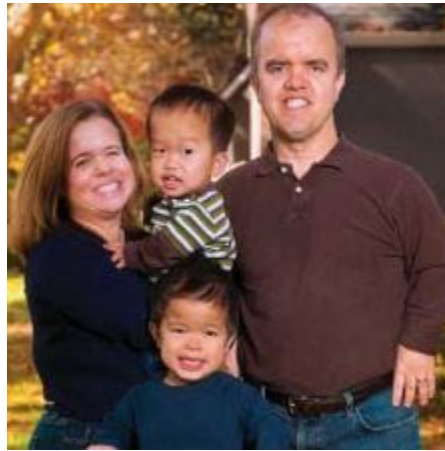


Figure 5.1.1: A "traditional family" has a somewhat narrow definition that includes only relationships of blood, marriage, and occasionally adoption. More recently, in many societies, the definition of family has expanded. The definition of family includes the vast diversity that exists to ensure better outcomes for children.[1]

To begin our study of contemporary families in the United States, we will first define a concept that is important for us to understand as it relates to the content of this textbook: social constructions. 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.

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. A current popular sitcom, *Modern Family*, which just 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. It is important to note, however, that the primacy of the upper middle-class, White family image continues to be emphasized as the "norm". As early learning professionals, our role is to look at how this social construct impacts the way in which we interact with all families to ensure that we are serving all of the children and their families in our

program with cultural responsiveness.

In more modern times, the traditional definition of family has been criticized as being too narrow. **Modern families**—especially those in industrialized societies—exist in many forms and always have, including the **single parent family**, foster 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 close emotional ties—which 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 re-marriage. 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**, or the family into which he or she is born, generally acts as the social context for young children learning about relationships.

According to Bowen (1978), each person has a role to play in his or her family, and each role comes with certain rules and expectations. This system of rules and roles is known as **family systems theory**. The goal for the family is stability: rules and expectations that work for all. When the role of one member of the family changes, so do the rules and expectations. Such changes ripple through the family and cause each member to adjust his or her own role and expectations to compensate for the change. We will discuss family systems theory later on in this chapter as it helps to inform us about the different ways in which families social-emotional life varies.



Figure 3.2 - There are many variations of modern families, including blended or step families where two families combine. In a combined family the roles of individuals may be different than in their family of origin.

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 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. Although the majority of families in the United States no longer fit the traditional model (3) social institutions perpetuate the idea of a certain family structure. 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.



Figure 3.3 This was how we tended to think of families in the past.

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. The images that we used to see of families, on television, in magazines, on billboards, and other media images portrayed the typical family as a mother, father, two children usually one male child and one female child that lived in a house with a white picket fence. Today, we elevate and value diverse families. Following are definitions of many of the family structures today that early learning professionals must embrace as our role is to serve all of the children and families that attend our early learning programs.

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 parents as they are also raising children together.

Single parent

This could be a male or female parent 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. Another aspect of single parenting is when there is the death of a spouse and the remaining spouse chooses not to remarry.

Grandparents or other relatives raising children

Children whose parents 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 (including transracial adoption)

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.

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. According to recent research into children raised by same sex parents, there is evidence to suggest that since these children are planned, they often have better outcomes than originally was believed.

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. Society is becoming more acceptable of diversity within families, which provides children with better outcomes.

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 parent 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. Each time the parent goes away and comes back it adds to this confusion. Sometimes, children whose parent(s) are incarcerated may live in foster care or a resource home while their parent is away and be returned to the parent upon their release, if it is safe for the child to do so.

Unmarried parents who are raising children

Today, many parents 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 parent or parents. 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 parents that come together each bringing their children from a previous relationship with

them. Sometimes the parents that come together with children from a previous relationship may also decide to have a child together.

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 technology that is 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 typically developing children 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.

Pause to reflect!

In reviewing all of the families above, how do you see your role as an early learning professional in supporting these families in your early learning programs? What level of comfort do you have? 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?

There is evidence that supports that children exist in many different family structures. It is our responsibility as early childhood professionals to provide supportive and inclusive interactions, relationships and environments for each and every family in our early childhood programs. This can be accomplished through our ability to be open, inviting, and to listening to what the families in our program need from us to feel a sense of belonging.

References:

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5.2: Parent Development

Our families are so familiar to us that we can sometimes take for granted the idea that families develop over time. **Nuclear families**, those core units of parents and children, do not simply pop into being. The parents meet one another, they court or date one another, and they make the decision to have children. Even then the family does not quit changing. Children grow up and leave home and the roles shift yet again.

Intimacy

In a psychological sense, families begin with intimacy. The need for intimacy, or close relationships with others, is universal. We seek out close and meaningful relationships over the course of our lives. What our adult intimate relationships look like actually stems from infancy and our relationship with our primary caregiver (historically our mother)—a process of development described by **attachment theory**. According to attachment theory, different styles of caregiving result in different relationship “attachments.” For example, responsive mothers—mothers who soothe their crying infants—produce infants who have **secure attachments** (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). (ADD LINK TO VIDEO) About 60% of all children are securely attached. As adults, secure individuals rely on their **working models**—concepts of how relationships operate—that were created in infancy, as a result of their interactions with their primary caregiver (mother), to foster happy and healthy adult intimate relationships. Securely attached adults feel comfortable being depended on and depending on others.



Figure 5.2.1: According to Attachment Theory, the type of care that we receive as infants can have a significant influence on the intimate relationships that we have as adults.[1]

As you might imagine, inconsistent or dismissive parents also impact the attachment style of their infants (Ainsworth, 1973), but in a different direction. In early studies on attachment style, infants were observed interacting with their caregivers, followed by being separated from them, then finally reunited. About 20% of the observed children were “resistant,” meaning they were anxious even before, and especially during, the separation; and 20% were “avoidant,” meaning they actively avoided their caregiver after separation (i.e., ignoring the mother when they were reunited). These early attachment patterns can affect the way people relate to one another in adulthood. **Anxious-resistant** adults worry that others don’t love them, and they often become frustrated or angry when their needs go unmet. **Anxious-avoidant** adults will appear not to care much about their intimate relationships, and are uncomfortable being depended on or depending on others themselves.

Table 5.2.1: - Early Attachment and Adult Intimacy

Attachment Style	Description
Secure	"I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them having them depend on me. I don't often worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me."
Anxious-avoidant	"I am somewhat comfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being."
Anxious-resistant	"I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to merge completely with another person, and this desire sometimes scares people away."

The good news is that our attachment can be changed. It isn't easy, but it is possible for anyone to "recover" a secure attachment. The process often requires the help of a supportive and dependable other, and for the insecure person to achieve [coherence](#)—the realization that his or her upbringing is not a permanent reflection of character or a reflection of the world at large, nor does it bar him or her from being worthy of love or others of being trustworthy ([Trebooux, Crowell, & Waters, 2004](#)).

	Check-in Time! Based off of the chart above - where do you currently fall? Have you always been at this level? What relationships in your life influenced where you are now? How does the stage you are at impact or influence others who you interact with?
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Dating, Courtship, and Cohabitation

One major difference in the way people find a partner these days is the way we use technology to both expand and restrict the [marriage market](#)—the process by which potential partners compare assets and liabilities of available prospects and choose the best option ([Benokraitis, 2015](#)). Comparing marriage to a market might sound unromantic, but think of it as a way to illustrate how people seek out attractive qualities in a mate. Modern technology has allowed us to expand our "market" by allowing us to search for potential partners all over the world—as opposed to the days when people mostly relied on local dating pools. Technology also allows us to filter out undesirable (albeit available) prospects at the outset, based on factors such as shared interests, age, and other features.

The use of filters to find the most desirable partner is a common practice, resulting in people marrying others very similar to themselves—a concept called [homogamy](#); the opposite is known as [heterogamy](#) ([Burgess & Wallin, 1943](#)). In his comparison of educational homogamy in 55 countries, Smits ([2003](#)) found strong support for higher-educated people marrying other highly educated people. As such, education appears to be a strong filter people use to help them select a mate. The most common filters we use—or, put another way, the characteristics we focus on most in potential mates—are age, race, social status, and religion ([Regan, 2008](#)). Other filters we use include compatibility, physical attractiveness (we tend to pick people who are as attractive as we are), and proximity (for practical reasons, we often pick people close to us) ([Klenke-Hamel & Janda, 1980](#)).

In many countries, technology is increasingly used to help single people find each other, and this may be especially true of older adults who are divorced or widowed, as there are few societally-structured activities for older singles. For example, younger people in school are usually surrounded with many potential dating partners of a similar age and background. As we get older, this is less true, as we focus on our careers and find ourselves surrounded by co-workers of various ages, marital statuses, and backgrounds.

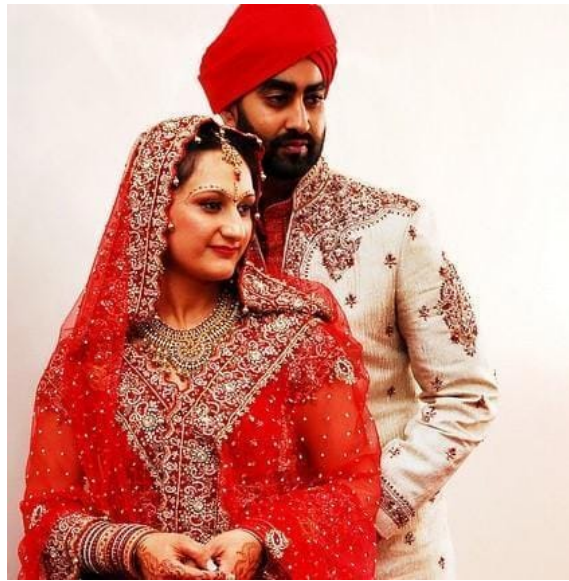


Figure 5.2.2: In some countries, many people are coupled and committed to marriage through arrangements made by parents or professional marriage brokers.[2]

In some cultures, however, it is not uncommon for the families of young people to do the work of finding a partner for them. For example, the Shanghai Marriage Market refers to the People's Park in Shanghai, China—a place where parents of unmarried adults meet on weekends to trade information about their children in attempts to find suitable spouses for them (Bolsover, 2011). In India, the marriage market refers to the use of marriage brokers or marriage bureaus to pair eligible singles together (Trivedi, 2013). To many Westerners, the idea of arranged marriage can seem puzzling. It can appear to take the romance out of the equation and violate values about personal freedom. On the other hand, some people in favor of arranged marriage argue that parents are able to make more mature decisions than young people.

While such intrusions may seem inappropriate based on your upbringing, for many people of the world such help is expected, even appreciated. In India for example, “parental arranged marriages are largely preferred to other forms of marital choices” (Ramsheena & Gundemeda, 2015, p. 138). Of course, one's religious and social caste plays a role in determining how involved family may be.

In terms of other notable shifts in attitude seen around the world, an increase in cohabitation has been documented. Cohabitation is defined as an arrangement in which two people who are romantically live together even though they are not married (Prinz, 1995). Cohabitation is common in many countries, with the Scandinavian nations of Iceland, Sweden, and Norway reporting the highest percentages, and more traditional countries like India, China, and Japan reporting low percentages (DeRose, 2011). In countries where cohabitation is increasingly common, there has been speculation as to whether or not cohabitation is now part of the natural developmental progression of romantic relationships: dating and courtship, then cohabitation, engagement, and finally marriage. Though, while many cohabitating arrangements ultimately lead to marriage, many do not.

Engagement and Marriage

Most people will marry in their lifetime. In the majority of countries, 80% of men and women have been married by the age of 49 (United Nations, 2013). Despite how common marriage remains, it has undergone some interesting shifts in recent times. Around the world, people are tending to get married later in life or, increasingly, not at all. People in more developed countries (e.g., Nordic and Western Europe), for instance, marry later in life—at an average age of 30 years. This is very different than, for example, the economically developing country of Afghanistan, which has one of the lowest average-age statistics for marriage—at 20.2 years (United Nations, 2013). Another shift seen around the world is a gender gap in terms of age when people get married. In every country, men marry later than women. Since the 1970's, the average age of marriage for women has increased from 21.8 to 24.7 years. Men have seen a similar increase in age at first marriage.



Figure 5.2.3: While marriage is common across cultures, the details such as “How” and “When” are often quite different. Now the “Who” of marriage is experiencing an important change as laws are updated in a growing number of countries and states to give same-sex couples the same rights and benefits through marriage as heterosexual couples.[3]

As illustrated, the courtship process can vary greatly around the world. So too can an [engagement](#)—a formal agreement to get married. Some of these differences are small, such as on which hand an engagement ring is worn. In many countries it is worn on the left, but in Russia, Germany, Norway, and India, women wear their ring on their right. There are also more overt differences, such as who makes the proposal. In India and Pakistan, it is not uncommon for the family of the groom to propose to the family of the bride, with little to no involvement from the bride and groom themselves. In most Western industrialized countries, it is traditional for the male to propose to the female.

Check-in Time!

What types of engagement traditions, practices, and rituals are common where you are from? How are they changing?

Matthews & Hamilton share that “Families that choose to forego having children are known as childfree families, while families that want but are unable to conceive are referred to as childless families.” - What are your thoughts on the terms “childfree” and “childless”?

Children?

Do you want children? Do you already have children? Increasingly, families are postponing or not having children. Families that choose to forego having children are known as [childfree](#) families, while families that want but are unable to conceive are referred to as [childless](#) families. As more young people pursue their education and careers, age at first marriage has increased; similarly, so has the age at which people become parents. The average age for first-time mothers is 25 in the United States (up from 21 in 1970), 29.4 in Switzerland, and 29.2 in Japan ([Matthews & Hamilton, 2014](#)).

The decision to become a parent should not be taken lightly. There are positives and negatives associated with parenting that should be considered. Many parents report that having children increases their well-being ([White & Dolan, 2009](#)). Researchers have also found that parents, compared to their non-parent peers, are more positive about their lives ([Nelson, Kushlev, English, Dunn, & Lyubomirsky, 2013](#)). On the other hand, researchers have also found that parents, compared to non-parents, are more likely to be depressed, report lower levels of marital quality, and feel like their relationship with their partner is more businesslike than intimate ([Walker, 2011](#)).

If you do become a parent, your parenting style, which is discussed in the next chapter, will impact your child’s future success in romantic and parenting relationships.

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5.3: Influences on Child Rearing Practices

Child Rearing Practices

There are many theorists/researchers who have compiled a plethora of ideas about child rearing that have influenced our thinking about children and how to raise them. While some of these theories/ideas may be a bit out of date, it is important for us to explore them to provide the context of how these ideas have infiltrated our thinking and why some of them still exist even in light of the new information that we have available. It is important in supporting all children and families, that we are aware of the multiple ways in which children are raised in their diverse households. There is not one right way to raise a child, but many different strategies that work best for the children and the families that they are being raised in. The following ideas are offered to enable you to investigate the nature by which ideas continue to permeate our social constructs. When we know where something comes from, we are better able to understand and adapt to what makes the most sense in our current society.

Autocratic Parenting and Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679, contributed to the era of autocratic parenting due to his views regarding human motivation, Psychological Egoism, and the social contract. According to Hobbes, humans are extremely self-interested and born with original sin. Hence, adults had to use control and discipline because children were born “evil” and had to be saved. Further, as a result of adults’ own self-interests, Hobbes believed that absolute authority was a necessity in politics, in dealing with others, and in the home.

During this era, many believed that children learned obedience to God via their parents’ use of harsh discipline and strict parenting. Children were typically viewed as being “willful” and were used as household servants.

Key takeaways

- Babies were born with original sin and were very egocentric.
- Parents were to direct children away from their evil tendencies.
- Similar to the current authoritarian approach.
- Recommended that rigid and strict rules be used to shape children into well-behaved, successful adults.

Jacques Rousseau and Childlike Innocence

During the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s views started to change parenting practices. Rousseau contended that children were inherently innocent (not sinful, as Hobbes believed), weak, and easily tempted. He believed that humans were born pure until one’s interactions with the environment caused negative effects on one’s development. Rousseau also believed that children needed protection from child labor and negative influences within civilization. Rousseau’s work is credited as being the first developmental account of childhood via his emphasis on maturation and stages of development:

- Childhood (0 to 12 years): children are guided by simple impulses and simply react to their surroundings.
- Pre-Adolescence (12 to 16 years): children begin to develop reason and are able to comprehend more abstract ideas.
- Puberty and Adulthood (16 years and onward): children develop into adults that can navigate society and its moral issues.

These stages elicited guidelines outlining “developmentally-appropriate” practices in parenting and education. Rousseau’s work also emphasized the importance of play and teaching within the early years of childhood education:

“When the child flies a kite he is training eye and hand to accuracy; when he whips a top, he is increasing his strength by using it, but without learning anything. I have sometimes asked why children are not given the same games of skill as men; tennis, mall, billiards, archery, football, and musical instruments. I was told that some of these are beyond their strength, that the child’s senses are not sufficiently developed for others. These do not strike me as valid reasons; a child is not as tall as a man, but he wears the same sort of coat; I do not want him to play with our cues at a billiard-table three feet high; I do not want him knocking about among our games, nor carrying one of our racquets in his little hand; but let him play in a room whose windows have been protected; at first let him only use soft balls, let his first racquets be of wood, then of parchment, and lastly of gut, according to

his progress.”

Key takeaways

- Children were born innocent and exposure to certain circumstances resulted in them acting negatively.
- Parents were to shelter children from negative circumstances and interactions.
- Children mature over time throughout three stages—childhood, pre-adolescence, puberty, and adulthood.
- Maturation and development worked alongside each other.

G. Stanley Hall and Pedagogy

Hall was one of the first scientific psychologists who gained notoriety as an educational expert; his work was often geared toward parents and educators in addition to psychologists. Hall presented public lectures to educators on the psychology underlying childhood and how to “best” teach children (otherwise known as “pedagogy”). This work made significant contributions to the study of, and improvements within, parenting and educational practices. Hall believed that a child’s nature should guide educational practices so children could become healthy, productive members of society. Overall, Hall’s in-person presentations started the movement for the U.S. to integrate psychological and scientific studies within educational endeavors.

Key takeaways

- One of the first psychologists to be known as an educational expert.
- Developed “pedagogy” (how to “best” teach for optimal learning).
- A child’s nature should guide educational practices in order to become a healthy, productive member of society.

Watson: Behaviorism

John B. Watson was an influential American psychologist whose most famous work occurred during the early 20th century at Johns Hopkins University. Watson conducted research on animal behavior, child-rearing, and advertising. Along with this research, he conducted the controversial “Little Albert” study, Watson believed that an objective analysis of the mind was impossible; therefore, he preferred to focus directly on observable behavior and attempted to modify it. Watson was a major proponent in shifting the focus of psychology from the mind to behavior, and this approach of observing and controlling behavior came to be known as behaviorism. A major object of study by behaviorists was learned behavior and its interaction with the inborn qualities of the organism.

Behaviorism commonly used animals in experiments under the assumption that what was learned using animal models could, to some degree, be applied to human behavior. This famous quote from Watson explains his contentions:

“Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I’ll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors. I am going beyond my facts and I admit it, but so have the advocates of the contrary and they have been doing it for many thousands of years.”

Watson believed that children should be treated as young adults. In his book, he warned against the inevitable dangers of a mother providing too much love and affection. Watson’s slogan was ‘not more babies but better brought up babies’. Watson argued for the nurture side of the nature-nurture debate and contended that everything is built into a child through their interactions with their environment.

Thus, according to Watson, parents and caregivers hold complete responsibility for their children’s actions since they choose the environment into which their child is reared.

Based on the results from his “Little Albert” study, Watson concluded that caregivers can shape a child’s behavior and development simply by taking control of all stimulus-response associations.

Watson’s advice to treat children with respect, but with relative emotional detachment, has been strongly criticized. However, behaviorism is still evident today and is largely responsible for establishing psychology as a scientific discipline through its

objective methods and experimentation. It is currently used in behavioral and cognitive-behavioral therapies, in classroom settings, and in child-rearing.

Key takeaways

- Objective analysis of the mind was impossible, therefore Watson coined “behaviorism” where the focus of psychology is to observe and control behavior.
- Individuals can be trained to behave in certain ways as a result of their environment and the types of stimuli applied.
- The Little Albert experiment—emotional responses can be conditioned in humans.

Vygotsky: Sociocultural Theory

Lev Vygotsky believed that a person has both a set of abilities and a set of potential abilities that can be reached if given the proper guidance from others. His Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the importance of culture and interaction in the development of cognitive abilities. Vygotsky concentrated more on children’s immediate social and cultural environment and their interactions with adults and peers. He saw a child as more of an apprentice, learning through a social environment with others who had more experience and were sensitive to the child’s needs and abilities.

Vygotsky theorized that through guided participation with a teacher or a more capable person, also known as scaffolding, a child can learn cognitive skills within a certain range known as the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, development occurs first through children’s immediate social interactions and then moves to the individual level as they began to internalize their learning.

Have you ever taught children how to perform a task? Maybe it was brushing their teeth or tying their shoestrings. Chances are you spoke to them and described what you were doing while you demonstrated the skill and let them work along with you throughout the process. You provided them assistance when they seemed to need it, but once they knew what to do, you stood back and let them perform the task alone. This is an example of scaffolding.

Examples of scaffolding, the temporary support that parents, peers or teachers give a child to perform a task, can be seen throughout the world in an unlimited number of situations. Vygotsky’s theory contends that instead of assessing what people are doing, people should be understood in terms of what they are capable of doing with the proper guidance. This approach to teaching has also been adopted by educators.

Key takeaways

- Culture and interactions are key to the development of cognitive abilities.
- Scaffolding—a process of teaching by explaining a process, demonstrating the process, and performing the process.
- Zone of proximal development—the distance between a person’s potential to learn and their actual learning.

Freud and Psychodynamic Theories of Personality: The Role of the Unconscious

One of the most important psychological approaches to understanding personality is based on the theorizing of the Austrian physician and psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who founded what is known today as the psychodynamic approach to understanding personality. Many people know about Freud because his work has had a long-standing impact on our everyday thinking about psychology and the psychodynamic approach is one of the most important approaches to psychological therapy.

Freud is probably the best known psychologist, in part because of his impressive observation and analyses of personality (there are 24 volumes of his writings). As is true of all theories, many of Freud’s ingenious ideas have turned out to be at least partially incorrect, but yet other aspects of his theories are still influencing psychology.

Freud used the observations that he and French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) made to develop his theory regarding the sources of personality and behavior, and his insights are central to the fundamental themes of psychology. In

terms of free will, Freud did not believe that we are able to control our own behaviors. Rather, he believed that all behaviors are predetermined by motivations that lie outside our awareness, in the unconscious. These forces show themselves in our dreams, in neurotic symptoms such as obsessions, while we are under hypnosis, and in Freudian “slips of the tongue” in which people reveal their unconscious desires in language. Freud argued that we rarely understand why we do what we do, although we can make up explanations for our behaviors after the fact. For Freud the mind was like an iceberg – many motivations of the unconscious being much larger, but out of sight, in comparison to the consciousness of which we are aware.

Freud proposed that the mind is divided into three components: the id, ego, and superego, and that the interactions and conflicts among the components create a personality.

According to Freudian theory, the id is the component of personality that forms the basis of our most primitive impulses. The id is entirely unconscious, and it drives our most important motivations, including the sexual drive (libido) and the aggressive or destructive drive (Thanatos).

According to Freud, the id is driven by the pleasure principle—the desire for immediate gratification of our sexual and aggressive urges. The id is why we smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, view pornography, tell mean jokes about people, and engage in other fun or harmful behaviors, often at the cost of doing more productive activities. The function of the ego is based on the reality principle—the idea that we must delay gratification of our basic motivations until the appropriate time with the appropriate outlet. The ego is the largely conscious controller or decision-maker of personality. The ego serves as the intermediary between the desires of the id and the constraints of society contained in the superego. We may wish to scream, yell, or hit, and yet our ego normally tells us to wait, reflect, and choose a more appropriate response. In stark contrast to the id, the superego represents our sense of morality and doing what is “right”. The superego tells us all the things that we shouldn’t do, or the duties and obligations of society. The superego strives for perfection, and when we fail to live up to its demands we feel guilty.

Freud's Stages of Development

Stage of Development	Age	Brief description	Current implications for caregivers
Oral	birth to 18 months	The infant uses their mouths to explore their environment as this is where their initial pleasure lies. Sucking/drinking	Make sure that the learning environment is safe for this type of exploration
Anal	18 months to 3 years	Children are focused on toileting and controlling their bladder and bowels. Toilet training too lenient or too harsh	Make sure that the environment is supportive to encourage children to feel safety in learning how to use the toilet as they gain more control of their bladders and bowels.
Phallic	3 to 6 years	Children are interested in their body parts, the genitals are a part of the body in which they feel a pleasurable sensation.	Make sure that children are not shamed when they touch the various parts of their bodies, that they are given loving supportive guidance.
Latency	6 to 12 years	Children are interested in developing friendships with their peers.	Make sure that children are supported in developing healthy relationships supported by loving, guiding adults.
Genital	Puberty and older	The bodies physical changes occur during this time which influences their social and emotional development. They begin to develop interests beyond friendships with other they may be physically attracted to. This used to be referred to as opposite sex attraction, but this development is the same for humans that have same sex attraction. Mature romantic relationships	Make sure that the adults in a child's environment have a deep understanding and knowledge base in regards to sexual development and sexual orientation, so the child make positive connections during this period of development.

Key takeaways

- Stages of sexual and emotional development: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital.
- Human personality contains the id, ego, and superego.

- Individuals have unconscious drives and should be allowed to follow their own instincts.

Benjamin Spock: A Child-Centered Approach

Benjamin Spock was the first American pediatrician to study psychoanalysis in an attempt to understand children's needs and family dynamics. His ideas about childcare significantly changed overall attitudes toward the rearing of infants and children via his book, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946), one of the best selling volumes in history. The book's premises to parents are that "you know more than you think you do," and if you "feel like comforting the child, do it."

He encouraged parents to be more flexible and affectionate with their children and to treat them as individuals. Spock's first edition advised mothers to indulge their own impulses and as well as their children's, assuring them on the basis of the latest scientific studies that it was safe to do so. In the process, the book changed child-rearing advice from the previous generation and authorized mothers to express their "natural" feelings toward their children. However, his theories were criticized by colleagues for relying too heavily on anecdotal evidence rather than academic research.

Spock recommended spontaneity, warmth, and a fair amount of fun for parents and children. In subsequent editions of his book, Spock also included fathers in the contexts of childcare and child-rearing, acknowledged gender roles, and addressed divorce and single parenting.

Overall, Spock's advice encouraged caregivers to help children fit into the current needs of society and become contributing members of that society. He highly advocated for caregivers to instill values of cooperativeness and congeniality and help their child be likable. Spock was one of the most notable American authors of child-rearing advice during the twentieth century due to publications. In subsequent editions of his book, Spock also included fathers in the contexts of childcare and child-rearing, acknowledged gender roles, and addressed divorce and single parenting.

Overall, Spock's advice encouraged caregivers to help children fit into the current needs of society and become contributing members of that society. He highly advocated for caregivers to instill values of cooperativeness and congeniality and help their child be likable. Spock was one of the most notable American authors of child-rearing advice during the twentieth century due to publications in contemporary, mainstream magazines.

Key takeaways

- Parents should be adaptable, loving and encourage individuality within each child.
- Parents should have balanced relationships with their children composed of spontaneity, warmth, and fun.
- Parents should help children become contributing members of society by teaching cooperativeness and congeniality.
- The first American pediatrician to study psychoanalysis to understand children's needs and family dynamics.

B.F. Skinner: Operant Conditioning

Psychologist B.F. Skinner saw that classical conditioning is limited to existing behaviors that are reflexively elicited, and doesn't account for new behaviors such as riding a bike.

He proposed a theory about how such behaviors come about. Skinner believed that behavior is motivated by the consequences we receive for the behavior: reinforcements and punishments. His idea that learning is the result of consequences is based on the law of effect, which was first proposed by psychologist Edward Thorndike. According to the law of effect, behaviors that are followed by consequences that are satisfying to the organism are more likely to be repeated, and behaviors that are followed by unpleasant consequences are less likely to be repeated.

Essentially, if an organism does something that brings about a desired result, the organism is more likely to do it again. If an organism does something that does not bring about the desired result, the organism is less likely to do it again. An example of the law of effect is employment. One of the reasons (and often the main reason) we show up for work is because we get paid to do so. If we stop getting paid, we will likely stop showing up—even if we love our job.

In discussing operant conditioning, we use several everyday words—positive, negative, reinforcement, and punishment—in a

specialized manner. In operant conditioning, positive and negative do not mean good and bad. Instead, positive means you are adding something, and negative means you are taking something away. Reinforcement means you are increasing a behavior, and punishment means you are decreasing a behavior. Reinforcement can be positive or negative, and punishment can also be positive or negative. All reinforcers (positive or negative) increase the likelihood of a behavioral response. All punishers (positive or negative) decrease the likelihood of a behavioral response.

The most effective way to teach a person or animal a new behavior is with positive reinforcement. In positive reinforcement, a desirable stimulus is added to increase a behavior. For example, let's say you tell your five-year-old son, Jerome, that if he cleans his room, he will get a toy. Jerome quickly cleans his room because he wants a new art set. Some people might say, "Why should I reward my child for doing what is expected?" However, we are constantly and consistently rewarded in our lives. Our paychecks are rewards, as are high grades or acceptance into our preferred schools. Being praised for doing a good job or for passing a driver's test are also rewards. Positive reinforcement as a learning tool is extremely effective.

In negative reinforcement, an undesirable stimulus is removed to increase a behavior. For example, car manufacturers use the principles of negative reinforcement in their seatbelt systems, which go "beep, beep, beep" until you fasten your seatbelt. The annoying sound stops when you exhibit the desired behavior, increasing the likelihood that you will buckle up in the future. Negative reinforcement is also used frequently in horse training. Riders apply pressure—by pulling the reins or squeezing their legs—and then remove the pressure when the horse performs the desired behavior, such as turning or speeding up. The pressure is the negative stimulus that the horse wants to remove.

Many people confuse negative reinforcement with punishment in operant conditioning, but they are two very different concepts. Remember that reinforcement, even when it is negative, always increases a behavior. In contrast, punishment always decreases a behavior. In positive punishment, you add an undesirable stimulus to decrease a behavior. An example of positive punishment is reprimanding a student to get the student to stop texting in class. In this case, a stimulus (the reprimand) is added in order to decrease the behavior (texting in class). In negative punishment, you remove a pleasant stimulus to decrease a behavior, such as something the child enjoys (e.g., a toy or a scheduled outing). Time-outs are a very common form of negative punishment — they momentarily take away children's access to something they enjoy.

Punishment, especially when it is immediate, is one way to decrease undesirable behavior. For example, imagine your four-year-old son, Brandon, runs into a busy street to get his ball. You give him a time-out (positive punishment) and tell him never to go into the street again. Chances are he will not repeat this behavior. While strategies like time-outs are common today, in the past children were often subject to physical punishment, such as spanking. It's important to be aware of some of the drawbacks of using physical punishment on children. Within the context of parenting, it is important to note that the term "punishment" doesn't mean that the consequence should be harmful.

In fact, experts caution that punishments like spanking can cause more harm than good.

First, punishment may teach fear. Brandon may become fearful of the street, but he also may become fearful of the person who delivered the punishment—you, his parent. Similarly, children who are punished by teachers may start to fear the teacher and try to avoid school. Consequently, most schools in the United States have banned corporal punishment.

Second, punishment may cause children to become more aggressive and prone to antisocial behavior and delinquency. They see their parents resort to spanking when they become angry and frustrated, so, in turn, they may act out this same behavior when they become angry and frustrated. For example, because you spank Brenda when you are angry with her for her misbehavior, she might start hitting her friends when they will not share their toys.

While positive punishment can be effective in some cases, Skinner suggested that the use of punishment should be weighed against the possible negative effects. Today's psychologists and parenting experts favor reinforcement over punishment—they recommend that you catch your child doing something good and reward her for it.

In his operant conditioning experiments, Skinner often used an approach called shaping. Instead of rewarding only the target behavior, in shaping, we reward successive approximations of a target behavior. For instance, parents can break a task into smaller more "attainable" steps. These smaller steps should be in sequence of completing the entire desired task. As children start a step, or show improvements on a step, they should be praised and rewarded. As children master each step, they should again be praised and rewarded and then encouraged to the next step. This process of successive approximations is followed until a child masters the entire task. This takes time, but it is a proven method of shaping a child's behavior via rewarding and praising ongoing improvements.

Why is shaping needed? Remember that in order for reinforcement to work, the organism must first display the behavior. Shaping is needed because it is extremely unlikely that an organism will display anything but the simplest of behaviors spontaneously. In

shaping, behaviors are broken down into many small, achievable steps. The specific steps used in the process are the following:

- 1.Reinforce any response that resembles the desired behavior.
- 2.Then reinforce the response that more closely resembles the desired behavior. You will no longer reinforce the previously reinforced response.
- 3.Next, begin to reinforce the response that even more closely resembles the desired behavior.
- 4.Continue to reinforce closer and closer approximations of the desired behavior.
- 5.Finally, only reinforce the desired behavior.

Shaping is often used to teach a complex behavior or chain of behaviors. Skinner used shaping to teach pigeons not only relatively simple behaviors such as pecking a disk in a Skinner box, but also many unusual and entertaining behaviors, such as turning in circles, walking in figure eights, and even playing ping pong; this technique is commonly used by animal trainers today. An important part of shaping is stimulus discrimination. Recall Pavlov's dogs—he trained them to respond to the tone of a bell, and not to similar tones or sounds. This discrimination is also important in operant conditioning and in shaping behavior.

It is easy to see how shaping is effective in teaching behaviors to animals, but how does shaping work with humans? Let us consider parents whose goal is to have their child learn to clean his room. They use shaping to help him master steps toward the goal. Instead of performing the entire task, they set up these steps and reinforce each one. First, he cleans up one toy. Second, he cleans up five toys. Third, he chooses whether to pick up ten toys or put his books and clothes away. Fourth, he cleans up everything except two toys. Finally, he cleans his entire room.

Rewards such as stickers, praise, money, toys, and more can be used to reinforce learning. Let us go back to Skinner's rats again. How did the rats learn to press the lever in the Skinner box? They were rewarded with food each time they pressed the lever. For animals, food would be an obvious reinforcer.

What would be a good reinforcer for humans? For your daughter Sydney, it was the promise of a toy if she cleaned her room. How about Joaquin, the soccer player? If you gave Joaquin a piece of candy every time he made a goal, you would be using a primary reinforcer. Primary reinforcers are reinforcers that have innate reinforcing qualities. These kinds of reinforcers are not learned. Water, food, sleep, shelter, sex, and touch, among others, are primary reinforcers. Pleasure is also a primary reinforcer. Organisms do not lose their drive for these things. For most people, jumping in a cool lake on a very hot day would be reinforcing and the cool lake would be innately reinforcing—the water would cool the person off (a physical need), as well as provide pleasure.

A secondary reinforcer has no inherent value and only has reinforcing qualities when linked with a primary reinforcer. Praise, linked to affection, is one example of a secondary reinforcer, such as when you called out "Great shot!" every time Joaquin made a goal. Another example, money, is only worth something when you can use it to buy other things—either things that satisfy basic needs (food, water, shelter—all primary reinforcers) or other secondary reinforcers. If you were on a remote island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and you had stacks of money, the money would not be useful if you could not spend it. What about the stickers on the behavior chart? They also are secondary reinforcers.

Sometimes, instead of stickers on a sticker chart, a token is used. Tokens, which are also secondary reinforcers, can then be traded in for rewards and prizes. Entire behavior management systems, known as token economies, are built around the use of these kinds of token reinforcers. Token economies have been found to be very effective at modifying behavior in a variety of settings such as schools, prisons, and mental hospitals.

Key takeaways

- Behavior is motivated by the consequences of that behavior.
- Behaviors with satisfying consequences are often repeated, while behaviors with unpleasant consequences are often avoided.
- Conditioning can be done through positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, positive punishment, and negative punishment.
- Reinforcement increases a behavior; punishment decreases a behavior.
- Shaping is slowly reinforcing behaviors that are more and more similar to the ideal goal behavior.

Attachment Theory (Harlow, Bowlby and Ainsworth)

Psychosocial development occurs as children form relationships, interact with others, and understand and manage their feelings. In social and emotional development, forming healthy attachments is very important and is the major social milestone of infancy.

Attachment is a long-standing connection or bond with others. Developmental psychologists are interested in how infants reach this milestone. They ask questions such as: How do parent and infant attachment bonds form? How does neglect affect these bonds? What accounts for children's attachment differences?

Researchers Harry Harlow, John Bowlby, and Mary Ainsworth conducted studies designed to answer these questions. In the 1950s, Harlow conducted a series of experiments on monkeys. He separated newborn monkeys from their mothers. Each monkey was presented with two surrogate mothers. One surrogate monkey was made out of wire mesh, and she could dispense milk. The other monkey was softer and made from cloth, but did not dispense milk. The findings showed that the monkeys preferred the soft, cuddly cloth monkey, even though she did not provide any nourishment. The baby monkeys spent their time clinging to the cloth monkey and only went to the wire monkey when they needed to be fed. Prior to this study, the medical and scientific communities generally thought that babies become attached to the people who provide their nourishment. However, Harlow concluded that there was more to the mother-child bond than nourishment.

Feelings of comfort and security are the critical components of maternal-infant bonding, which leads to healthy psychosocial development. Building on the work of Harlow and others, John Bowlby developed the concept of attachment theory. He defined attachment as the affectional bond or tie that infants form with their mother. An infant must form this bond with a primary caregiver in order to have normal social and emotional development. In addition, Bowlby proposed that this attachment bond is very powerful and continues throughout life. He used the concept of a secure base to define a healthy attachment between parent and child.

A secure base is a parental presence that gives the child a sense of safety as he explores his surroundings. Bowlby said that two things are needed for a healthy attachment: the caregiver must be responsive to the child's physical, social, and emotional needs, and the caregiver and child must engage in mutually enjoyable interactions.

While Bowlby believed that attachment was an all-or-nothing process, Mary Ainsworth's research showed otherwise. Mary identified the existence of what she calls "attachment behaviors," which are examples of behaviors demonstrated by insecure children in hopes of establishing or re-establishing an attachment to a presently absent caregiver. 'Since this behavior occurs uniformly in children, it is a compelling argument for the existence of "innate" or instinctual behaviors in human beings'.

Ainsworth wanted to know if children differ in the ways they bond, and if so, why. To find the answers to these questions, she used the Strange Situation procedure to study attachment between mothers and their infants in 1970. In the Strange Situation, the mother (or primary caregiver) and the infant (age 12-18 months) are placed in a room together. There are toys in the room, and the caregiver and child spend some time alone in the room. After the child has had time to explore one's surroundings, a stranger enters the room. The primary caregiver then leaves the baby with the stranger. After a few minutes, the caregiver returns to comfort the child. Based on how the infants/toddlers responded to the separation and reunion, Ainsworth identified three types of parent-child attachments: secure, avoidant, and resistant. A fourth style, known as disorganized attachment, was later described.

The most common type of attachment—also considered the healthiest—is called secure attachment. In this type of attachment, the toddler prefers their parent over a stranger. The attachment figure is used by the child as a secure base to explore their environment and is sought out in times of stress. Securely attached children were distressed when their caregivers left the room in the Strange Situation experiment, but when their caregivers returned, the securely attached children were happy to see them. Securely attached children have caregivers who are sensitive and responsive to their needs.

With avoidant attachment (sometimes called insecure or anxious-avoidant), the child is unresponsive to the parent, does not use the parent as a secure base, and does not care if the parent leaves. The toddler reacts to the parent the same way she reacts to a stranger. When the parent does return, the child is slow to show a positive reaction. Ainsworth theorized that these children were most likely to have a caregiver who was insensitive and inattentive to their needs.

In cases of resistant attachment (also called ambivalent or anxious-ambivalent/resistant), children tend to show clingy behavior, but then reject the attachment figure's attempts to interact with them. These children do not explore the toys in the room, as they are too fearful. During separation in the Strange Situation, they became extremely disturbed and angry with the parent. When the parent returns, the children are upset and difficult to comfort. Resistant attachment is the result of the caregivers' inconsistent level of response to their child.

Finally, children with disorganized attachment behave oddly in the Strange Situation. They freeze, run around the room in an erratic manner, or try to run away when the caregiver returns. This type of attachment is seen most often in children who have been abused. Research has shown that abuse disrupts a child's ability to regulate their emotions.

While Ainsworth's research has found support in subsequent studies, it has also met criticism. Some researchers have pointed

out that a child's temperament may have a strong influence on attachment, and others have noted that attachment varies from culture to culture, a factor not accounted for in Ainsworth's research.

Key takeaways

- Harlow: Contact comfort research concerning wire and cloth monkeys.
- Bowlby: Human attachment theory derived from Harlow's research.
- Attachment: The connection formed between two individuals over time.
- Secure base: A primary caregiver a child views as "home base" who provides the child with security to actively explore one's environment.
- Ainsworth: Strange Situation research which led to identifying types of attachment: secure, avoidant, disorganized, and resistant attachment.

Jean Piaget - Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget studied how children and youth gradually become able to think logically and scientifically, resulting in his Cognitive Development Theory. Cognition refers to thinking and memory processes, and cognitive development refers to long-term changes in these processes. He was one of the first to recognize and map out the ways in which children's thought differs from that of adults. His interest in this area began when he was asked to test the IQ of children and began to notice that there was a pattern in their wrong answers.

Piaget believed that children's intellectual skills change over time based on biological predispositions and their own individual interactions with the world. He was very critical of teacher-directed instruction, believing that teachers or caregivers who take control of the child's learning place the child into a passive role. According to Piaget, children of differing ages interpret the world differently; therefore, he divided this learning into four stages. His stages assumed a sequence of thinking patterns with these key features:

- 1.They always happen in the same order.
- 2.No stage is ever skipped.
- 3.Each stage is a significant transformation from the stage before it.
- 4.Each later stage builds upon and incorporates the earlier stages.

Piaget's Developmental Stages

Piaget's Stages of Development

Stages	Age	Brief description	Current implications for caregivers
Sensorimotor	Infancy	The infants intelligence is based on direct, physical contact via the use of their senses, infants taste, feel, pound, push, hear, and move in order to experience the world	Making sure to have lots of sensory materials available for infants to explore

Stages	Age	Brief description	Current implications for caregivers
Preoperational	Early Childhood	children learn to use language and to think of the world symbolically, they are egocentric in how they think that everyone sees things in the same way as them	Understanding that children see things from their perspective and gently helping them to develop perspective taking with patience.
Concrete Operational	Middle Childhood	characterized by the development of organized and rational thinking, can apply logic to physical and "concrete" objects; they gain the ability to understand conservation (number, area, volume, orientation) and understand that when concrete objects change in appearance, they still contain the same volume, are, number, and orientation and can return to their original state (reversibility); affords children with the ability to solve problems more systematically	Introducing more opportunities for learning experiences that are exploratory. Allowing for children to make inferences and to encourage deductive reasoning.
Formal Operational	Adolescence	are able to understand abstract principles, no longer limited by what can be directly seen or heard; contemplate constructs such as beauty, love, freedom, and morality, they demonstrate hypothetical-deductive reasoning which is developing hypotheses based on what might logically occur, able to think about all the possibilities	Allowing for children of this age to grapple with concepts and ideas; providing opportunities for them to have agency.

Criticisms of Piaget's Theory

Critics have discovered a considerable variation in what children are able to do at various ages in different parts of the world and in different cultures. Further, many contend that Piaget may have underestimated what children are capable of given the right circumstances. For instance, he believed that learning peaked around the age of 12 years, designated by his last stage—formal operational stage.

Key takeaways

- Children develop cognitively through stages—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational.
- Each stage must be mastered before moving on to the next stage.
- Children's intellectual skills change based on their direct experiences with the environment.

Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erik Erikson suggested that our relationships and society's expectations motivate much of our behavior in his theory of psychosocial development. Unlike Freud, Erikson believed that we are not driven by unconscious urges. He is considered the father of developmental psychology because his model gives us a guideline for the entire life span and suggests certain primary psychological and social concerns throughout life. Erikson expanded on Freud's theory by emphasizing the importance of culture in parenting practices and motivations. He also added three stages of social and emotional domains regarding adult development. He believed that we are aware of what motivates us throughout life and that the ego has greater importance in guiding our actions than the id does. We make conscious choices in life and these choices focus on meeting certain social and cultural needs rather than purely biological ones. Humans are motivated, for instance, by the need to feel that the world is a trustworthy place, that we are capable individuals, that we can make a contribution to society, and that we have lived a meaningful life. These are all psychosocial issues.

Erikson divided the lifespan into eight stages. In each stage, we have a major psychosocial task to accomplish or crisis to overcome. Successful completion of each developmental task results in a sense of competence and a healthy personality. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy. Erikson believed that our personality continues to take shape throughout our lifespan as we face these challenges in living. These eight stages form a foundation for discussions on emotional and social development during the life span. However, these stages or crises can occur more than once and can occur at different ages. For instance, a person may struggle with a lack of trust beyond infancy under certain circumstances. Erikson's theory has been criticized for focusing so heavily on stages and assuming that the completion of one stage is a prerequisite for the next development crisis. His theory also focuses on the social expectations that are found in some cultures, but not in others. For instance, the idea that adolescence is a time of searching for identity might translate well in the middle-class culture of the United States, but not as well in cultures where the transition into adulthood coincides with puberty through rites of passage and where adult roles offer fewer choices.

Erikson's Stages of Development

Stage	Age	Brief Description	Current implications for caregivers
Trust vs. Mistrust	0 - 1 year	Infant must have basic needs met in a consistent way in order to feel that the world is a trustworthy place From birth to 12 months of age, infants must learn that adults can be trusted. This occurs when adults meet a child's basic needs for survival. Infants are dependent upon their caregivers, so caregivers who are consistently and appropriately responsive and sensitive to their infant's needs help their baby to develop a sense of trust; their baby will see the world as a safe, predictable place. Unresponsive or inconsistent caregivers who do not meet their baby's needs can elicit feelings of anxiety, fear, and mistrust; their baby may see the world as unpredictable and unsafe. If infants are treated cruelly or their needs are not met appropriately, they will likely grow up with a sense of mistrust for people in the world.	Ensuring that children's needs are met in primary caregiving experiences.

Stage	Age	Brief Description	Current implications for caregivers
Autonomy vs. shame and doubt	1 - 3 years	mobile toddlers have newfound freedom that they like to exercise and by being allowed to do so, they learn some basic independence	Providing opportunities for children to explore and to do things in their way and time.
Initiative vs. guilt	3 - 5 years	preschoolers like to initiate activities and emphasize doing things "all by myself"	Listening to and scaffolding what children are capable of doing.
Industry vs. inferiority	5 - 11 years	focus on accomplishments and making comparisons between themselves and their classmates (social media plays a big part in this today)	Help them to see that each person is an individual with differing skills and talents.
Identity vs. role confusion	Adolescence	trying to gain a sense of identity as they experiment with various roles, beliefs, and ideas	Providing opportunities for them to think about the possibilities that exist.
Intimacy vs. Isolation	Young adulthood	make some of our first long-term commitments in intimate relationships	
Generativity vs. stagnation	Middle adulthood	focus is on being productive at work and home and are motivated by wanting to feel that they've made a contribution to society	
Integrity vs. despair	Late adulthood	become reflective, look back and take stock and hope that we have lived well and have a sense of integrity because we lived according to our beliefs	

Key takeaways

- Erikson was a student of Freud but focused on conscious thought.
- His stages of psychosocial development address the entire lifespan and suggest a primary psychosocial crisis in some cultures that adults can use to understand how to support children's social and emotional development.
- Certain cultures may need to resolve the stages in different ways based upon their cultural and survival needs.
- During each of Erikson's eight development stages, two conflicting ideas must be resolved successfully in order for a person to become a confident, contributing member of society. Failure to master these tasks leads to feelings of inadequacy.
- The stages include: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Observational Learning

Observational learning is a component of Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which asserts that individuals can learn new responses via observation of key others' behaviors. Observational learning does not necessarily require reinforcement, but instead hinges on the presence of others, referred to as social models. Social models typically possess a higher status or authority compared to the observer, examples of which include parents, teachers, or police officers. Bandura theorized that the observational learning process consists of four parts. The first is attention—one must pay attention to what one is observing in order to learn. The second part is retention. To learn, one must be able to retain the observed behavior into one's memory. The third part of observational learning, initiation, acknowledges that the learner must be able to execute, or initiate the learned behavior. Lastly, the observer must possess the motivation to engage in observational learning.

Imagine a child walking up to a group of children playing a game on the playground. The game looks fun, but it is new and unfamiliar. Rather than joining the game immediately, the child opts to sit back and watch the other children play a round or two. While observing the others, the child takes note of the ways in which they behave while playing the game. By watching the behavior of the other kids, the child can figure out the rules of the game and even some strategies for performing well at the game. This is called observational learning.

In the example here, the child must want to learn how to play the game in order to properly engage in observational learning. The

children who already know how to play the game could be thought of as being authorities—and are therefore social models—even though they are the same age as the observer. By observing how the social models behave, an individual is able to learn how to act in a certain situation. Other examples of observational learning might include a child learning to place her napkin in her lap by watching her parents at the dinner table, or a child learning how to use a pair of scissors after watching another child successfully use a pair of scissors.

Bandura developed his theory by conducting research using a Bobo Doll. There were several groups of children who were exposed to different experiences with the Bobo Doll. One group of children watched while the adult interacted aggressively with Bobo; punching it, kicking it, throwing it, and even hitting it in the face with a toy mallet. Another group of children watched the adult interact with other toys, displaying no aggression toward Bobo. In both instances, the adult left and the children were allowed to interact with Bobo on their own.

Bandura found that children exposed to the aggressive social model were significantly more likely to behave aggressively toward Bobo, hitting and kicking him, compared to those exposed to the non-aggressive model. The researchers concluded that the children in the aggressive group used their observations of the adult social model's behavior to determine that aggressive behavior toward Bobo was acceptable. One word of caution, the children were randomly assigned to these groups. There wasn't a pre-questionnaire determining if the child was exposed to violence beyond this experiment. It is important to understand the context of research in order to make sense of what it is saying and not saying.

While reinforcement was not required to elicit the children's behavior in Bandura's first experiment, it is important to acknowledge that consequences do play a role within observational learning. A future adaptation of this study demonstrated that children in the aggression group showed less aggressive behavior if they witnessed the adult model receive punishment for aggressing against Bobo. Bandura referred to this process as vicarious reinforcement, as the children did not experience the reinforcement or punishment directly, yet were still influenced by observing it.

Key takeaways

- Individuals learn through observing others.
- Bobo doll experiment—children were more aggressive toward the Bobo doll if they witnessed models being aggressive.

Rudolf Dreikurs

Rudolf Dreikurs was an American psychiatrist and educator who developed Alfred Adler's system of individual psychology into a pragmatic method for understanding the purposes of misbehavior in children and stimulating cooperative behavior without punishment or reward. His primary focus was on pre-adolescents, and he reasoned that their problematic behavior resulted from feelings of lack of significance in their social group. He described four "mistaken goals" that such children would resort to, and outlined the most effective ways that teachers and parents could respond.

He saw the family as the first social setting in which education takes place, with the school environment as an extension of the family. Thus, his techniques for preventing misbehavior and encouraging appropriate behavior could be applied equally in both settings. Dreikurs' work continues through the training centers he and his colleagues established to train counselors in addressing the social problems of youth.

Adler and Dreikurs firmly believed that encouragement was essential to the improvement of behavior and human relationships. Their basic assumption was that human behavior is not predetermined by genetics, or merely the result of outside forces beyond one's control. They argued that behavior is a result of a search for significance within a social setting. Dreikurs said "anticipation influences outcome—the fear of making a mistake leads to mistakes. Anyone who can alter the expectations of people can change their behavior."

Accordingly, encouragement and positive support have a direct correlation with improved behavior in others. Adlerian Parent Education aims to give children the skills to meet life challenges in a constructive, positive way and the courage to circumvent the many pitfalls and dangers that confront children in society. It supports parents by providing them with tools to ease and handle the stress of being a parent and to raise children with courage and compassion.

Dreikurs believed that all behavior has a purpose. He constructed what is often considered the most effective tool in helping to understand children's behavior: The Four Goals of Misbehavior and the techniques of effectively revealing these to a misbehaving

child. The development of the system of natural and logical consequences and the application of these techniques may well be Dreikurs' finest contribution to the betterment of human society.

Dreikurs suggested that human misbehavior is the result of not having one's basic needs of belonging to, and contributing to, a social group met. The child then resorts to one of four mistaken goals: attention, power, revenge, or avoidance of failure. Dreikurs' main theory dealt with the misbehavior of pre-adolescents. He reasoned that these students will "act out" based on these four, principled "mistaken goals."

The first reason for their misbehavior is that they desire attention. If they do not receive the attention they crave through their actions (good or bad, e.g., doing well on a paper or throwing a tantrum), they move onto seeking power (e.g., they may refuse to complete a paper). If their power struggle is thwarted, they seek revenge. If even revenge does not achieve the desired response, they begin to feel inadequate.

His books list many ways to combat these behaviors. The first step is for teachers to identify the mistaken goal while also noting their own response to the misbehavior, and observe the students' reactions. Second, a teacher should confront the mistaken goal by providing an explanation of it along with a discussion of the faulty logic involved. By doing so, students are given an opportunity to examine and change their behavior. Third, Dreikurs emphasized the importance of avoiding power struggles with students. One way is simply by withdrawing as an authority figure; teachers can also redirect students' ambitions for power by having them participate in making decisions or giving directions. This is called "democratic teaching."

Dreikurs also recommended taking positive steps against revenge-seeking behavior. The teacher is instructed to set up situations where the students can exhibit talents and strengths and ultimately experience acceptance. Lastly, teachers should encourage students who display inadequacy by offering these students encouragement and support for even minimal efforts. His overall goal was that students would learn to cooperate reasonably, without being penalized or rewarded, because they would feel that they are valuable contributors to the classroom.

Dreikurs described two types of consequences: logical and natural. Logical consequences refer to "reasonable results that follow behavior either desirable or non-desirable." They typically require students to make right of what they have done wrong. For example, if students do not complete their work during class, they are required to do it for homework. In a democratic classroom, the students would know in advance the consequences of their misbehavior because as part of the classroom they helped formulate the consequences.

Natural consequences differ from logical consequences in that the results following the behavior occur naturally. For example, if a student tips his chair backward and falls, leaving him hurt or embarrassed, this would be a natural consequence, because the hurt and embarrassment alone is a sufficient consequence for his misbehavior.

Dreikurs did not consider punishment an effective method of discipline. He viewed punishment as an action taken by the teacher as an act of revenge to show the students who is in charge. He believed that punishment was humiliating and offensive to students.

Dreikurs believed in prevention, and his main focus was on constructive behavior rather than coercive discipline. He recommended that teachers have a democratic classroom and teaching style to help students gain a sense of belonging which is the genuine goal. In this manner, students would have a social interest: a condition in which students would realize themselves that it is to their advantage to contribute to the welfare of a group. Therefore, to understand children, they must be observed in a social setting and in relationship to others, to discover the reasons for their behavior.

Key takeaways

- Children who do not feel the basic need of belonging to a social group turn to attention, power, revenge, and avoidance of failure.
- Misbehavior can be modified without punishment through implementing natural and logical consequences.
- Dreikurs focused on pre-adolescents' reasons for their problematic behaviors and how teachers and parents can respond to it.
- Humans have a basic need for unconditional positive regard and acceptance.

Bioecological Systems Theory - Urie Bronfenbrenner

Urie Bronfenbrenner was one of the first psychologists to adopt a holistic perspective on human development via his Bioecological Systems Theory, which had a widespread influence on the way psychologists and other social scientists approach the study of human beings and their environments. Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of the social environments in which children are raised, and saw the breakdown of the family as the leading cause of the ever-growing rates of alienation, apathy, rebellion, delinquency, and violence among American youth. His work led to new directions in research and the design of programs and policies affecting the well-being of children and families. Bronfenbrenner's primary theoretical contribution was his Bioecological Systems Theory, in which he identified four types of nested systems.

Bronfenbrenner recognized that it is necessary to understand how not only the family or school influences human development, but how broader influences do as well.

The four systems are (with a fifth system being added later)

- **Microsystem:** Immediate environments such as family, school, peer group, neighborhood, and childcare environments.
- **Mesosystem:** A system comprised of connections between immediate environments (i.e., a child's home and school).
- **Exosystem:** External environmental settings which only indirectly affect development, such as parent's workplace.
- **Macrosystem:** The larger cultural context (Eastern vs. Western culture, national economy, political culture, subculture).
- **Chronosystem:** The patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of life. (this was added later)

Each system contains roles, norms, and rules that can powerfully shape development. As this theory is discussed comprehensively in Chapter 1, it is important to note that while theories inform our practices, they also shape our thinking. Theory lives in many places, especially in social science disciplines. Reducing children's behavior to being one directional, we miss the opportunity to look at how the systems that Bronfenbrenner discovered are bi-directional in that these systems impact each other.

This example provides a clear explanation for you to consider. In order to understand the issues a learner is having with math, we can't simply look at that individual and what challenges they face directly with the subject. We have to look at the interactions that occur between the teacher and the child. Perhaps the teacher needs to make modifications as well. The teacher may be responding to regulations made by the school, such as new expectations for students in math or constraints on time that interferes with the teacher's ability to instruct. These new demands may be a response to national efforts to promote math and science deemed important by political leaders in response to relations with other countries at a particular time in history. Can you think of an example from your personal experience, that would help you to integrate this theory more meaningfully?

It has been said that before Bronfenbrenner, child psychologists studied the child, sociologists examined the family, anthropologists the society, economists the economic framework of the times, and political scientists the political structure. As a result of Bronfenbrenner's groundbreaking work in human ecology, these environments, from the family to economic and political structures, have come to be viewed as part of the life course from childhood through adulthood. The "bioecological" approach to human development broke down barriers among the social sciences and built bridges between the disciplines that have allowed findings to emerge about which key elements in the larger social structure, and across societies, are vital for optimal human development.

Key takeaways

- Bioecological Systems Theory—the study of how individual development can be shaped by one's interactions with the various systems and how an individual can impact the nested systems.
- Five nested systems: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, Macrosystem, and Chronosystem.
- Each system contains roles, norms, and rules that can impact human development.

Pause to reflect

As you can see there are so many things to consider when it comes to our role as early learning professionals. We must have core knowledge that will enable us to be most up to date with current thinking about how to help families with the complicated tasks of parenting. As has been mentioned, there is no one right way. There are many ways to support children

in learning and growing. We will explore more contemporary parenting programs that are an integration of many of these thoughts and ideas that have been shared. It's not that ideas go away, we just make improvements as we go along. As Maya Angelou says, "We do the best we can until we know better. When we know better we do better."

References:

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5.4: Styles of Parenting

Parenting is a complicated emotional roller coaster, one in which we are often unprepared for. This section will engage you with the different ideas of the styles of parenting that have been a part of our theoretical journey in Early Childhood Education. It is important to note, that many of these ideas/theories have been normed using white children and families and that these ideas may not translate to all families as culture is another part of the dynamic of raising children. (This was discussed further in Chapter 2 which is dedicated to the influences of culture).

Styles of Parenting - Diana Baumrind

The parenting style used to rear a child will likely impact that child's future success in romantic, peer and parenting relationships. Diana Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist, coined the following parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive/indulgent. Later, Maccoby and Martin added the uninvolved/neglectful style.

According to Baumrind, it is beneficial to evaluate the support and demandingness of a caregiver in order to determine which style is being used and how to effectively use it. Support refers to the amount of affection, acceptance, and warmth a parent provides to a child. Demandingness refers to the degree a parent controls a child's behavior.

The chart below depicts the four styles of parenting brought to us by Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

Parenting Style	Brief Description	Outcomes for children
Authoritative (Democratic parenting) High demandingness and responsiveness	Authoritative parents tend to: • have high expectations for achievement and maturity, but they are also warm and responsive • set rules and enforce boundaries by having open discussion, providing guidance and using reasoning • provide their kids with reasoning and explanation for their action • allow children to have a sense of awareness and teach kids about values, morals, and goals • provide discipline that is confrontive, i.e. reasoned, negotiable, outcome-oriented, and concerned with regulating behaviors • are affectionate and supportive • provide their children with autonomy and encourage independence • allow bidirectional communication • cherish their children	Based on Baumrind's research on parenting styles, children of authoritative parents tend to: • appear happy and content • be more independent • be more active • achieve higher academic success • develop good self-esteem • interact with peers using competent social skills • have better mental health — less depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, delinquency, alcohol and drug use • exhibit less violent tendencies • are securely attached

Parenting Style	Brief Description	Outcomes for children
Authoritarian Parenting (Dictator parenting) High demandingness, low responsiveness	Authoritarian parents tend to: • demand blind obedience using reasons such as “because I said so” • allow one way communication through rules and orders, attempts to reason with them are seen as backtalk • use stern discipline and often employ harsh punishment, such as corporal punishment, as a way to control children’s behavior • be unresponsive to their children’s needs and are generally not nurturing • believe in tough love	Based on Baumrind’s research on parenting styles, children of authoritarian parents tend to: • have an unhappy disposition • be less independent • appear insecure • possess low self-esteem • exhibit more behavioral problems • perform worse academically • have poorer social skills • be more prone to issues with mental health • be more likely to have drug use problems • have worse coping skills
Permissive Parenting (Indulgent parenting) Low demandingness, high responsiveness	Permissive parents tend to: • set very few rules and boundaries • they are reluctant to enforce rules • be warm and indulgent but they do not like to say no or disappoint their children	Based on Baumrind’s research on parenting styles, children of authoritarian parents tend to: • have difficulty following rules • have difficulty with self-control • have more egocentric tendencies • encounter more problems in relationships and social interactions
Neglectful Parenting (Uninvolved parenting) Low demandingness and responsiveness	Neglectful parents tend to: • not set firm boundaries or high standards • be indifferent to their children’s needs and uninvolved in their lives • have issues of mental health (depression, physical abuse or child neglect when they were children)	Based on Baumrind’s research on parenting styles, children of permissive parents tend to: • be more impulsive • have difficulty with self-regulating their emotions • encounter more delinquency and addictions problems • have issues with mental health — e.g. suicidal behavior in adolescents

In reviewing the styles of parenting identified in the chart above, one can see that the focus comes more from Western, individualistic society’s thoughts on the role of raising children. It is important that we look at how these ideals may influence the way in which we see families who have different ideals about parenting. This is one lens to look at parenting, but we need to be more critical thinkers about the many possibilities that exist in raising healthy, productive humans in the many different societies that exist in our world.

Additional parenting styles

Researchers have identified additional parenting approaches that are not applicable to Baumrind’s styles, definitions, or outcomes. Below is an overview of four of these approaches—overindulgent parenting, helicopter parenting, lawnmower parenting, and traditional parenting.

Overindulgent Parenting

Overindulgent parenting is providing children with too much of what “looks good, too soon, too long.” Oftentimes, it appears that parents implement these strategies to fulfill their own unmet needs or feelings of neglect from their own childhood.

Examples include giving children an overabundance of:

- things or experiences that are not developmentally appropriate for the child,
- family resources that appear to meet the child’s needs but do not,
- anything that actively harms or prevents a child from developing and achieving one’s full potential, and
- freedom with minimal boundaries and limits that are developmentally-inappropriate for the child.

Many negative outcomes have been linked to overindulgent parenting, which include, but are not limited to, children who exhibit:

1. extreme self-centeredness,
2. excessive degrees of a sense of entitlement,
3. poor decision-making and coping skills, and
4. stifled developmental growth as a result of not experiencing or learning “necessary” life lessons.

Helicopter Parenting

Helicopter parenting is characterized by caregivers who are extremely over involved in their child’s life due to the belief that they can protect their child’s physical and/or emotional well-being. Caregivers using this approach appear overbearing and overprotective due to the close attention they pay to all of their child’s problems and successes. Parents “hover overhead” by constantly overseeing or being excessively interested in every aspect of their child’s life. Some contend that cell phones are “the world’s longest umbilical cord” which is contributing to this phenomenon.

Many negative outcomes have been linked to helicopter parenting, which may include, but are not limited to, children and adults who exhibit:

1. stifled developmental growth as a result of not experiencing or learning “necessary” life lessons,
2. long-term mental health problems,
3. rebellious behaviors in adolescence, and
4. a lack of independence coupled with poor decision-making, motivational, and coping skills.

Lawnmower Parenting

Saba Harouni Lurie, a licensed marriage and family therapist defines lawnmower parenting (also referred to as “bulldozing parenting” and “snowplow parenting”) simply as: “when parents remove obstacles for their kids in hopes of setting them up to be successful.” Lawnmower parents have a strong desire to protect their child from any type of struggle or obstacle. As a result, they’re said to “mow over” any problems their child faces, as well as prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

This may result in creating a generation that has no ideas what to do when they actually encounter a struggle. This may lead to adversely affecting children as having to face adversity, struggle, and/or failure robs them of opportunities to learn from their mistakes. Raising children who have experienced “minimal struggle” is not necessarily doing them any favors or even making them even remotely happier.

Traditional Parenting Style

The traditional parenting style is more commonly used in families with non-Western cultural values. Parents using this approach expect their children to respect and obey authority (e.g., parents, elders, etc.) and comply with their cultural beliefs and values without questions. Parents using this approach are high in demandingness, warmth, and responsiveness, similar to the authoritative approach, however, they do not engage in democratic discussions. This style was created because many parenting styles in non-Western cultures do not meet the criteria for authoritarian (due to expressing warmth) or authoritative (due to lack of communication).

For example, many families who self-identify as Asian Americans and Latino Americans engage in high demandingness and expect respect and obedience of their children. However, these caregivers also value closeness and love which is different from

the authoritarian parenting style. Adolescents who grow up in families using traditional parenting style characteristics tend to show higher academic achievements and lower behavioral and psychological problems when compared to their peers who are reared by caregivers using the authoritarian approach. These positive outcomes may be related to the closeness and love shown to children, which is different from the “cold” or “distant” characteristics consistent with the authoritarian style.

Key takeaways

- Overindulgent parenting is when parents over-provide things which are typically not developmentally-appropriate for their child.
 - This style of parenting can result in the child having poor decision-making and coping skills and being highly self-centered.
- Helicopter parenting is when parents are over-involved in their child's life, many times as a way to protect their child.
 - This style can result in the child lacking independence, having poor decision-making and coping skills, etc.
- Lawnmower parenting is a newer phenomenon in where parents avoid letting their children struggle
 - This style can result in children not being able to handle the complexities of life once they leave their nest/home
- Traditional parenting is when parents expect their children to respect and obey authority, as well as comply with their cultural beliefs and values.
 - This style of parenting can result in higher academic achievements and lower behavioral and psychological problems.

Additional less researched parenting styles:

LeMaster and Defrain Parenting Styles

Style	Description	Possible Outcomes
Martyr	Will do anything for the child; even tasks that the child should do for themselves; may use all they do for the child to guilt child into compliance	Child learns to be dependent and manipulative.
Pal	Wants to be the child's friend; lets children do what they want and focuses mostly on being entertaining and fun; sets few limits	Child may have little self-discipline and may try to test limits with others.
Police officer/ drill sergeant	Focuses primarily on making sure that the child is obedient and that the parent has full control of the child; may scold or punish child for not doing things right; struggles to allow child to grow and learn to make decisions independently	Child may have a log of resentment toward parent that is displaced on others
Teacher-counselor	Pays a lot of attention to expert advice on parenting and who believes that as long as all of the steps are followed, the parent can rear a perfect child	Puts all the responsibility of outcomes on parent
Athletic coach	Helps the child understand what needs to happen in certain situations and encourages and advised the child about how to manage these situations; does not intervene or do things for the child; sets consistent and objective rules	Child is supported and guided while they learn firsthand how to handle situations

Family Systems Theory

In an article by Linda Garris Christian entitled: "Understanding Families - Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice" she suggests that using this theory can help explain why members of a family behave the way they do in a given situation*. The chart below provides a brief overview of this theory and it's application in our early learning environments.

Category	Brief description	Examples	Ideas for working with families
Roles	There are many roles that individuals in families possess. Some of those roles are clown, peacemaker, victim, rescuer, etc. Each role carries an expectation with it. These roles can be carried over to work, school, and other social settings. Each role has both a positive and a negative aspect.	If you have the role of rescuer, you are required to fix problems and take care of others. The positive aspect of this is that you become the responsible person in the family capable of solving problems. The negative aspect is that other members in the family are not given opportunities to develop problem-solving skills.	• Provide children with opportunities to role play. This helps them to experience new roles in a safe space. • Observe children carefully so you are able to help them with experiencing other ways of being. • Highlight to families something about their child in both the roles that they currently possess and those that they are trying on.
Rules	This is a set of standards, laws, or traditions that tell us how to live in relation to each other. They may be spoken or unspoken.	When rules are spoken, it gives us the opportunity to discuss, problem solve, and make choices. If they are unspoken, we may not be aware of them until we break them. They are often embedded in a cultural context which can contribute to cultural discontinuity at school.	• Let children know about the difference between home rules and school rules. Make sure you respect the home rule, but help children to identify how that rule is different at school. • Unspoken rules can be related to gender, power, and how we treat each other. Make sure to discuss them with care and respect. • Help families to understand school rules and elicit their input carefully when conflict arises over school and home rules.

Category	Brief description	Examples	Ideas for working with families
Hierarchy	This refers to "who is the boss" in the family, meaning who is responsible for decision making, control, and power in the family. This can also be a shared in some families.	Understanding the hierarchy of families assists early learning professionals in knowing how to relate to each family in their early learning environment. One of the ways you can learn more about this hierarchy is to ask specific questions in a family questionnaire to enable you to understand each family structure. This may include using the following prompts in a family questionnaire to help you to get to know the hierarchy of the family: • Decisions about children in our family are usually made by _____. • How and when with whom would you like information about your child shared? • We want to respect your family in our work with you and your child at this center. Please share any information that you feel will help us in these efforts.	• Be a keen observer. Who signs the permission slips? Who returns the phone calls? How does the child role-play their family members in dramatic play? • Watch for how children are demonstrating the hierarchy they are growing up with. Make sure to vary experiences for children so they can be exposed to different ways of being.

Category	Brief description	Examples	Ideas for working with families
Boundaries	This relates to limites, togetherness, separateness -- what or who is "in" or "out of" the family. The use of disengaged and enmeshment is used to describe this element. Disengaged tends to be families that emphasize independence and autonomy. Each person's identity is encouraged and respected. Enmeshed tends to be families that emphasize togetherness, belonging, emotional connectedness, and at times conformity. It is important to note that one or the other is not better, just different. In addition, there are various degrees of how this looks in families. There are varying degrees as to how each family emphasizes disengagement and enmeshment.	One family may want to make sure that their child has choices as to what they engage in. They believe that ultimately it is the child's choice and will support their child's ultimate decision. They are working to foster his independence and his identity. This would be an example of disengaged. Another family may insist that their child do what they think is in the child's best interest. Making sure that the child conforms to what the family knows is best. This would be an example of enmeshment.	• Avoid stereotyping the family as a families culture does not automatically mean that the family is a certain way. It is important to become familiar with the families individual cultural background. • Respect families need for control. Involve families when introducing new ideas, materials, experiences to children. This is helpful in building relationships with families over time. • Include families in school events and make sure that you make space for the various configurations of families. It is important to include extended family. • Make space for difference and celebrate those differences by learning more about the families in your early learning programs.

Category	Brief description	Examples	Ideas for working with families
Climate	This is the emotional and physical environment that a child grows up in.	This is related to beliefs about children and families. You may consider the following questions in helping you to determine the climate of the family: • What would it feel like to be a child in this family? • Would I feel safe, secure, loved, encouraged, and supported? • Or, would I feel scared, fearful, angry, hated, and unhappy?	• Provide opportunities for families to discuss how they see children. This may be in casual conversation or in parenting workshops that you can offer in your program. • Make sure that the classroom is a safe space where children can explore, be given feedback and guidelines, and healthy sensory experiences.
Equilibrium	This refers to the consistency in families that may be difficult to maintain but necessary for children's development of a sense of security and trust.	This may be in the rituals and customs that keep families together during times of change and stress. This is the balance that tells members of the family what to expect.	• Provide as much consistency for children in the routines that you follow in your classrooms. This includes the room arrangement, the introduction of new staff, etc. • Provide opportunities to inform families of what they can do to create more stability for their children. This may be in providing a newsletter with tips or a workshop covering this topic.

References:

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*adapted from Understanding Families: Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice by Linda Garriss Christian, Young Children, January, 2006

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5.5: Child Abuse and Neglect

Types of Abuse

Child abuse takes many forms. Children can be physically or sexually assaulted, and they may also suffer from emotional abuse and neglect of many different forms. Whatever form it takes, child abuse is a serious problem. It is especially difficult to know how much child abuse occurs. Infants obviously cannot talk, and toddlers and older children who are abused usually do not tell anyone about the abuse. They might not define it as abuse, they might be scared to tell a trusted adult, they might blame themselves for being abused, or they might not know with whom they could talk about their abuse. Whatever the reason, children usually remain silent, thus making it very difficult to know how much abuse takes place. Up-to-date statistics on the different types of child abuse in the United States can be found at the [U.S. Children's Bureau](#) website.

Abuse can occur in multiple forms and across all family relationships. Breiding, Basile, Smith, Black, and Mahendra (2015) define the forms of abuse as:

- Physical abuse, the use of intentional physical force to cause harm. Scratching, pushing, shoving, throwing, grabbing, biting, choking, shaking, slapping, punching, and hitting are common forms of physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse, the act of forcing someone to participate in a sex act against the person's will. Such abuse is often referred to as sexual assault or rape.
- Psychological abuse, aggressive behavior that is intended to control someone else. Such abuse can include threats of physical or sexual abuse, manipulation, bullying, and stalking.

The most common form of child abuse is neglect. Child neglect is a deficit in meeting a child's basic needs, such as failure to provide adequate nutrition, supervision, health care, clothing, or housing, as well as other physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs. All societies have established necessary behaviors a caregiver must provide in order for a child to develop well within the domains of physical, social, and emotional development. Causes of neglect may result from caregivers experiencing problems associated with mental disorders, unplanned pregnancy, substance abuse, unemployment, over-employment, domestic violence, and, in special cases, poverty.

Child neglect depends on how a child and society perceives the caregivers' behaviors; it is not how parents or caregivers believe they are behaving toward their child. Caregiver's failure to provide for a child, when options are available, is different from failure to provide when options are not available. Poverty and lack of resources are often contributing factors that may prevent caregivers from meeting children's needs, when they otherwise would be able to meet those needs.

There are various types of child neglect which include:

- Physical neglect is the failure to provide a child with basic necessities of life such as adequate food, shelter, and clothing.
- Medical neglect is the failure of caregivers to meet a child's basic health care needs. Examples include not brushing teeth on a daily basis, not bathing a child, and/or taking children to doctor visits when needed.
- Emotional neglect is the failure to provide emotional support such as emotional security and encouragement (love, nurturance, etc.).
- Educational and developmental neglect include the failure to provide children with experiences necessary for normative growth and development. These may include failing to ensure children receive adequate education or experiences that help foster normative, developmental standards.
- Depending on the laws and child protective policies in one's area, leaving a young child unsupervised may be considered neglect, especially if doing so places the child in danger.

Child Abuse, Neglect and Foster Care

All types of abuse are complex issues, especially within families. There are many reasons people may become abusers, such as poverty, stress, and substance abuse are common characteristics shared by abusers, although abuse can happen in any family. Children who experience any type of abuse may "act out" or respond in a variety of unhealthful ways. This is the language that children use to communicate when they are hurting. These may include acts of self-destruction, withdrawal, and aggression, and struggles with depression, anxiety, and academic performance. Researchers have found that abused children's brains may

produce higher levels of stress hormones. These hormones can lead to decreased brain development, lower stress thresholds, suppressed immune responses, and lifelong difficulties with learning and memory. Abused children are much more likely than children who are not abused to end up with various developmental, psychological, and behavioral problems throughout their life course. In particular, they are more likely to be aggressive, to use alcohol and other drugs, to be anxious and depressed, and to get divorced if they marry.

Children who experience abuse or neglect are at risk of developing lifelong social, emotional, and health problems, particularly if neglected before the age of two years. This is consistent with what research tells us about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). However, it is important to note that not all children who experience abuse and neglect will have the same outcomes. As we learned, there are many ways in which we can foster stable, permanent, safe, secure, nurturing, loving care for children who have been associated with reduced effects of ACEs. It is extremely important to understand the ways in which child abuse and neglect can be prevented. For more information, visit the [CDC Child Abuse and Neglect](#) web page.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) | VitalSigns | CDC](#). The video below provides an overview of ACEs and how we can prevent the impact.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ACEs can include violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems.
- Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress.
- ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood.

These are experiences that have been identified as ACEs:

- Experiencing violence or abuse
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Having a family member attempt or die by suicide
- Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding such as growing up in a household with:
 - Substance misuse
 - Mental health problems
 - Emotional abuse or neglect
 - Instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison

Currently, we are seeing the impact of COVID-19 and Racial Injustice on children and their families. Consider how this societal trauma with the disruptions, isolations, and uncertainty may contribute to outcomes for children in the early years. This may be exacerbated by children who are already experiencing toxic stress in their homes, school, and community.

Corporal Punishment

Worldwide initiatives have recommended banning the use of corporal punishment with or in children of all ages. According to the Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, corporal punishment is defined as “any punishment in which physical force issued and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light”.

Examples include shaking, kicking, forcing ingestion (e.g., soap, hot sauce), and “smacking,” “slapping,” or “spanking” with any object or a hand. Nonphysical forms of punishment (e.g., verbal and emotional abuse) include activities that are intended to cause

shame to a person such as humiliation, threats, ridicules, etc.

Vast amounts of research have consistently demonstrated strong correlations between youth who experienced harsh punishment (e.g., spanking) by their parents and increased risks of:

- changes in brain physiology that show on MRI studies,
- mental health disorders such as depression or anxiety,
- elevated cortisol levels,
- cognitive problems,
- aggressive behaviors,
- unhealthy caregiver-child relationships,
- suicide attempts,
- moderate-to-heavy drinking,
- substance use disorders,
- misconduct, and
- adverse outcomes that extend into adulthood.

Foster Care/Resource Families

In the United States and in some other countries, another way to immediately protect children from further abuse is to remove them from their primary caregivers and place them into foster care or with family members. Foster care is a system in which a minor is placed into a group home (residential child care community, treatment center, etc.), or private home of a state-certified caregiver, referred to as a "foster parent," "resource family," or with a family member approved by the state. The placement of the child is normally arranged through the government or a social service agency. The institution, group home, or foster parent is typically compensated for expenses unless the child is placed with a family member.

In the United States, on any given day, there are more than 400,000 youth living in foster care (out-of-home care) primarily due to abuse and/or neglect. And, more than 100,000 of these youth are waiting to be adopted from foster care. This means that these parents have lost permanent legal rights and custody of their children, leaving their children without any permanently legal caregivers (the government assumes this responsibility until someone adopts the children). The average age of youth waiting to be adopted from foster care is eight years old. This is one way that a child may be adopted into a permanent family.

Adoption

Adoption of children is one of many ways in which families are formed. Adoption, the legal transfer of parental rights of a child to another person, can occur in many ways and elicit a wide variety of family types. In the United States, statistics for the total number of all types of adoptions are not compiled on a regular basis and statistics are not at all compiled for some adoption types. Adoption statistics and estimates are based on U.S. Census data and other sources. It is estimated that approximately 2-4% of all Americans are adopted.

As we learned previously, more than 100,000 youth (with an average age of 8 years) are waiting to be adopted from foster care. But, a majority of individuals wish to adopt an infant. According to research, millions of American women have expressed a desire to adopt an infant and tens of thousands of families are waiting to adopt an infant.

However, it is also estimated that fewer than 20,000 babies are voluntarily placed for adoption each year in the United States. Certainly, there are thousands fewer infants placed for adoption than families waiting to adopt an infant. Research has shown that placing a baby for adoption can serve as a preventive option of child abuse and neglect for individuals who are not ready to parent, able to parent, or willing to parent.

Thus, it is a best-practice approach that individuals experiencing unplanned or unwanted pregnancies be provided the most accurate information concerning their options for parenting, adoption, the processes associated with all options, etc.

In the U.S., it is common for birth parents to choose their baby's adoptive parents, and in some cases, adoptive and birth family members are able to maintain some contact with each other. It is important to note that infants who are voluntarily placed are typically taken home immediately from the birthing location by their adopting family. In conclusion, fewer children may end up in foster care if their parents were advised of their options for adoption and parenting. To learn how to educate parents about the option of placing their baby for adoption.

Types of Adoptive Families

There are numerous adoptive family types. Below is a brief definition of each family type.

- Infant/newborn/domestic: A child who is born in a country and who is adopted shortly after birth (within the same country).
- Transnational/Intercountry/International: A child who is born in one country and is adopted by a family who lives in another country. Often, the child is orphaned. For statistics and information about intercountry adoptions visit this website.
- Kin: Children adopted by a relative such as an aunt, uncle, sister, brother, grandparent, or other relative.
- Foster care: Children who are no longer able to be cared for by their primary caregiver(s) who are adopted by another family member.
- Stepparent: Children adopted by one parent's spouse; the spouse agrees to take full responsibility for the child.
- The following forms of adoption are a result of assisted reproductive technology (methods that utilize medical technology to achieve conception and birth). In most U.S. states, these forms require the legal transfer of parental rights to another parent(s).
- Embryo: Families can adopt an embryo produced from the sperm and egg of one couple. Clinics and agencies help match donating families and recipient/adopting families.
- Surrogacy: A surrogate mother carries a fertilized egg in utero. After the birth of the child, the intended parent(s) adopt(s) the child.

Below are some of the more commonly-used terms associated with adoption and the legal process.

- Adoption Triad: Birth parents, adoptive parents, and the adopted child(ren).
- Disrupted Adoption: An adoption agreement that ends before finalization.
- Dissolution of Adoption: An adoption that ends after finalization.
- Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children: A law that requires written notice and prior approval of the placement of a child for adoption or foster care from one state with a family in another state.
- Kinship care: The full-time nurturing of a child by someone related to the child by family ties or by prior relationship connection (fictive kin).
- Reunification: The returning of foster children to the custody of their parent(s) after placement outside the home.
- Relinquishment/Termination of Parental Rights: The legal step necessary for parents to voluntarily or involuntarily have their parental rights terminated to allow their child to be adopted by adoptive parents; sometimes referred to as a surrender or as making an adoption plan for one's child.
- Special Needs: Children with physical, behavioral, or mental impairments, children with siblings in need of adoption, and at-risk children.
- Before and after the legal transfer of parental rights, families can decide how they may stay in contact after the child is no longer a legal member of the birth family. This decision is referred to as "levels of openness" or "degrees of contact."

Levels of Openness/Degrees of Contact

Non-identifying information: Information that allows the members of the adoption triad to know about each other, but without identifying information. First names, physical descriptions, occupation, education, personality characteristics, hobbies, interests, religious affiliation, and medical information are examples of non-identifying information.

Semi-open adoption: An adoption in which a child's birth parents and adoptive parents may exchange primarily non-identifying information. After the child is placed in the adoptive home, contact with the birth family may involve letters or pictures or other communications sent through the intermediary of the adoption agency or the attorney who assisted in the placement.

Closed adoption: An adoption that involves total confidentiality and sealed records; contact does not exist between any members of either family.

Identifying information: Information concerning birth parents which discloses their identities.

Open adoption: An adoption that involves some amount of initial and/or ongoing contact between birth and adoptive families, ranging from sending letters through the agency, to exchanging names, and/or scheduling visits.

Terminology

Using accurate adoption language can stop the spread of adoption-related misconceptions and educate others about adoption. For instance, the phrase "choosing to place your child for adoption" has a much more positive connotation than "giving up your

baby.” “Choosing to place your child for adoption” focuses on the fact that parents most likely considered options and chose the option they felt was best for the child. It is important to use appropriate terms so that accurate language may someday be the norm.

Accurate and Inaccurate Adoption Terminology

Accurate language	Inaccurate language
Birthparent, first parent	Real parent, natural parent
My child	Adopted child
Choosing an adoption plan	Giving away/giving up your child
Finding a family to parent the child	Keeping your baby
To parent	To keep
Child in need of a family/parent	Adoptable child; Available child
Internation or intercountry adoption	Foreign adoption
Child who has special needs	Handicapped child, hard to place
Child from another country	Foreign child
Was adopted	Is adopted

References:

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[Center for Disease Control](#)

5.6: Mandated Reporting

Legal and Ethical Responsibilities of a Mandated Reporter

Legal responsibilities

As an early learning professional in the state of California, you are a mandated reporter. As such you are required to report any known or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to the county child welfare department or to a local law enforcement agency (local police/sheriffs' department). Understanding abuse is something that early learning professionals are required to have knowledge about. There is a required course that all early learning professionals must take in order to work with children and families.

This website [Mandated Reporter Training](#) offers the training needed for no cost. This training provides early learning professionals with the information they need to be understand their role and the actions they must take as a mandated reporter. The training for early learning professionals takes about 3 hours. After you have completed the training, you will earn a certificate to provide to your employer.

Many professionals who work directly or indirectly with children are mandated reporters. That includes:

- School personnel
- Child care providers (early learning professionals)
- Mental and social health providers
- Law enforcement
- Clergy
- Other professionals
- Volunteers

Each profession has training that provides what they need to know in order to ensure that they are doing their job as a mandated reporter.

Child Care Providers

Child care providers have unique opportunities to notice signs of child abuse or neglect. Your caregiving duties allow you to pay attention to children's progress and development, and regular contact with children can reveal changes in appearance and behavior that indicate abuse. You may have infants in your care who cannot speak for themselves and are completely reliable on caregivers to protect them.

As a child care provider, you may be the only person outside of the family with whom a child has significant contact. You may be the one trusted adult to whom a child confides in about abuse and the only person who is in a position to help a child. It's critical that you know how to recognize the signs and what to do when abuse is suspected.

- Licensee of a licensed community care facility
- Administrator of a licensed community care facility
- Employee of a licensed community care facility
- Licensee of a licensed child day care facility
- Administrator of a licensed child day care facility
- Employee of a licensed child day care facility

School Personnel

School personnel play a key role in identifying and helping abused children. Children spend the majority of their day in school, where you have regular contact and the ability to observe changes in appearance and behavior that others may not notice.

School personnel are often seen as positive role models and may be a source of support and care for many children; you may be the one trusted adult to whom a child confides in about abuse. It's critical that you know how to recognize the signs and report suspected abuse.

- Teacher
- Instructional aide
- Teacher's aide or teacher's assistant
- Classified employee of any public school
- Administrative Officer or supervisor of child welfare and attendance, or a certified pupil personnel employee
- Administrator of a public or private day camp
- Administrator or employee of a public or private youth center, youth recreation program or youth organization
- Administrator or employee of a public or private children's organization
- Employee of a county office of education or the California Department of Education, whose duties bring the employee into contact with children on a regular basis
- Head start teacher
- Licensing worker or licensing evaluator employed by a licensing agency
- Employee of a school district police or security department
- Any person who is an administrator or presenter of, or a counselor, in a child abuse prevention program in any public or private school
- District attorney investigator, inspector or family support officer
- Special education teachers, and staff.
- An athletic coach, athletic administrator, or athletic director employed by any public or private school that provides any combination of instruction for kindergarten or grades 1 to 12
- Any other employees and persons working on the behalf of school districts, county offices of education, state special schools and diagnostic centers operated by the State Department of Education, and charter schools who are mandated reporters, as defined in Section 11165.7 of the Penal Code

To report child abuse, you can contact the [Children's Department of Social Services Mandated Reporting website](#).

Ethical responsibilities

As an early learning professional, there is guidance given from National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC has developed many position statements that guide our responsibility to the children and families we serve. The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment is a document that outlines our ethical responsibilities to:

- to children
- to families
- to colleagues
- to community and society

The code is divided into principles and ideals. The primary principle we must adhere to is:

P-1.1—Above all, we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are emotionally damaging, physically harmful, disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, or intimidating to children. This principle has precedence over all others in this Code.

As early learning professionals, you must be aware of your ethical responsibilities as you are trained to know how to best support children and their families in early learning environments.

References:

"Parenting and Family Diversity" by Diana Lang is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Code of Ethical Conduct and Statement of Commitment: Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2011

[Children's Department of Social Services](#)

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6: COMMUNITIES

Learning Objectives

After completing this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define a community and its functions.
- Describe some of the theories that have studied the impact of a community on a child's development.
- Describe how a community influences socialization including social, emotional and physical development.
- List the types of organizations and agencies that can be found in communities.
- Describe the types of communities
- Describe how racism has and continues to impact communities today.

Community as a Socialization Agent

As we have seen, a child is socialized within the context of a family and culture. A child is also socialized within a community. The community a child grows up in can influence a child in their access to resources, their access to education, their access to health and wellness and their access to kinship. It is an identifier. Where are you from? One of the questions we might get asked if someone is getting to know us. The answer can give a lot of context to who we are as individuals. Did we grow up in the city or in a farming town? Was it a on the West Coast of the United States or in the bustling city of Hong Kong? The community a child grows up in contributes to the socialization of a child and has profound impacts on their development as we will see in this chapter.

[6.1: What is Community?](#)

[6.2: Neighborhoods](#)

[6.3: Community Organizations and Services](#)

[6.4: Racism](#)

[6.5: Advocacy for Children and Families](#)

6.1: What is Community?

Community:

A Community is a socialization agent, because children learn the expectations of adults and will model those around them within the community. Within communities, children are given the opportunity to build relationships that support their social, emotional, and physical development and can help them to succeed in life. But not all communities are created equal. In this chapter we will learn what a community is, what some of the benefits and drawbacks of certain communities are and how the community plays a role in the child's development.



Figure 4.1.1 "Oak Terrace Preserve's Walkable Neighborhoods" by North Charleston is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

What is a community?

The term "community" is used in several ways, but a common definition is the concept of belongingness (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps, & Delucci, 1996). Further, Furman (1998) states that a community is not established until its members feel a sense of belonging, community members trust each other, and feel safe (Osterman, 2000). Community can be used to describe a territorial or geographical entity or community can be relational, describing the nature of human relationships (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In the context of child development, we can define community narrowly (a classroom community) or broadly (a city or state). Communities can be large or small. They can be vibrant or static. They can be a positive force or a negative force. Communities are ever changing because the people change. But some aspects of community never change.

A community serves both as a place for the individual and family as well as for the larger group. It can be a place for small groups or family only groups to congregate or it can be a place for the larger community to band together. This sense of community can be found most often in times of stress and disasters. When the Campfire happened in Butte County in 2018 in which over 150,000 acres burned and 85 people lost their lives, (Calfire, 2019) people came to help in droves. A community struck by devastation donated food, shelter and time. Not only did the small mountain community help, but so did many around the country.

YouTube Video

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In Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, he identified communities in the mesosystem; how communities interacted with families and peers and schools. He also identified communities in the exosystem as the history and values and economic condition of a community. And as we'll learn a little later on, it can also be found in the Macrosystem due to the political ideologies of the community and the services available to those that live there.

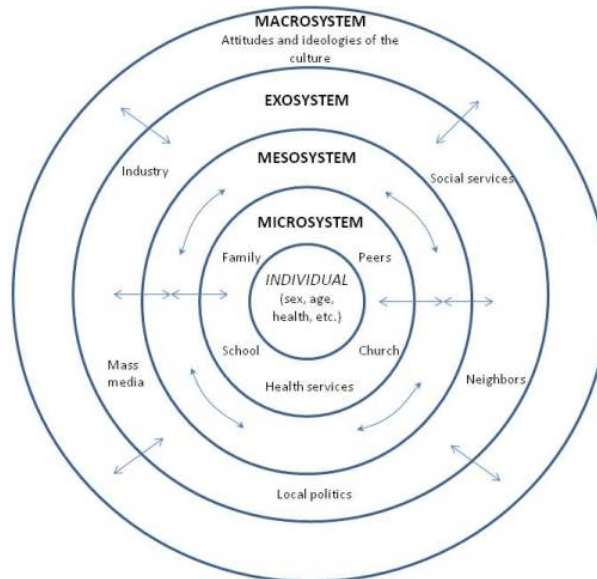


Figure 6.1.2: Bioecological Model of Human Development Source: Visual adaptation of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Note: SES = socioeconomic status.

There are other theories and theorists that have studied the way neighborhoods and communities have affected children's development. Some of the other theories we will take a look at are:

- Stress Theory, which identifies the danger of exposure to physical toxins such as lead in the soil and paint as well as neighborhood violence on children's development.
- Social Organizational Theory which is characterized as the strength of local institutions and the amount of willingness of the community to become involved on behalf of the common good.
- Institutional Model Theory which holds that the resources of the community rather than the neighbors make the most difference.

How might the community or neighborhood a child lives in, contribute to their socialization? Let's look at the types of neighborhoods children live in, as well as what each has to offer. The political climate of an area, transportation, pollution, cultural opportunities, social services, all go into contributing to the lives and socialization of children. We will also brainstorm resources that neighborhoods have to offer families living in them.

References:

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of educational research*, 70(3), 323-367.

Solomon, D., Watson, M., Battistich, V., Schaps, E., & Delucchi, K. (1996). Creating classrooms that students experience as communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 24(6), 719-748.

"*Camp Fire*". *fire.ca.gov*. *CAL FIRE*. November 15, 2019. *Archived* from the original on September 8, 2020. Retrieved February 2, 2022.

6.2: Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods

When asked, over 50% of people describe their living situation as in the suburbs, according to the US Census Bureau. The suburbs was originally a subset up of urban areas, but has become where the majority of families live. The suburbs are generally where housing communities are set up and is typically more dense than rural areas, but less dense than urban areas. Urban areas are cities with a higher population and is a mixture of housing and business. In 2017, Pew Research studied the changing demographics of where more of the population is residing. What they found is that rural communities are shrinking and suburban areas are increasing. They also found that they are changing ethnically as well, with the majority of urban dwellers being non-Hispanic

According to the Census Bureau, 11.6 million children 16% of all kids nationwide were living in poverty in 2020. The data also reveal that poverty rates remain disproportionately high for children of color. Nationwide, Black (28%), American Indian (25%) and Latino (23%) children are more likely to grow up poor when compared to their non-Hispanic white (10%) and Asian and Pacific Islander (9%) peers.

High-poverty urban settings has increased in the United States and the the amount of poor urban families living in high-poverty neighborhoods has increased exponentially.

Additional Theories

Stress theory looks at how air and land pollution in neighborhoods can cause stress on families and children. Exposure to lead, smog, bad water and high levels of toxins are all environmental stressors and can play a part in environmental racism. Let's look at the Flint water crisis. As of the writing of this book, the water in Flint Michigan is still undrinkable and the majority of the city residents are standing in long lines to get their weekly ration of bottled water. In 2014 the water was contaminated with lead and while some inroads have been made to clean up the mess, it is still a crisis. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission set out to determine if this was an environmental justice issue and this is what they said, "The Commission believes that we have answered our initial question, "was race a factor in the Flint Water Crisis?" Our answer is an unreserved and undeniable -- "yes." We do not base our finding on any particular event. It is based on a plethora of events and policies that so racialized the structure of public policy that it systemically produced racially disparate outcomes adversely affecting a community primarily made up of people of color."



Figure 4.2.1: "Flint Water Response Team" by Michigan Emergency Management & Homeland Security is licensed under CC BY-ND

Neighborhoods can be places where families can gather together and commune. Some neighborhoods have strong community bonds and you can see that in the activities offered, in their resources and how they gather. In Social Organizational Theory, social integration and participation is key to having better outcomes for children. Like the African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child" in Social Organizational Theory, neighborhoods with similar values will raise the alarm and monitor for dangers to children. Contact among families may lead them to share ways of dealing with behavior problems with their own children, getting advice, encouraging children's skills, connecting to community resources and organizing neighborhood activities (Klebanov et al., 1997). This can happen in rural, suburban as well as urban neighborhoods. In this theory, it is the people coming together to make the change for children.

In Institutional models, the importance of neighborhood wellness is placed on the resources; parks, libraries, children's programs and activities. The more affluent areas, the richer the experiences offered. And of course, the safer the neighborhoods, or the perceived level of safety, the more willingness parents are to take advantage of these resources. This is of critical importance as children get older and are adolescents; but can also play a big role in early childhood as well. Interactions between children and preschools, religious communities, child care, libraries, health care systems, public transportation, and other playmates have an impact on children and children's development as well.

This video (5:48) shows the Bioecological Model by Urie Bronfenbrenner. Pay attention to how the environment and the opportunities around a child can help or hinder a child.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

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Reflection

How were the physical resources in your neighborhood growing up? Were you able to play in the parks and walk around your neighborhoods while feeling safe?

Parks and Recreation

Green space and parks are sometimes hard to find, unsafe and difficult to access. In rural areas, they can be far and without transportation, near impossible to access. In urban and suburban areas, they may be unsafe or not well maintained. We also have some of the most beautiful and adventurous parks. One of our most famous parks was established in 1853. Central Park in New York City is 843 acres of land preserved for the purpose of recreation and relief from urban conditions. Many other large cities followed New York's example and in the early 1900's the people put pressure on the government to create and maintain our city parks (Rivkin, 1995). This was because by this time, many cities had grown larger and there was less play space for children. In 1906, the Playground and Recreation Association of America was created, which now goes by the name; The National Recreation Association.



Figure 4.2.3: "Central Park" by kevin dooley is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Figure 4.2.4: "Riverfront Park" by North Charleston is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Adventure Playgrounds are spaces that are open, with real materials such as tools, paint, wood, metal, recyclables and anything else that sparks the imagination of the children that use them to create and play with. There is no direct adult direction, only support. There can be a lot of risk taking as well in some of these playgrounds. There are currently only a handful of these playgrounds in the United States.

YouTube Video

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Check In

Look on the Internet where the nearest Adventure Playground is to you. What is different about it than other parks?

References:

Klebanov, P.K.,J. Brooks-Gunn, and G.J.Duncan 1994 Does neighborhood and family poverty affect mothers' parenting, mental health, and social support? *Journal of Marriage, and the Family* 56(2):441-455

Rivkin, M.S. (1995). *The great outdoors: Restoring children's right to play outside*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children

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6.3: Community Organizations and Services

Types of Community Organizations and Agencies:

There are many types of organizations we can find in communities from religious, cultural, public, private, or government that can provide help to families in many different ways. Some of these might be businesses offering services for a fee or sliding scale. They might be medical services to keep children healthy or they might be educational opportunities for a child to gain experiences from and learn. These community organizations and agencies are socialization agents and can help children understand the world around them, how it works, and how they interact within that space. Some of these experiences are formal learning experiences and others are learned informally, by watching what is going on around them.

Businesses

In any urban and some suburban and rural areas, you will find many types of businesses. There are large corporations in some areas of town, and small family run businesses. One of the ways that children learn about money and finances is to see the adults in their lives spending it. How they spend it, what they spend it on and where they spend it are all lessons they are learning. The adults are also interacting with shopkeepers, and waiters, bank teller and cashiers. Children from a very young age are watching the interactions between these very important people in their life and these people within these businesses. The adults are *modeling* behavior and ways of interacting with others that are outside of their family and school setting. Businesses are a great educational resource for children as well. Whether it is learning about produce at the grocery store or counting out change at the bank, or ordering food from a menu at a restaurant or learning how manufacturing works in a factory, there are many ways that children can learn from the businesses around them. These experiences provide an opportunity for young people to learn about social relationships and emotions through education and exploration.

Reflection

What businesses are around your school that you can partner with for an educational experience for the children in your class? What would the children learn from the experience?

Social Organizations

Many social and cultural experiences exist for children as well and can provide a rich curriculum and foster a love of the arts. But there is a gap in opportunity when not all families have equal access to these cultural and social events. Some events, such as street fairs and parades, may be free. Some museums, theaters, or cultural centers may offer free or reduced priced days for those that can't afford it. Many of these museums offer hands on activities for children and educational programs. One of the most accessible, free and educational resources for children are libraries. According to the American Library Association, there are an estimated 116,867 libraries of all kinds in the United States today. Libraries are one of our best resources. The purpose of a library is to provide free access to books and other cultural materials, but they are so much more. They are a meeting place in the event of a disaster. They are a place to hold community events. It is a social gathering place and provide space and companionship for seniors and parents and guardians of young children. There are story times for young children often with crafts and a lesson. Many times mothers or fathers are able to meet other parents and it can become a social experience as well as childcare. It can also help instill a love of learning and begin the child on their literacy journey, which hopefully continues through life.

"Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one." Neil Gaiman, Author

Religious organizations offer services and often times youth groups and camps and can also be a vital part of a community. Churches are another gathering place in times of disaster and many open their doors to those in need often with food or shelter or other support.

Note

In August 2017, Hurricane Harvey devastated parts of Texas including Houston, with record flooding and families in crisis. The Islamic Society of Greater Houston which provides religious and social services to all Muslims but who live their vision by providing a social services unit to any in need, opened their mosques to any Houston residents that had been flooded out of their homes. “There’s no religion, there’s no color,” one of the volunteers said of the tragedy. “We are open to help everyone and anyone. When disaster strikes, we have to jump on this immediately.” One Islamic center set up a 24-hour hotline to help with medical emergencies.



Figure 4.3.1: Hurricane Harvey flooding in Port Arthur, Texas, August; via NARA & DVIDS Public Domain Archive

Community clubs are another way that children can informally learn. They could be clubs for adults that children are welcome or they could be specifically for children. For adults there are car clubs and exercise clubs and hobby clubs and social and religious clubs. For children there can be Girl or Boy Scouts, theater clubs, team clubs, sport clubs, all types of clubs for the social, physical and emotional development of children. The boys and Girls club of America is another club, which helps kids and does not need parental support in the way of money or transportation. It is a way for a child to connect with a big brother or big sister mentor to guide them through life's challenges to be a successful and productive member of society. But as Lareau (2011) states in her book *Unequal Childhoods*, a family's social class determines how much children will participate in community opportunities, as a lot of these are fee based and require transportation and time away from work or commitments for parents.

Transportation

Each community offers different types of transportation, whether they are private or public. Some urban and suburban areas offer private transportation services such as airplanes, taxis or ride shares, but there are also city transportation services such as buses, trains and subways. Transportation is not limited to vehicles, but also to bikes, scooters, wheelchairs and our feet. The safety and amount of bike paths available, as well as the proximity of services makes it easier to get around a community. Transportation can be limited and difficult in rural areas of the country, while it can be dangerous for children in some urban areas. All of these transportation services can be educational opportunities for children.

Social Service Agencies

Part of Bronfenbrenner's *Macrosystem* is the political ideology of the community, and the larger country, which creates policies and determines which services are worthy of support. For example, Head Start was started under President Lyndon Johnson, but although the country has not been able to pass federal legislation for Preschool for all children, several states such as Georgia and New York have. We have a wide variety of social service programs that are either government funded, privately funded or funded through a non-profit.

Some of these programs are:

- **YMCA:** A non-profit committed to strengthening community by empowering young people, improving the health and well-being of people of all ages and inspiring action in and across communities.
- **Catholic Charities:** A religious organization that is called to provide service to people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures, and to call the entire church and other people of goodwill to do the same.
- **WIC:** The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.
- **Family Service Agencies:** These services are broad and can offer help in:
 - Early Childhood and Child Care Services.
 - Education Services.
 - Health Services.
 - Housing Services.
 - Respite Care Programs.
 - Services to Children and Youth With Disabilities.

They are also a referral agency and can refer families to the help they need.

- **Child Welfare:** The purpose of child welfare is to protect children from abuse, neglect, abandonment or delinquency. Traditionally children are only removed from the home in extreme cases but *Foster Care*, *Kinship Care* and *Adoption* are also social service programs for children in abusive situations. In cases of delinquency the child may stay with the family or they may be placed in juvenile detention or an institution.
- **TANF:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a federal government program that offers assistance with shelter, food, jobs and cash assistance to help people with children to get on their feet. Each state uses the program differently.
- **Regional Centers:** Regional centers oversee the coordination and delivery of services for those with developmental disabilities. They are part of the department of social services and provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and offer case management services. Regional centers also develop, purchase, and coordinate the services in each person's *Individual Program Plan*.

There are many more social service programs and they vary from community to community, but they often do not always meet the needs of those in the community. Like previously stated, the people in power decide what is worthy of support. Unlike other wealthy nations, the United States lacks federally mandated supports for family life in areas such as adequate parental leave and child sick leave, universal health care coverage and affordable quality child care (Cruse, Hegewisch, & Gault, 2016). Resources vary significantly state to state and community to community due to local and state government political ideology.

Reflection:

What resources do you have in your area? If a family came to you looking for a resource would you know what resources are available to them?

References:

Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, race and family life* (2nd ed). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Cruse, L.R., Hegewisch, A., & Gault, B. (2016). [The need for support for working families](#)

6.4: Racism

Racism in Communities

If we can determine that low funded schools, pollution, crime, community resources, toxins and poverty can have a negative effective on a child's development we can easily draw the conclusion that there are negative outcomes for children that grow up in these low income urban neighborhoods. The data also shows that the majority of these children are Black, Brown and Indigenous children (Shrider, Kollar, Chen, & Semega, 2021). This is not a mistake, it is an example of systemic racism. This is from years of racism and white supremacy that is still happening today. **Jim Crow laws** were laws put into place in the late 1800s until mid 1900s that segregated Black people from white people. They also prevented Black people from voting by enacting a poll tax or requiring a test before voting. If you can't vote, you can't vote for your interests or vote to better your situation.

Redlining is another example of systemic racism. This was the practice of outlining areas with sizable Black populations in red ink on maps as a warning to mortgage lenders, effectively isolating Black people in areas that would suffer lower levels of investment than their white counterparts. But redlining hasn't stopped. There is significantly greater economic inequality in cities where more of the high-risk or "hazardous" areas are currently minority neighborhoods.

Currently in California and many other states, schools are funded in large part by property taxes. What does that mean for schools in neighborhoods that have a lower socioeconomic status and lower median property value? Some states like California, New York, Texas and Illinois tax wealthier businesses more heavily and redistribute those dollars into lower-income school districts to help spread out the funding more evenly. Even in those states the wealthier school districts have families that can fundraise or donate more money to the schools for better opportunities for the students.

As home ownership is the traditional, tried and true key to accessing wealth in the U.S., it becomes easier to understand the web of institutional racism. Where we live generally determines where our children attend school. The quality of schooling we receive impacts our potential for higher education, our entrance into the job market, and quite possible our interactions with police and the criminal justice system. Additionally, the type of job we work generally determines the type of health care we receive or do not receive.

The combination of family poverty and neighborhood poverty poses a double risk to a large population of black and brown children and are much more likely to grow up in these situations than white children. There are still laws being passed that make it harder for black people to vote and that are trying to deny the history of racism in this country.

This video gives a good explanation of some of these challenges.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



References

Shrider, E. A., Kollar, M., Chen, F., & Semega, J. (2021). Income and poverty in the United States: 2020. *Current Population Reports*. US Census Bureau.

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6.5: Advocacy for Children and Families

Advocacy

The better that families are able to meet their children's basic need for shelter, food, and clothing, the more that family members will be available to support their child's learning. Effective programs provide support to families who want it, usually by linking families with resources in the community through referrals. To support family functioning and promote resilience in families and young children, programs and teachers can establish community partnerships and identify key resources for families, connecting them to those resources considered appropriate. In particular, services that help families become self-sufficient and prevent risk of stress or at least reduce ongoing, intense stress, allow family members to become sources of support for each other. Services that promote positive, nurturing relationships among family members enable families to become more resilient and strengthen the children's capacity for learning. Once working relationships with other service providers in the community are established, preschool programs can work to ensure that families receive needed services and children experience continuity in their learning and development.

Strengthening Families: Five Protective Factors

Five protective factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families Approach: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. Research studies support the common sense notion that when these protective factors are well established in a family, the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminishes. Research shows that these protective factors are also "promotive" factors that build family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child and youth development.

Source: Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.

Family Functioning

Programs

- Collaborate with staff, families, and social service providers to develop policies and procedures related to family support.
- Respond to questions or concerns from staff members or other adults and act as a professional resource.
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff on family functioning, protective and risk factors, and community resources.

Teachers

- Articulate an understanding that families function in a variety of ways and that children or families may require support outside the program.
- Demonstrate an understanding of risk, stress, and resiliency factors related to family functioning and how to support all families appropriately.
- Take steps for further inquiry when concerns arise based on observations of a child or family.
- Communicate daily with families about children's well-being.
- Refer questions or concerns to other staff members when appropriate.
- Work with colleagues to respond to signs of risk or stress in children, as developmentally appropriate and individually meaningful.



Figure 6.5.1: Your coworkers can work with you to support families that are experiencing stressors.[1]

Programs

- Establish effective relationships with partners to ensure continuity of children's learning and development.
- Maintain professional connections to community and state partners.

Teachers

- Understand the importance of community partnerships in meeting children's needs.
- Form effective partnerships and collaborations with families, professionals, and community representatives.
- Support the needs of children, their success, and their well-being by maintaining professional connections to community and state partners.

Connecting Families with Resources

Programs

- Support staff and families in the referral process as appropriate.
- Work with community resources to conduct outreach or provide services to program families as appropriate.
- Anticipate families' needs for support based on knowledge of the families' circumstances or of current events that may affect them (e.g., economic climate, natural disasters).
- Identify key community resources that support program practices and family needs, including services that support families with dual language learners' communication with the program.
- Share information with colleagues and develop connections to the program.

Teachers

- Demonstrate familiarity with community resources to support children and families.
- Respond to requests from families about community resources and refer questions to appropriate staff members.
- Protect the confidentiality and privacy of families.
- Engage in conversations with families about referrals to community resources and assist in identifying or gaining access to services as needed, with consideration for the diverse linguistic and cultural experiences of families.
- Identify signs that children or families may require support outside the program, maintain documentation, and initiate closer observation or further inquiry, collaborating with families as appropriate.
- Provide resources linked to classroom instructions to assist families in supporting continued development and maintenance

of the home language.



Figure 6.5.2: Families experiencing food insecurity could benefit from this community resource, a food bank.[2]

Use of Community Resources

Teachers

- Gain knowledge about the importance of community resources that can enhance professional expertise and children's learning experiences.
- Use community resources routinely to enhance their knowledge about families and services and classroom learning activities.

Note

Often resources for families are compiled and sometimes sold for the cost of printing can be purchased from a church or community organization. Check your local area to see if that is an option for you.

The power of a resource

One morning a mother dropped off her three children to their classrooms in the childcare program and then went to the director of the programs office, closed the door behind her, and sunk to the floor crying. She shared with the director that her husband is bipolar and had been off his medication. The night before he had thrown her and her three children ages 4, 3 and 1 out of the house without shoes, keys, coats or any food or diapers. She was able to call a friend to take her in for the night, but they could not stay there another night. She needed help. After listening, the director was able to pull out her book of local resources and find her temporary shelter, a low cost lawyer, a treatment center for her husband and access to food and clothing. While sometimes all they need is a listening ear, there are times that families need help and resources. Having those gathered ahead of time can be helpful for struggling families.

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7: GOVERNMENT POLICIES

7.1: Political Context

7.2: Interrelationships of Families, School and Communities

Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

- Identify and Describe contemporary social issues and their effects on families and children
- Examine the cultural and historical implications of discrimination in many forms and the impact of the socialization of children and families.
- Understand the generational outcomes of media on the socialization of children.

Issues for Children and Families

Socialization intends to instill developmental skills in children for them to successfully function in their larger target communities. Children are members of several groups and structure within their nested systems. The developmental skills or tasks of a specific society differ from group to group depending on the cultural group the child belongs to. Factors that impact a child's socialization are ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability or class; skill development is thus dependent on the individual and the societal demand within the Bronfenbrenner's larger macrosystem influence.

Even at a young age, children are impacted by experiences that occur in the larger society. In response to these experiences children's beliefs, values attitudes will be shaped. How do society issues impact the way children are socialized? How do these societal changes redefine children's needs and development?

Some of key contemporary experiences and exposures include issues of related discrimination and prejudice and bias in all forms, and larger Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem changes such as the COVID-19 pandemic has on the socializing agent of media.

In this section, we consider how contemporary issues is changing the landscape of socialization for children. We consider what is needed to prepare children to be competent members of an ever-changing society.

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- [3: The Development of Identity in Children](#) by Krischa Esquivel, Emily Elam, Jennifer Paris, and Maricela Tafoya is licensed [CC BY 4.0](#). Original source: drive.google.com/file/d/1Fvn1eq2lecG0LXRTHAz5Kj6fFiOjH-jT.

7.1: Political Context

Political Context and Policy

Policies have a huge impact on children, families and how they experience the world around them. For instance, in 2001, President Bush signed into effect Public Law 107-110, better known as the No Child Left Behind Act mandating that schools administer achievement tests to students and publish those results so that parents have an idea of their children's performance. Additionally, the government would have information on the gaps in educational achievement between children from various social class, racial, and ethnic groups. Schools that showed significant gaps in these levels of performance were mandated to work toward narrowing these gaps. Educators criticized the policy for focusing too much on testing as the only indication of student performance. Target goals were considered unrealistic and set by the federal government rather than individual states. Because these requirements became increasingly unworkable for schools, changes to the law were requested. Children living in low SES communities suffered the most from this law. Children were expected to perform and meet unrealistic achievement levels while schools were not given the proper funding, tools, and resources to improve the quality of education to children.

School discipline policies that are below federal and state level can also be detrimental to children's development. This idea fits in to the school to prison pipeline. It is widely acknowledged that American schools—urban public schools in particular— are defining and managing student discipline with an increasingly punitive approach. Specific examples of restrictive school policies include the imposition of dress codes or uniforms to promote conformity, as well as the use of student ID badges to facilitate immediate identification of troublemakers and deter would-be rule breakers. Recent statistics indicate that over 80 percent of schools, and nearly all urban schools, now use some type of security and surveillance program. Aspects of these programs include the use of metal detectors, locked or monitored doors and gates, adult supervision of hallways, uniformed security guards or uniformed and armed security resource officers (SROs), security cameras, locker searches, clear school bag requirements, and drug-sniffing dogs. Research suggests that these trends in school punitiveness are not inconsequential (Welch & Payne 2010). For students perceived by teachers and administrators to be in the “school to prison pipeline” or on the “jailhouse track”, more punitive discipline is sanctioned, even when the particular violations are not illegal. Schools are more frequently responding to defiance of behavioral codes and broken laws with in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions (Welch & Payne 2010). These extreme measures contribute to children's academic success and perception of self.



Figure 7.1.1: Protesters fighting for public change. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Ted Eytan via [The Federalist](#))

Public Policies and Politics

Reflection

If tomorrow you could make one change to public policies that would make life better for children in your care or community, what would you change and why?

An investment in a well-crafted government program, using the tools that we know today to be highly effective, can have a huge development impact. Early childhood development programs are the foundations for successful social investments over the lifetime of an individual, especially for the poor. Investing more in this area is one of the most effective ways governments can improve economic mobility. Many governments are taking this lesson to heart and have increased investments in the early years. On a per capita basis, for example, governments are spending three times more on children aged 6–11 than on those aged 0–5. Moreover, early childhood investments tend to disproportionately favor physical infrastructure such as daycare facilities, while neglecting vital training and human capital. Recent research shows that some of the biggest returns on investment can come from modest programs that focus on improving the critical early interactions between young children and adults, be they parents, teachers, or caregivers (Berlinski & Schady, 2015).

Consider the influences from the exosystem and macrosystems that influence children and families as you watch [The Raising of America](#) video clips. Explore the website to learn more about the five-part documentary series that explores the question: Why are so many children in America faring so poorly? What are the consequences for the nation's future? How might we, as a nation, do better? The series investigates these questions through different disciplines: What does science tell us about the enduring importance of early life experiences on the brain and body? What it is like to be a parent today? And what policies and structures help or hinder the raising of healthy, happy and compassionate children?

Did you know that wages for average Americans have stagnated over the last forty years. At the same time, the cost of essentials (like housing and education) has substantially increased while corporate profits have skyrocketed. How does this pattern affect childhood?

Some facts to consider from Raising of America

- Most women work and 40% of new mothers return to work by the time their babies are three months old. Former Investment banker and economist Robert Dugger says, “Our policies actually actively discourage parents from being able to take care of their children when they’re very young. They may instinctively want to do it, but we don’t make it easy for them.”
- Ashley a welfare recipient says, “Everybody thinks that you get state assistance, well you’re just lazy and you don’t want to work. That’s not the case for the majority and that’s sure not the case for me.” Given its inaccuracy, why do you think the stereotyping of people in need of public assistance as “lazy” persists? What kind of public assistance do wealthy people receive?
- Why do so many people blame parents for making “wrong” or “irresponsible” decisions rather than address how the dice are loaded against them? How does this impact the policies and programs enacted to support low-income families with children?

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7.2: Interrelationships of Families, School and Communities

The Importance of Home/School Connection

Prior to Covid-19, home and school for children who may have not been homeschooled were a young child's two most important worlds. Children and families had to bridge these two worlds every day. It is important that home and school are connected in positive, respectful ways in which children feel secure. But when the two worlds are at odds because of apathy, lack of understanding, or an inability to work together, children suffer. Teachers who truly value the family's role in a child's education, and recognize how much they can accomplish by working with families, can build a true partnership. This section 5.8 will help you by addressing the following topics:

- Getting to know families
- Making families feel welcome
- Communicating with families
- Partnering with families on children's learning
- Responding to challenging situations

Appreciating Differences

Just as you get to know each child and use what you learn to develop a relationship that helps every child learn, you begin building a partnership with families by getting to know and appreciate each family. Every family is different. Teachers must vary the ways in which they communicate and involve families to reach every family. Think about the structure of your family did you live in a house with multiple generations? Families vary in regards to personalities and temperament with different comfort levels in relating to their child's school. Our life experiences, including the level of education, socio-economic status, immigrant status, may impact how families engage with their child's school and teacher. It's also important to acknowledge that we all have cultural differences and different beliefs, values, and practices. What are your personal experiences with schools and teachers? In what ways in understanding your experiences can assist in appreciating how families engage with their child's school? Knowing and appreciating what is unique or different about each family helps you to build relationships and support children's learning and development.

Belonging

Initial contacts with children's families are opportunities to get to know them better and understand their experiences, values, and beliefs. Some programs start with enrollment at the school, others use home visits. I can remember my daughter's teacher sending postcards to each student welcoming the family as a whole to the next grade, this made me feel as if the teacher cared and took the time to develop a relationship with not only the student but also the family. Families who feel welcome in the classroom are more likely to return and become involved in the program. When children first enter your program, their parents are likely to be especially interested in finding out what their child will be learning and what each day will be like. You can be prepared to meet this interest by making available as many of the following as possible:

- Take families and children on a tour of the classroom, introducing the inside and outside classroom environments. This can also be virtually or a video in which you and teachers tour not only the classroom but also the school. This may be helpful in decreasing anxiety and apprehension about what to expect and assist families in talking with their children about their school and classroom.
- Hold an open house to allow families to meet each other and experience the classroom environment.
- Create a display at the entrance to your classroom with pictures and descriptions of life in your classroom based on the languages of your children and families as well as the community. ([Adapted from National PTA Family Guide](#))

Communication

Communication with families is a means of building and maintaining relationships. What is the influence of culture on communication styles? One thing we learned from living in a Pandemic is the use of technology. Schools provided technology to

children as we pivoted to a remote learning environment and still may utilize this as schools are opening and temporarily shutting down for the well-being and health and safety of the teachers, staff, and children. Some schools might be using platforms to maintain open dialogue and communication with families. It is important to communicate in ways that meet the needs and ability levels of family members, particularly those whose primary language is not English.

Understanding the History

Schools and systems and policies which support schools can lend to how educators/teachers build relationships with families and support the needs of the community in which they are housed. For example, when we begin to look at policies and laws that changed schools structures it allows us to understand the difference between equality and equity. Equality is providing the same opportunity to all. Equity is meeting the specific needs of the individual to partake in the opportunity being provided.

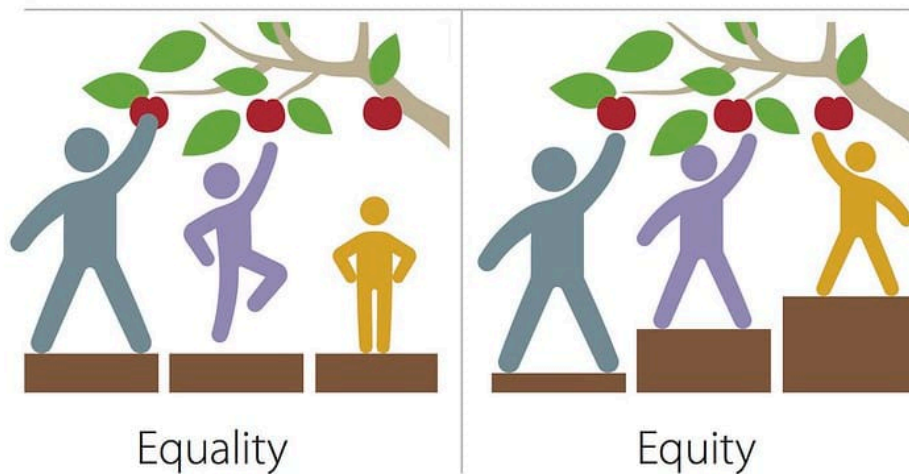


Figure 7.2.1: Equality vs Equity. (CC BY-NC 2.0; via flickr)

Policies and Laws

Mendez vs. Westminster (1947)



KAMALA HARRIS
UNITED STATES SENATOR

Sylvia Mendez

ONE OF THE FIRST STUDENTS
OF MEXICAN DESCENT TO
ATTEND AN ALL-WHITE
SCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA

Figure 5.8.2: Sylvia Mendez, by the Office of Senator Kamala Harris and US Department of Agriculture | Public domain

Just after the end of World War II, [Sylvia Mendez](#) was eight years old and a student at a racially segregated elementary school in Westminster, California. She wanted to attend a nearby school, but it was reserved for white-only students. Her parents (along with four other Mexican-American families) sued the school district on behalf of the community's 5,000 Latino and Latina students. In 1946, the plaintiffs won their case in federal court, making it the first time in U.S. history that a school district was told it had to desegregate.

The Mendez case had enormous implications for civil rights in the country. It preceded the *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation decision by eight years. Future Supreme Court Justice [Thurgood Marshall](#) represented both Sylvia Mendez and later Linda Brown in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. He used some of the same arguments from the Mendez case to win the *Brown* decision.

In the *Mendez v. Westminster* case, the judge wrote these words challenging the "separate but equal" doctrine established in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1898:

"The equal protection of the laws' pertaining to the public school system in California is not provided by furnishing in separate schools the same technical facilities, textbooks and courses of instruction to children of Mexican ancestry that are available to the other public school children regardless of their ancestry. A paramount requisite in the American system of public education is social equality. It must be open to all children by unified school association regardless of lineage."

A national hero, Sylvia Mendez received a 2010 Presidential Medal of Freedom and in 2018 was awarded the National Hispanic Hero Award. She continues to work for equality and justice for Latinos and all people of color.

The Maestas Desegregation Case

A 1914 case, [Francisco Maestas et al. v. George H. Shone, et al.](#), is a little-known forerunner to Sylvia Mendez and her family's fight to end educational segregation of Mexican American children. The case involved a railroad worker, Francisco Maestas, who was unable to enroll his son in the Alamosa, Colorado public school nearest their home. School officials demanded the boy attend a "Mexican school" with the district's other children of Mexican descent because it was assumed the children needed to learn English - even though most of the children at the school spoke English. The district court judge ruled in favor of the Maestas family, stating that all English-speaking children should be allowed to attend the school closest to their homes. Efforts are under way to build a memorial to the case as a milestone in ending segregation of Mexican children based on language and race ("[The Most Important School Desegregation Case You've Never Heard Of](#)", National Education Policy Newsletter, July 9, 2020).

Brown vs Board of Education

Jim Crow laws began around 1965 following the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. Jim Crow required separate accommodations for Whites and blacks. And then in 1896, with the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling, the "separate but equal" law became constitutional. Since these laws were built on the notion of white supremacy and black inferiority, "separate but equal" is indeed a misnomer. In 1954, the *Brown v. Board of Education* unanimous decision overturned *Plessy* and decided that separate is inherently unequal. But it was not until 1968 that the Supreme Court ordered segregated school systems dismantled.

Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA)

Developmental Disabilities are a group of disabilities, including ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disabilities, Hearing Loss, Learning Disability, Vision Impairments, and delays. These occur before age 21 and are expected to last throughout the lifetime.

Intellectual disabilities are disabilities that occur before age 21 – during a person's developmental stage of life – and are likely to be lifelong. A person with a developmental disability may require support in learning (both academic and experiential learning), judgment and reasoning. Some people with intellectual disabilities can live independently, work, and have families, while some need maximum support in all aspects of daily living.

Common developmental disabilities include Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, hearing loss, intellectual or cognitive disability, learning disability, vision impairment, or neurological impairments.

Intellectual or cognitive disabilities require some specialized assistance in learning. There is a wide range of people who have this

diagnosis, so we can't assume anything just because a person has a label of intellectual disability. Most people with intellectual disabilities are able to acquire information and skills in order to live independently and work as adults. A small percentage, however, need lifelong maximum support in activities of daily living like eating, showering, and dressing.

There are many causes of intellectual disability, including genetic disorders, falls, malnutrition, environmental pollution, birth trauma, infections, child abuse and accidents.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are very common – according to the Centers for Disease Control from 2017, 1 in 59 children has been diagnosed with ASD. The criteria for a diagnosis of ASD are complicated.

While ASD is sometimes characterized as a communication disorder, increasingly, some people believe autism is simply a different way of seeing the world, and the behaviors that accompany autism should be viewed as a form of diversity rather than something that needs professional intervention. It's important to remember that everyone with the diagnosis of ASD is an individual and nothing can be assumed about her or his abilities or need for support simply because of the diagnosis. Not every autistic person has every trait named in the diagnostic criteria, or experiences the same characteristic in the same way. While there is a growing movement of autistic pride, each autistic person experiences autism in their own way, and each may require different types of support for housing, education, employment, relationships, communication, healthcare, and activities of daily living.

Learning Disabilities are very common and can be thought of as a processing disorder, where information is processed a bit differently than with people who don't have this disability. One way to accommodate children and adults with learning disabilities is to provide extra time to process information or to express ideas. Dyslexia (difficulty in reading), dysgraphia (difficulty in writing), and dyscalculia (difficulty with arithmetic), are common learning disabilities. Another common learning disability is attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which results in difficulty in sustaining focus.

Cerebral Palsy is a very common developmental disability that causes people to experience stiff muscles or difficulties with coordination that causes a jerky motion. In some people it causes a continuous writhing motion. Some people with cerebral palsy can walk, while others need to use a wheelchair for mobility. A small percentage of cerebral palsy is inherited, but most cerebral palsy is caused by birth trauma or another kind of trauma, such as an accident.

Some people with cerebral palsy have cognitive or learning disabilities, while many do not. So like having a diagnosis of any other disability, having a diagnosis of cerebral palsy doesn't imply anything about intelligence, judgment or ability to work.

Epilepsy is a seizure disorder, where neurons in the brain can cause several different types of seizures. Some seizures are minor and the individual experiencing them loses contact with the environment for a brief period of time. Some seizures might cause a person to have repetitive motions for a minute or more. And some seizures are more involved and cause the person experiencing them to lose control of muscles for a period of time.

Neurological impairments are a collection of conditions resulting from issues with the nervous system that may cause a range of symptoms. Some neurologic impairments are hidden disabilities that result in the need for some specialized assistance. Some neurological impairments have a genetic component, while others do not. Neurological impairments include narcolepsy, neurofibromatosis, tuberous sclerosis, spina bifida, Prader-Willi syndrome, and Tourette Syndrome.

Legal Issues, Legal Rights, and Disability

Citizens of the United States obtain rights in three different ways: they are enumerated in our Constitution and Bill of Rights; they are enacted through legislation (local, state or federal) and codified in regulations that further explain or interpret the legislation; or they are the result of court decisions that further define our rights, how they should be interpreted and commonly understood.

Citizens with disabilities have the same rights as citizens who do not have disabilities, among them the right to vote, to own property and dispose of it as they wish, the right to marry, the right to privacy, the right to worship, and freedom of speech, and the right to due process.

After World War II and the Nuremberg Trials, an important concept of informed consent became the standard when medical or other interventions are recommended. This means that a person needs to consent to treatment and needs to understand both the benefits of the treatment and any risks that might derive from the treatment. If we go in for surgery, we are asked to sign a consent form that details what could happen to us as a result of the surgery or of medications that are prescribed. Informed consent also applies to issues like behavior management interventions.

One issue that has involved informed consent and is the source of some tension at the moment is the issue of guardianship. In New York State, the law presumes that anyone who is over 18 can make his or her own decisions. Some individuals with intellectual disabilities may need support in order to make decisions about health care, whether or not to have children, or other life choices. Parents can retain the power to make these decisions for their adult children with intellectual or developmental disabilities if they go to court and petition to remain their adult child's guardian. Sometimes parents are awarded limited guardianship – they can make some decisions for their adult child with a disability, but not all decisions. Recently a new idea – supported decision-making – is gaining ground. The idea is that the person appoints someone he or she trusts to assist in making important decisions without giving up her or his rights.

When a person with a disability enters public care (or private care) they often give up some rights or parts of rights in order to be eligible for the care they receive. For example, if a person is moving into a group home or apartment program that is run by a service agency, s/he might be giving up some rights to privacy or self-determination in order for the service agency to provide what's needed. For example, if the person is living with six people and there are two staff members, and five of the residents want to go swimming on Tuesdays, the person who would prefer to stay home may end up going swimming because there is no one to stay home with him or her. Or if the person is used to having a private room s/he may be living with a roommate, at least for a period of time. These issues are typically spelled out so that they are clear before the person moves from one setting to another. While the goal of these organizations should be to provide as much choice as possible – to provide services in the 'least restrictive environment' possible, practical issues sometimes mean choices may be limited.

There are five basic laws and regulations that affect disabled children and adults. These are explained below:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973: Sections 504 and 508 (1973)

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is very important because its Section 504 mandated that any public entity receiving federal funds needed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Since hospitals, federal courts, transportation systems and educational institutions received federal funds, what this meant was that for the first time people who had mobility or sensory issues could take advantage of higher education or the court system, or have access to public transportation. Section 508 mandated that internal federal systems – for example, the telecommunications systems- had to be accessible. This opened the door for people with disabilities to be employed by the federal government. One of the important principles included in the Rehab Act of 1973 was the idea of 'least restrictive alternative' or 'least restrictive environment.' What this means is that when services are needed – whether they are rehabilitative or educational – they should be provided in the least possible segregated setting, and that people with disabilities should only receive segregated services when absolutely necessary. So, rehabilitation services should be provide in the community, not in segregated settings like hospitals or institutions.

PL 94-142 (1975), renamed IDEA (2004), and Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)

Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act – further modified in and renamed Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated a free and appropriate education to all children, whether or not they had a disability. IDEA expanded on this idea, and recent reauthorizations have made some improvements. Important to the original and subsequent modifications is the idea which was embedded in the Rehab Act of 1973 – the idea of 'least restrictive setting.' Extending this idea is the concept that the default educational setting should be one where the child with a disability is included or integrated, and only removed from an inclusive classroom for a specific, documented reason (therapy or another documented reason). Also included is the mandate for a written individualized education plan (IEP) that describes the student's needs and the services to be provided to assist in that child's education, due process and appeals, formalized input from parents and the student, and periodic review. Additional supports needed by the student are detailed in each student's IEP.

The Developmental Disabilities Act (1963)

The [Developmental Disabilities Act](#) was initially authorized in 1963 by President Kennedy. It is administered under the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL). It is reauthorized periodically and changes are made depending on current needs. For example, in 1975, the State Protection and Advocacy systems were created to address civil rights violations. The Act of 1978 provided for the creation of Developmental Disabilities Planning Councils in each state. These Councils are awarded federal funds and are charged with funding pilot projects that can be widely adopted if they prove to be viable and useful. The DD Act also provided for the creation of University Centers of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDs) which are charged with training clinicians and other staff to work in the community with individuals with developmental disabilities. Protection and Advocacy programs in each state can help with bringing legal actions in cases of violations of individual rights, but they frequently bring actions against more systemic violations of rights. Protection and Advocacy Programs address legal rights of individuals

with developmental disabilities, assistive technology, voting accessibility and traumatic brain injury.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is the most sweeping legislation for persons with disabilities in the United States. The ADA was signed by President George H. W. Bush in July of 1990, and took effect two years later. The ADA and its amendments of 2008 provide for reasonable accommodation in employment, communication, transportation, and in the use of community resources, like local businesses. While the ADA lays the groundwork for forcing accessibility, it also puts the burden of complaint upon disabled citizens. While the Office of Civil Rights will investigate and prosecute violations of the ADA, reliance for identifying instances of violation rests with individuals with disabilities.



Figure 7.2.3: Obama archives. President Bush signing the ADA. Far right (in hat) is Justin Dart.. (CC BY-SA 2.0; Wikimedia)

The Olmstead v L.C. Decision of 1999

The [Olmstead v L.C. Decision of 1999](#) was a lawsuit filed by two women living in the Georgia Regional Hospital. Each of the women wanted to live in the community and in each case the professionals treating the women agreed that they would be able to do that. The State of Georgia had not placed the women arguing that their budget was inadequate to support them in the community. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which found that “under Title II of the ADA states are required to place persons with mental disabilities in community settings rather than in institutions when the State’s treatment professionals have determined that community placement is appropriate” and when other conditions have been met. The decision also reaffirmed that individuals with disabilities should not be excluded from life in the community but instead should be included in society.

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8: EDUCATION

Learning Objectives

- Identify types of schools/systems and educational systems.
- Explore the interrelationships of families, communities and schools.
- Identify the roles of teachers/educators.
- Explore current research and methods.

The Role of School in our Society

Schools and schooling in the United States and were developed to facilitate learning, increase knowledge, skills and impart values based on the dominant culture(s) and structural systems (Larson, 2021). Formal education is commonly divided formally into such stages as infant/toddler, preschool, transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high school and then career technical education, college, university and internships or apprenticeships.

[8.1: History of American Education](#)

[8.2: Theoretical Perspectives on Education](#)

[8.3: Education around the World](#)

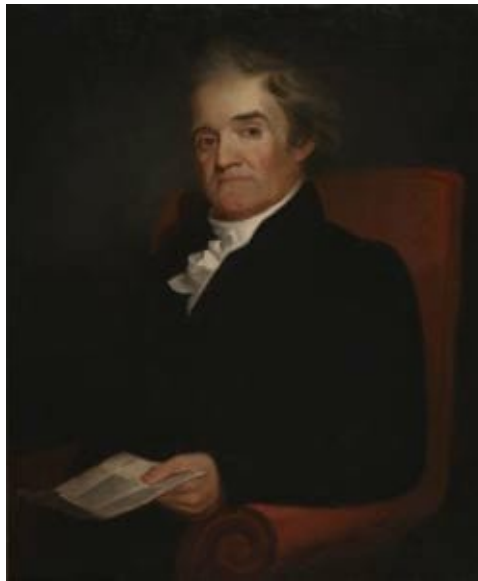
[8.4: School Systems](#)

[8.5: Current Research](#)

8.1: History of American Education

Learning Objectives

- Identify important points during the timeline of American Education
- Explain how past events continue to affect current education and educational policy.
- Locate and explain, by referencing examples in a Nation at Risk, the three competing goals of public education: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility.
- Explain the Nation at Risk commission's recommendations.
- Identify two recommendations that affect current educational policies.

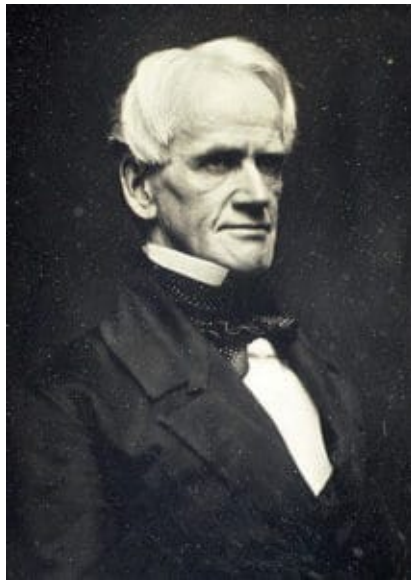


Portrait of Noah Webster

In this chapter, by studying the history of education in America, a better understanding of what currently exists in the educational landscape and why can be achieved. Important innovations have occurred throughout the history of education. In contrast, not every policy or strategy resulted in better education. In the beginning, education was not very widespread and definitely not available to all children.

Thomas Jefferson (1779) had a radical idea that every child should receive an education at the public's expense. The education Jefferson proposed was limited in scope compared with the amount of time spent by a student currently. One of the needs in a democratic society required the ability to read and understand what was read. Jefferson's efforts met with stiff resistance while all efforts to obtain legislative approval failed.

After the Revolution, America needed to separate itself from Britain. Noah Webster called for the elimination of British texts. He wrote the popular Blue Back Speller that Americanized the spelling of many words. Other authors began writing texts that promoted national ideals. Education was being used to make America a unique country.



Daguerreotype of Horace Mann

In the early 1800s Horace Mann began the make-over of the Massachusetts school system as the state superintendent of education. Mann began visiting schools, making reports, and publicly arguing for a free education for all children. In addition, Mann argued for teacher preparation and standardized equipment. His ideas resulted in common schools that were free, had standard curriculums, were funded by taxes, and gave some local control back to the state. Shortly after Mann's death, he was recognized as a leader in public education and Massachusetts passed public, tax supported, compulsory education.

Slavery had been abolished in Massachusetts early, but African American children were mistreated and harassed in integrated schools leading to segregated schools. A concern about the growth of prejudice generated by segregation in schools and a resentment among African American parents over supporting schools their children could not attend led to unsuccessful petitions to close segregated schools. *Roberts v City of Boston* (1850) argued before the state supreme court failed because the court cited provisions had been made for the African American children to have a school even though it was segregated. In 1855 the state legislature abolished segregation in schools.

Since the beginning of American education, the Protestant faith was a dominant influence with philosophy, holidays, and even prayers. Besides wide spread prejudice against Catholics, they did not want their children exposed to religious beliefs not supported at home. Well attended Great School Debates argued by Cardinal Hughes against a multitude of Protestant ministers occurred. Hughes wanted public funds to start Catholic schools, but the NY City School Board held the line on funding only public schools. The Catholic school system started by breaking away from the public-school system.

At the end of the Civil War, slavery was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment. Unfortunately, although African Americans were no longer slaves, states of the former Confederacy actively fought integration. Reconstruction ended with the Compromise of 1877 signaling the beginning of the Jim Crow era and the erosion of black civil rights and liberties. By 1896, states had been using the doctrine of separate but equal to justify segregation. Facilities and equipment were vastly inferior for African American students, not equal. *Plessy v. Ferguson* had worked its way up to the US Supreme Court. *Plessy* argued Louisiana's law of separate but equal violated the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments and that segregation labeled African American people as inferior. The Supreme Court ruled that separate but equal did not violate the Constitution.



Brown County's Sod High School

As more and more people migrated to the West for opportunity, state constitutions touted free public educations. So many schools were opening that a new source of teachers was needed. Katherine Beecher established teaching as a female moral calling. Beecher's stand allowed females to journey into the vast expanse of the western plains. With the influx of female teachers, care came into the American classrooms. Students also received moral education through the very popular McGuffey's Readers.

By 1890, America's public schools were educating more students than any other nation on Earth. Unfortunately, many minorities were segregated from public education including, African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexicans. In 1896, John Dewey open his first progressive laboratory in Massachusetts. The progressive philosophy practiced hands-on learning that led to problem solving and critical thinking. Progressivism was popular until World War II.

In 1954, a unanimous decision crafted by Chief Justice Earl Warren in the case of Brown v. the Topeka Board of Education heard before the US Supreme Court ended segregation in public schools. Cases from Kansas, Delaware, Washington, DC, South Carolina, and Virginia were combined. In Topeka, each of the students who tried to enroll in a neighborhood school were denied admission. Thurgood Marshall, a future Supreme Court Justice, was one of the lawyers who argued the case for the NAACP. The justices stated that separate facilities are inherently unequal, and that education is a right. Not much changed, the southern states resisted integration, and African American faculty of students who were integrated lost their jobs. As nine students, the Little Rock Nine, tried to integrate a white high school the Alabama National Guard under the direction of the governor prevented the students from entering the school. President Eisenhower federalized the national guard and sent federal troops to enforce the integration in 1959. Finally, when the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 stipulating that noncompliance in integration would result in the loss of federal funds, states complied with the Court's order. By 1972, 91% of students attended integrated schools.



In 1958, the Russians launched Sputnik, the world's first satellite. America found itself behind in the resulting space race. The National Defense Education Act called for finding and educating more talent in science, mathematics, foreign languages,

and technology. Monetary support was given to states and students. Vocational education received funding, also. A call for experimentation and research in media to improve the presentation of academic subject matter with training given to teachers.

In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to provide all students a fair and equal opportunity to achieve an exceptional education. Part of the act's goal was to close the achievement gap between poor students and all other students. The three major titles of the act are: Title I – Financial Assistance for the Education of Low-Income Families; Title VI – Aid to Handicapped Children; and Title VII – Bilingual Education Programs, which established the federal fingerprints on education. Congress reauthorized the act in 2001 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). A major provision added testing of all students in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics with each state setting their own standards. Wide spread criticism caused Congress to reauthorize the act as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. Although the testing continued, accountability was transferred to the states. States submit goals and standards with a plan on how they will be achieved. States also determine the consequences for low-achieving schools (bottom 10%). In addition, all schools are to offer college and career counseling and Advanced Placement courses to all students.



In 1968, Mexican American students from three Los Angeles East Side high schools (Garfield, Roosevelt, and Lincoln) walked out over high dropout rates, lack of college prep courses, rundown schools, and a low number of Mexican American teachers. Student walkouts were a part of a larger scope of activism in the Mexican American community that grew out of treatment as second-class citizens. The walkouts lasted more than a week with student speeches and clashes with the police culminating with students presenting demands at a board of education meeting. The board of education granted the request for smaller class sizes and more bilingual counselors and teachers immediately. A grand jury indicted the activists, the “Eastside 13,” but an appeals court vacated the indictment in 1970. Actions taken by the students cultivated a sense of possibility in the community.

By 1971, Detroit and its suburbs presented areas of entrenched segregation as a result of white flight, real estate policies, neighborhood associations, and town policies. A judge approved the Detroit metro plan as a remedy, but the plan failed to garner support from most of the groups involved. In fact, the plan failed to reverse segregation and did not raise the quality of education. When the Supreme Court struck down busing as a means of achieving integration in the *Milliken v Bradley* case, integration was deemed the responsibility of the city. Detroit is still searching for a solution to this thorny issue.

In 1972, Congress passed Title IX of the Education Amendments Act that states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance” (US Congress). Title IX corrected an oversight by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which did not prohibit sex discrimination against persons employed at educational institutions. If a school discriminated on the basis of gender, federal funds would be withheld from the school. Enforcement fell to lawsuits brought by the federal government. The act resulted in the creation of public-school sports teams for girls.

Lau v. Nicols (1974) was decided unanimously by the Supreme Court. Supplemental language instruction was denied to most Chinese students who were integrated into the San Francisco public school system; therefore, these students did not receive a meaningful education. In fact, few students throughout the country received supplemental English instruction since funding was limited and participation was voluntary. The Court stated that supplemental instruction was required because the school district received federal funds. The Court argued that a “sink or swim” policy for learning was prohibited. Subsequent decisions required plaintiffs to provide proof of intentional discrimination which weakened the *Lau* finding.

In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed by Congress that required “public schools receiving federal

funds to provide equal education to students with physical and mental disabilities” (US Congress). To ensure that the education provided students with disabilities closely aligned with the education of non-disabled students, students with disabilities were evaluated and an educational plan with parent input was created. Schools were required to provide procedures for parents to dispute decisions with judicial review as a last resort. The act required disabled students to be placed in the least restrictive environment with the greatest opportunity to interact with non-disabled students. Only when the nature and severity of the disability prevented education in a regular classroom were separate schools allowed.

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8.2: Theoretical Perspectives on Education

Education Theories

Schools and educational systems play an integral role in individuals' lives as well as society as a whole, sociologists and educators view that role from many diverse points of view. Functionalists believe that education equips people to perform different functional roles in society. Conflict theorists view education as a means of widening the gap in social inequality. Feminist theorists point to evidence that sexism in education continues to prevent women from achieving a full measure of social equality. Symbolic interactionists study the dynamics of the classroom, the interactions between students and teachers, and how those affect everyday life. In this section, you will learn about each of these perspectives and review familiar and new theorist such as Piaget, Gardner and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Functionalism

Functionalists view education as one of the more important social institutions in a society. They contend that education contributes two kinds of functions: manifest (or primary) functions, which are the intended and visible functions of education; and latent (or secondary) functions, which are the hidden and unintended functions.

Manifest Functions

There are several major manifest functions associated with education. The first is socialization. Beginning in preschool and kindergarten, students are taught to practice various societal roles. The French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who established the academic discipline of sociology, characterized schools as “socialization agencies that teach children how to get along with others and prepare them for adult economic roles” (Durkheim 1898). Indeed, it seems that schools have taken on this responsibility in full.

This socialization also involves learning the rules and norms of the society as a whole. In the early days of compulsory education, students learned the dominant culture. Today, since the culture of the United States is increasingly diverse, students may learn a variety of cultural norms, not only that of the dominant culture.

School systems in the United States also transmit the core values of the nation through manifest functions like social control. One of the roles of schools is to teach students conformity to law and respect for authority. Obviously, such respect, given to teachers and administrators, will help a student navigate the school environment. This function also prepares students to enter the workplace and the world at large, where they will continue to be subject to people who have authority over them. Fulfillment of this function rests primarily with classroom teachers and instructors who are with students all day.



Figure 5.1.1: Teacher lecturing in the classroom (CC BY 2.0; Tulane Public Relations via Wikimedia)

Education also provides one of the major methods used by people for upward social mobility. This function is referred to as social placement. College and graduate schools are viewed as vehicles for moving students closer to the careers that will give them the financial freedom and security they seek. As a result, college students are often more motivated to study areas that they believe will be advantageous on the social ladder. A student might value business courses over a class in Victorian poetry because she sees business class as a stronger vehicle for financial success.

Latent Functions

The educational setting introduces students to social networks that might last for years and can help people find jobs after their schooling is complete. Of course, with social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn, these networks are easier than ever to maintain. Another latent function is the ability to work with others in small groups, a skill that is transferable to a workplace.

The educational system, especially as experienced on university campuses, has traditionally provided a place for students to learn about various social issues. This was definitely apparent when the nation went into lock downs and online learning. Students were learning how to navigate and develop relationships with their peers, siblings and families in different ways than before. There were also movements happening within the United States and abroad related to social justice, equity, voting rights, fair pay, health care and many more which were unified with the purpose of changing the political climate of the country.

Manifest and Latent Functions of Education according to functionalist theory, education contributes both manifest and latent functions.

Manifest Functions: Openly stated functions with intended goals	Latent Functions: Hidden, unstated functions with sometimes unintended consequences
Socialization	Courtship
Transmission of culture	Social networks
Social control	Group work
Social placement	Creation of generation gap
Cultural innovation	Political and social integration

Another role of schools, according to functionalist theory, is that of sorting, or classifying students based on academic merit or potential. The most capable students are identified early in schools through testing and classroom achievements. Such students are placed in accelerated programs in anticipation of successful college attendance.

Figure 5.1.2: Young girl looking out window

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists do not believe that public schools reduce social inequality. Rather, they believe that the educational system reinforces and perpetuates social inequalities that arise from differences in class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Where functionalists see education as serving a beneficial role, conflict theorists view it more negatively. To them, educational systems preserve the status quo and push people of lower status into obedience.

The fulfillment of one's education is closely linked to social class. Students of low socioeconomic status are generally not afforded the same opportunities as students of higher status, no matter how great their academic ability or desire to learn. Picture a student from a working-class home who wants to do well in school. On a Monday, he's assigned a paper that's due Friday. Monday evening, he has to babysit his younger sister while his divorced mother works. Tuesday and Wednesday, he works stocking shelves after school until 10:00 p.m. By Thursday, the only day he might have available to work on that assignment, he's so exhausted he can't bring himself to start the paper. His mother, though she'd like to help him, is so tired herself that she isn't able to give him the encouragement or support he needs. And since English is her second language, she has difficulty with some of his educational materials. They also lack a computer and printer at home, which most of his classmates have, so they have to rely on the public library or school system for access to technology. As this story shows, many students from working-class families have to contend with helping out at home, contributing financially to the family, poor study environments and a lack of support from their families. This is a difficult match with education systems that adhere to a traditional curriculum that is more easily understood and completed by students of higher social classes.

Such a situation leads to social class reproduction, extensively studied by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. He researched how cultural capital, or cultural knowledge that serves (metaphorically) as currency that helps us navigate a culture, alters the experiences and opportunities available to French students from different social classes. Members of the upper and middle classes have more cultural capital than do families of lower-class status. As a result, the educational system maintains a cycle in which the dominant culture's values are rewarded. Instruction and tests cater to the dominant culture and leave others struggling to identify with values and competencies outside their social class. For example, there has been a great deal of discussion over what standardized tests such as the SAT truly measure. Many argue that the tests group students by cultural ability rather than by natural intelligence.

The cycle of rewarding those who possess cultural capital is found in formal educational curricula as well as in the hidden curriculum, which refers to the type of nonacademic knowledge that students learn through informal learning and cultural transmission. This hidden curriculum reinforces the positions of those with higher cultural capital and serves to bestow status unequally.

Conflict theorists point to tracking, a formalized sorting system that places students on "tracks" (advanced versus low achievers) that perpetuate inequalities. While educators may believe that students do better in tracked classes because they are with students of similar ability and may have access to more individual attention from teachers, conflict theorists feel that tracking leads to self-fulfilling prophecies in which students live up (or down) to teacher and societal expectations (Education Week 2004).

To conflict theorists, schools play the role of training working-class students to accept and retain their position as lower members of society. They argue that this role is fulfilled through the disparity of resources available to students in richer and poorer neighborhoods as well as through testing (Lauen and Tyson 2008).

IQ tests have been attacked for being biased—for testing cultural knowledge rather than actual intelligence. For example, a test item may ask students what instruments belong in an orchestra. To correctly answer this question requires certain cultural knowledge—knowledge most often held by more affluent people who typically have more exposure to orchestral music. Though experts in testing claim that bias has been eliminated from tests, conflict theorists maintain that this is impossible. These tests, to conflict theorists, are another way in which education does not provide opportunities, but instead maintains an established configuration of power.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. Almost two-thirds of the world's 862 million illiterate people are women, and the illiteracy rate among women is expected to increase in many regions, especially in several African and Asian countries (UNESCO 2005; World Bank 2007).

Women in the United States have been relatively late, historically speaking, to be granted entry to the public university system. In fact, it wasn't until the establishment of Title IX of the Education Amendments in 1972 that discriminating on the basis of sex in U.S. education programs became illegal. In the United States, there is also a post-education gender disparity between what male and female college graduates earn. A study released in May 2011 showed that, among men and women who graduated from college between 2006 and 2010, men out-earned women by an average of more than \$5,000 each year. First-year job earnings for men averaged \$33,150; for women the average was \$28,000 (Godofsky, Zukin, and van Horn 2011). Similar trends are seen among salaries of professionals in virtually all industries.

When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to promote women's rights to equal education (and its resultant benefits) across the world.

Grade Inflation: When is an 'A' Really a 'C'?

Consider a large-city newspaper publisher. Ten years ago, when culling résumés for an entry-level copywriter, they were well assured that if they selected a grad with a GPA of 3.7 or higher, they'd have someone with the writing skills to contribute to the workplace on day one. But over the last few years, they've noticed that A-level students don't have the competency evident in the past. More and more, they find themselves in the position of educating new hires in abilities that, in the past, had been mastered during their education.

This story illustrates a growing concern referred to as grade inflation—a term used to describe the observation that the correspondence between letter grades and the achievements they reflect has been changing (in a downward direction) over time. Put simply, what used to be considered C-level, or average, now often earns a student a B, or even an A.

Why is this happening? Research on this emerging issue is ongoing, so no one is quite sure yet. Some cite the alleged shift toward a culture that rewards effort instead of product, i.e., the amount of work a student puts in raises the grade, even if the resulting product is poor quality. Another oft-cited contributor is the pressure many of today's instructors feel to earn positive course evaluations from their students—records that can tie into teacher compensation, award of tenure, or the future career of a young grad teaching entry-level courses. The fact that these reviews are commonly posted online exacerbates this pressure.

Other studies don't agree that grade inflation exists at all. In any case, the issue is hotly debated, with many being called upon to conduct research to help us better understand and respond to this trend (National Public Radio 2004; Mansfield 2005).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism sees education as one way that labeling theory is seen in action. A symbolic interactionist might say that this labeling has a direct correlation to those who are in power and those who are labeled. For example, low standardized test scores or poor performance in a particular class often lead to a student who is labeled as a low achiever. Such labels are difficult to “shake off,” which can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton 1968).

In his book *High School Confidential*, Jeremy Iverson details his experience as a Stanford graduate posing as a student at a California high school. One of the problems he identifies in his research is that of teachers applying labels that students are never able to lose. One teacher told him, without knowing he was a bright graduate of a top university, that he would never amount to anything (Iverson 2006). Iverson obviously didn't take this teacher's false assessment to heart. But when an actual seventeen-year-old student hears this from a person with authority over her, it's no wonder that the student might begin to “live down to” that label.

The labeling with which symbolic interactionists concern themselves extends to the very degrees that symbolize completion of education. Credentialism embodies the emphasis on certificates or degrees to show that a person has a certain skill, has attained a certain level of education, or has met certain job qualifications. These certificates or degrees serve as a symbol of what a person has achieved, and allows the labeling of that individual.

Indeed, as these examples show, labeling theory can significantly impact a student's schooling. This is easily seen in the educational setting, as teachers and more powerful social groups within the school dole out labels that are adopted by the entire school population.

Cognitive Theories

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory from Chapter One

Gardner's [Multiple Intelligences Theory](#), of which there are currently nine so-called intelligences, listed as follows. (Note: number nine is pretty new on Professor Gardner's evolving list and is yet to be included in most representative graphics, such as the one below.)

1. musical-rhythmic and harmonic
2. visual-spatial
3. verbal-linguistic
4. logical-mathematical
5. bodily-kinesthetic
6. interpersonal
7. intrapersonal
8. naturalist
9. existential.



Figure 5.1.3: Gardener's Multiple Intelligences Theory. (CC BY-SA 4.0 ; Sajaganesandip via [Wikimedia](#))

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Kimberle Williams Crenshaw—who coined the term Critical Race Theory defined as "a practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship." (Crenshaw, 2011) This describes this theory as a verb. Here's an example of what this looks like in practice.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



Critical Race Theory in Education

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to education by arguing that race has remained undertheorized, and although race has been examined "as a powerful tool for explaining social inequity, the intellectual salience of this theorizing has not been systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequality" (p. 50). After Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) seminal article on CRT in education, many authors have applied CRT to educational research (Solorzano, 1998; Tate, 1997).

There are five tenets that CRT scholars have developed that guide the examination of educational equity and racial justice:

1. **Centrality of Race and Racism:** CRT research within an education context should center race and racism, as well as the intersections of other forms of oppression, such as gender, class, and sexual orientation.
2. **Challenge to the Dominant Perspective:** CRT in education challenges dominant culture perspectives and centers historically marginalized perspectives.
3. **Commitment to Social Justice:** CRT is consistently rooted in social justice outcomes.
4. **Valuing Experiential Knowledge:** CRT builds on the oral traditions and narratives of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities when discerning social inequities.
5. **Interdisciplinary:** CRT asserts that scholarly research should reflect multiple perspectives (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Critical Race Theory has also received criticisms by the educational systems as shame blaming or not the history which should be shared in our schools and classrooms.

Critical Reflection and Application Time

What did you hear the General in the video above say and what are your thoughts and feelings of what was said?

In what ways is education shaped by the theories we learned in this chapter, what examples would you add to each of the theories to provide deeper understanding?

Summary

The theories offer insight into how we understand education and how schools play a role in the development of child within Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Systems Theory. . Functionalists view education as an important social institution that contributes both manifest and latent functions. Functionalists see education as serving the needs of society by preparing students for later roles, or functions, in society. Conflict theorists see schools as a means for perpetuating class, racial-ethnic, and gender inequalities. In the same vein, feminist theory focuses specifically on the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education. The theory of symbolic interactionism focuses on education as a means for labeling individuals. Piaget's cognitive development describes the stages of thinking from individual to interpersonal based on interactions and experiences. Gardner incorporates the way we learn based on our diverse array of intelligences. Critical Race Theory calls us to act and identify race and racism in the communities we live and engage as educators.

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8.3: Education around the World

Education Values Vary Geographically



Figure 8.3.1: These children are at a library in Singapore, where students are outperforming U.S. students on worldwide tests.. (Copyright; kodomut via flickr)

International differences in education systems are not solely a financial issue. The value placed on education, the amount of time devoted to it, and the distribution of education within a country also play a role in those differences. For example, students in South Korea spend 220 days a year in school, compared to the 180 days a year of their United States counterparts (Pellissier 2010). As of 2006, the United States ranked fifth among twenty-seven countries for college participation, but ranked sixteenth in the number of students who receive college degrees (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education 2006). These statistics may be related to how much time is spent on education in the United States.

Then there is the issue of educational distribution within a nation. In December 2010, the results of a test called the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is administered to fifteen-year-old students worldwide, were released. Those results showed that students in the United States had fallen from fifteenth to twenty-fifth in the rankings for science and math (National Public Radio 2010). Students at the top of the rankings hailed from Shanghai, Finland, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

Analysts determined that the nations and city-states at the top of the rankings had several things in common. For one, they had well-established standards for education with clear goals for all students. They also recruited teachers from the top 5 to 10 percent of university graduates each year, which is not the case for most countries (National Public Radio 2010).

Finally, there is the issue of social factors. One analyst from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the organization that created the test, attributed 20 percent of performance differences and the United States' low rankings to differences in social background. Researchers noted that educational resources, including money and quality teachers, are not distributed equitably in the United States. In the top-ranking countries, limited access to resources did not necessarily predict low performance. Analysts also noted what they described as "resilient students," or those students who achieve at a higher level than one might expect given their social background. In Shanghai and Singapore, the proportion of resilient students is about 70 percent. In the United States, it is below 30 percent. These insights suggest that the United States' educational system may be on a descending path that could detrimentally affect the country's economy and its social landscape (National Public Radio 2010).

Education in Finland

With public education in the United States under such intense criticism, why is it that Singapore, South Korea, and especially Finland (which is culturally most similar to us), have such excellent public education? Over the course of thirty years, the country has pulled itself from among the lowest rankings by the Organization of Economic Cooperation (OECD) to first in 2012, and remains, as of 2014, in the top five. Contrary to the rigid curriculum and long hours demanded of students in South Korea and Singapore, Finnish education often seems paradoxical to outside observers because it appears to break a lot of the rules we take for granted. It is common for children to enter school at seven years old, and children will have more recess and less hours in school than U.S. children—approximately 300 less hours. Their homework load is light when compared to all other industrialized nations (nearly 300 fewer hours per year in elementary school). There are no gifted programs, almost no private schools, and no high-stakes national standardized tests (Laukkanen 2008; Lynell Hancock 2011).

Prioritization is different than in the United States. There is an emphasis on allocating resources for those who need them most, high standards, support for special needs students, qualified teachers taken from the top 10 percent of the nation's graduates and who must earn a Master's degree, evaluation of education, balancing decentralization and centralization.

"We used to have a system which was really unequal," stated the Finnish Education Chief in an interview. "My parents never had a real possibility to study and have a higher education. We decided in the 1960s that we would provide a free quality education to all. Even universities are free of charge. Equal means that we support everyone and we're not going to waste anyone's skills." As for teachers, "We don't test our teachers or ask them to prove their knowledge. But it's true that we do invest in a lot of additional teacher training even after they become teachers" (Gross-Loh, 2014).

Yet over the past decade Finland has consistently performed among the top nations on the PISA. Finland's school children didn't always excel. Finland built its excellent, efficient, and equitable educational system in a few decades from scratch, and the concept guiding almost every educational reform has been equity. The Finnish paradox is that by focusing on the bigger picture for all, Finland has succeeded at fostering the individual potential of most every child.

"We created a school system based on equality to make sure we can develop everyone's potential. Now we can see how well it's been working. Last year the OECD tested adults from twenty-four countries measuring the skill levels of adults aged sixteen to sixty-five on a survey called the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which tests skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments. Finland scored at or near the top on all measures."

Formal and Informal Education

As already mentioned, education is not solely concerned with the basic academic concepts that a student learns in the classroom. Societies also educate their children, outside of the school system, in matters of everyday practical living. These two types of learning are referred to as formal education and informal education.

Formal education describes the learning of academic facts and concepts through a formal curriculum. Arising from the tutelage of ancient Greek thinkers, centuries of scholars have examined topics through formalized methods of learning. Education in earlier times was only available to the higher classes; they had the means for access to scholarly materials, plus the luxury of leisure time that could be used for learning. The Industrial Revolution and its accompanying social changes made education more accessible to the general population. Many families in the emerging middle class found new opportunities for schooling.

The modern U.S. educational system is the result of this progression. Today, basic education is considered a right and responsibility for all citizens. Expectations of this system focus on formal education, with curricula and testing designed to ensure that students learn the facts and concepts that society believes are basic knowledge.

In contrast, informal education describes learning about cultural values, norms, and expected behaviors by participating in a society. This type of learning occurs both through the formal education system and at home. Our earliest learning experiences generally happen via parents, relatives, and others in our community. Through informal education, we learn how to dress for different occasions, how to perform regular life routines like shopping for and preparing food, and how to keep our bodies clean.

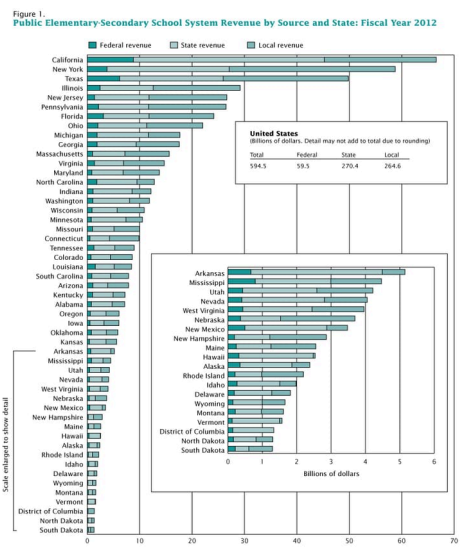


Figure 8.3.2: Parents teaching their children to cook provide an informal education. . (Photo by [Direct Media](#) on [StockSnap](#))

Cultural transmission refers to the way people come to learn the values, beliefs, and social norms of their culture. Both informal and formal education include cultural transmission. For example, a student will learn about cultural aspects of modern history in a U.S. History classroom. In that same classroom, the student might learn the cultural norm for asking a classmate out on a date through passing notes and whispered conversations.

Access to Education

Another global concern in education is universal access. This term refers to people's equal ability to participate in an education system. On a world level, access might be more difficult for certain groups based on class or gender (as was the case in the United States earlier in the nation's history, a dynamic we still struggle to overcome). The modern idea of universal access arose in the United States as a concern for people with disabilities. In the United States, one way in which universal education is supported is through federal and state governments covering the cost of free public education. Of course, the way this plays out in terms of school budgets and taxes makes this an often-contested topic on the national, state, and community levels. In viewing the table picture below you may need to enlarge your screen to view.



How has your state's revenue affected your educational opportunities? (Graph courtesy of Census of Governments: Survey of School System Finances 2012)

A precedent for universal access to education in the United States was set with the 1972 U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia's decision in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*. This case was brought on the behalf of seven school-age children with special needs who argued that the school board was denying their access to free public education. The school board maintained that the children's "exceptional" needs, which included mental retardation and mental illness, precluded their right to be educated for free in a public school setting. The board argued that the cost of educating these children would be too expensive and that the children would therefore have to remain at home without access to education.

This case was resolved in a hearing without any trial. The judge, Joseph Cornelius Waddy, upheld the students' right to education, finding that they were to be given either public education services or private education paid for by the Washington, D.C., board of education. He noted that

Constitutional rights must be afforded citizens despite the greater expense involved ... the District of Columbia's interest in educating the excluded children clearly must outweigh its interest in preserving its financial resources. ... The inadequacies of the District of Columbia Public School System whether occasioned by insufficient funding or administrative inefficiency, certainly cannot be permitted to bear more heavily on the "exceptional" or handicapped child than on the normal child (Mills v. Board of Education 1972).

Today, the optimal way to include differently abled students in standard classrooms is still being researched and debated. "Inclusion" is a method that involves complete immersion in a standard classroom, whereas "mainstreaming" balances time in a special-needs classroom with standard classroom participation. There continues to be social debate surrounding how to implement the ideal of universal access to education.

Summary

Educational systems around the world have many differences, though the same factors—including resources and money—affect every educational system. Educational distribution is a major issue in many nations, including in the United States, where the amount of money spent per student varies greatly by state. Education happens through both formal and informal systems; both foster cultural transmission. Universal access to education is a worldwide concern.

Critical Reflection

Has there ever been a time when your formal and informal educations in the same setting were at odds? How did you overcome that disconnect?

Do you believe free access to schools has achieved its intended goal? Explain.

Further Research

Though it's a struggle, education is continually being improved in the developing world. To learn how educational programs are being fostered worldwide, explore the Education section of the Center for Global Development's website.

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8.4: School Systems

Introduction

March 2020 was a month we will never forget. Schools and the educational system physically closed their doors for a particular time and went to remote learning platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Canvas and other electronic-learning tools. All children regardless of where they lived were being home-skilled to some degree by their families, siblings and neighborhoods. The [digital divide](#) was displayed by the lack of access children had to computers, laptops and even tablets. Schools would be forever changed and the country would realize how valued these settings were for children's learning and social-emotional development. Let's take an opportunity to identify and define the different types of schools, educational practices, partnerships and resources to serve children and families.

Types of Schooling

Public Schools are required to follow certain guidelines and maintain mandates via the state's local rules of curriculum, policies, and governance. Educators are required to have certain certifications and this may differ from state to state. For example, in California teachers have credentials to teach specific age groups and must maintain professional learning as part of their certification. The U.S. Department of Education provides guidance to states and requests state plans to be submitted based on the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Charter Schools is defined by the [California department of education](#) as "public schools providing instruction in any of grades TK-12 created or organized by teachers, parents, community leaders, or a community-based organization.

[Private Schools](#) differ from state to state and predominately charge tuition. The misconception is that private schools don't maintain the same standards or abide by the same laws and policies of public schools.

Home Schooling has its roots in the 1960s though the 1970s when educational reform became an issue on the national forefront (Dobson, 2000, paragraph 5). Actually, until 1852, public school attendance was not mandatory. It was only in 1852 that the state of Massachusetts made the first compulsory attendance law and eventually all other states followed suit. (All About Parenting). This issue has become increasingly debated because the number of students enrolled in home school has been increasing 15 to 20% each year for the last fifteen years (Dobson, 2000, paragraph 9). Families were faced with the option to send their children to public or private schools or to keep their children at home to educate the children themselves. Families considered many aspects of education to make this decision including their educational aptitude as teachers, the possible social effect on the children, the production of good citizens, the attention the children need to learn, and the external pressures of the school systems placed on the children. While public education uses a set curriculum to teach all children in a given classroom. The classroom is filled with a variety of learning styles, interests, and abilities. For the families who have chosen to educate their child at home, the curriculum can be catered to meet each child's individual needs, interests, and learning style. There is also the element of time. More personalized time is given to the child at home and there is not the wasted time standing in line for lunch, recess, others to finish their work, etc. and therefore much of the schoolwork is completed much earlier in the day, leaving time for real-life learning experiences. (All About Parenting).

Home Schooling and the Federal Government

Once an isolated practice with little support, homeschooling "has now reached a level of unprecedented visibility, politicization, and publicization" (Cooper, p. 111). Parents and advocates have gained significant legal, political, and social ground, substantially raising public awareness. Subsequently, the increase in home schooling's power and popularity has caused state and local educational leaders to adjust some of their policies. This has brought considerable criticism from supporters of the "democratic, public control of education" (Cooper, pg 112). They claim homeschooling "denies democratic accountability" (Cooper, pg. 112) and is "detrimental to the common good" (Cooper, pg. 115).

This section on homeschooling was captured from "What are the benefits and drawbacks of homeschooling?" by Jennifer Kidd, Jamie Kaufman, Peter Baker, Patrick O'Shea, Dwight Allen, & Old Dominion U students, LibreTexts is licensed under CC BY-SA .

Educational Practices and Models

Schools may utilize different pedagogical frameworks and models to support learning. The list below is not exhausted of all practices and models.

Montessori Approach (Dr. Maria Montessori)

The Montessori Approach refers to children's activity as work (not play); children are given long periods of time to work and a strong emphasis on individual learning and individual pace is valued. Central to Montessori's method of education is the dynamic triad of child, teacher and environment. One of the teacher's roles is to guide the child through what Montessori termed the 'prepared environment, i.e., a classroom and a way of learning that are designed to support the child's intellectual, physical, emotional and social development through active exploration, choice and independent learning.

The educational materials have a self-correcting focus and areas of the curriculum consist of art, music, movement, practical life (example; pouring, dressing, cleaning). In the Montessori method, the goal of education is to allow the child's optimal development (intellectual, physical, emotional and social) to unfold.

A typical Montessori program will have mixed-age grouping. Children are given the freedom to choose what they work on, where they work, with whom they work, and for how long they work on any particular activity, all within the limits of the class rules. No competition is set up between children, and there is no system of extrinsic rewards or punishments.

Other Approaches and Models of Curriculum

Common Core Standards are skills and knowledge for K-12 grade. View the video below for additional information about common core.

YouTube Video

This interactive element is not available in this format. Visit the link or scan the QR code to access it online.

[View this YouTube Video online](#)



School and Family Partnerships

Programs and schools that serve children and families may have formal committees such as [Parent Teacher Association \(PTA\)](#), advisory boards, and other ways to create space and build community. The PTA is one of the oldest national organizations with local chapters at school sites that advocate for children and promote family engagement. In what ways do you think schools changed how they engage families as the virtual platform has increased?

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8.5: Current Research

Joint Policy Statement on Expulsions and Suspensions Policies in Early Childhood (US Department of Education and Health and Human Services)

The joint statement of the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education titled Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings (2015) states that the most important steps early childhood education programs can take in preventing, limiting, and eliminating suspension and expulsion is to establish developmentally appropriate and equitable behavior guidance practices and policies that center both the social emotional and behavioral health of young children. These policies should be consistently enforced, without bias and clearly communicated to administrators, teachers, students, and their families (Longstreth, Brady, & Kay, 2013).

School to Prison Pipelines

The school-to-prison pipeline is the name for the phenomenon of suspensions and expulsions found to be a direct pathway to the criminal justice system. This journey begins in early childhood education where Black boys disproportionately experience punitive disciplinary actions. Research shows that early and repetitive exclusionary school discipline results in higher rates of Black males dropping out of school and becoming involved in the criminal justice system (Bryan, 2017).

Anti-Bias Education

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. 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 5.9.1: 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. 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).

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 cultural 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

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 5.9.2: Children collaborating while building children building with wooden blocks(CC BY 2.0) via flickr

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]

Social Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

In 1972, in response to the civil rights movement, Congress passed the law commonly known as Title IX (“Title IX Legal Manual”). This law stipulates that any school receiving federal funds must allow equal access to educational programs. Although Title IX is most often associated with athletics, because it is written so broadly, it actually paved the way for many improvements in women’s status in academics (“Achieving Success Under Title IX”; *Title IX - Gender Equity in Education*). It is important to remember that Title IX protects both sexes from discrimination. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, “Title IX benefits both males and females and is the lynchpin of thirty-five years of efforts to promote and establish gender equity in schools” (“Title IX – Gender Equity in Education”, para. 1).

Despite the progress initiated by Title IX, many educators still felt women and girls were feeling the pangs of discrimination. In 1992, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) published a major study titled *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. This study shed light of the ways in which schools consciously or unconsciously discriminated against girls. Among other things, the study noted how girls were often stereotyped or neglected by the educational system. The study claims that curricula and tests were sometimes even biased in favor of males (“How Schools Shortchange Girls”). At times, females are also victims of sexual harassment in schools, which can cause a huge disruption in the learning process (“How Schools Shortchange Girls”).

How Schools Shortchange Girls elicited national attention and action. However, a popular backlash has recently begun to develop. According to Thomas (2008, para. 7), “In recent years, a number of critics have said that attempts to achieve greater gender equity [are] producing unintended negative effects on boys.” In other words, boys may be the ones getting shortchanged now. Boys are now deemed more likely to exhibit behavior problems and to need remedial assistance (Kommer, 2006). Although groups like the AAUW still contend that girls’ advances have not come “at the expense of boys,” many feel it would be wise to bolster our support of boys (Thomas, para. 1; Tyre, 2006). We can do this by incorporating methods that specifically appeal to boys: kinesthetic learning, visual learning, and competitive learning.

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9: SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES WORKING TOGETHER

9.1: Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Families

9.2: Welcoming Spaces

9.3: Family Engagement and Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships

9.4: Strengths-based Attitudes and Relationship-based Practices

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of relationships between ECE program and families.
- Describe ways programs and teachers can facilitate trusting relationships with families.
- Differentiate parent involvement from family engagement.
- Defend the importance of recognizing families as having the primary role in children's lives.
- Define ways for programs to empower families.
- Describe effective communication strategies.

“A growing body of research suggests that meaningful engagement of families in their children’s early learning supports school readiness and later academic success” (NAEYC 2009; Henrich and Gadaire 2008; Weiss, Caspe, and Lopez 2006). Programs and teachers who strive to build genuine partnerships with the parents, guardians, and other primary caregivers at home and encourage families to become active participants in their child’s early learning and development help families to become advocates for their children. “High levels of engagement often result from strong program–family partnerships that are co-constructed and characterized by trust, shared values, ongoing bidirectional communication, mutual respect, and attention to each party’s needs (Lopez, Kreider, and Caspe 2004; NAEYC 2009, 6).

In addition, early childhood education programs have learned that when they can effectively partner with families, young children benefit and families are more likely to maintain involvement with school settings across the years. By strengthening family engagement during the early years, particularly with families from diverse backgrounds, families that have children with disabilities or other special needs, and families with dual language learners, early childhood education (ECE) programs can help to reduce the achievement gap.

When programs strive to build trusting, open, and collaborative relationships with families and genuinely seek the family’s input to inform program planning, family members receive the message that they play a key role in their child’s development and learning. In efforts to establish strong links between home and the early care and education setting, programs and teachers focus on developing strategies for family collaboration and being responsive to each family’s home language.

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9.1: Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Families

Honest, caring, understanding, and respectful exchanges with family members lead to their sharing important information with teachers that help to inform how to care and support each child's learning and development. Taking the time to find out from family members about their child's unique characteristics and needs plays an important role in providing teachers with the information needed to set up appropriate learning environments for individual children. Establishing positive relationships with families helps to bridge children's experiences between the program and home, and it fosters children's sense of belonging in the early education setting.



Figure 9.1.1: When there is a trusting relationship that values the family, it is easier for parents to trust the care of their children to early educators.[1]

Teachers view families as children's first teachers and seek their assessments of a child's needs, interests, and abilities. Different families and communities have different views and expectations of three through five-year-olds. The effective early childhood educator recognizes, understands, and respects the values of children's families and communities and attempts to make the environment as congruent with those values as possible. In high-quality early childhood programs, the teacher speaks frequently with family members and, whenever appropriate, strengthens the links between the home and program. Frequent communication between program staff and family members is important, especially in the case of children with disabilities or other special needs. Through collaboration with families, preschool teachers can gain insight into ways in which they can be important contributors to the child's learning and development. To support children's learning across home and school contexts, the program can encourage family participation in activities at the early care and education program.^[2]

Note [3]

"Family engagement with schools has been linked to important outcomes for children of all families, including families with children who are dual language learners . . . Numerous positive developmental child outcomes have been associated with family engagement, including early literacy skills, cognitive and language development skills . . . socio-emotional skills . . . and academic achievement."

Source: State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care 2013, Paper 4, Family Engagement, 121.

Programs and Teachers Build Relationships with Families

Programs convey an important message to families when they seek their views and collaborate with them in the care of their children. This message helps family members understand that their preferences and their concerns about the learning and development of their child are important to teachers and program leaders. When a teacher has open, honest, and understanding relationships with family members, the resulting links between the home and the early care and education setting often help their child feel safe and comfortable.

Programs

- Support the participation of all family members, being responsive to their cultural, linguistic, and economic differences, as well as to any disabilities or special needs of the children or a family member.
- Involve family members in making decisions about the program and its policies.
- Recognize and acknowledge that teen parents are still adolescents developmentally even though they are in an adult role as parents.
- Provide a way for families to give feedback to the program, such as regular evaluations or opportunities for informal discussion.
- Schedule regular meetings, social times, and other special events for families so that they can learn more about the program, get to know each other and staff members, and build a sense of community

Communication

- Seek and consider families' views when identifying and hiring new staff members.
- Create an area for posting information for families (daily notices, outside services, child development information, community events, and job and education opportunities).
- Encourage communication between teachers and family members at the beginning and end of each day.

Teachers

- Share a child's records with his or her family, including assessment information on the child's learning, experiences, and developmental progress.
- Learn about the different families in the program.

Communication

- Engage in a two-way exchange of ideas, preferences, and child-rearing philosophies during the first meetings with family members, setting the tone for future communication.
- Listen, reflect, and respond when family members communicate concerns and ideas about their child.
- Initiate discussions with families to understand and resolve issues when they arise.
- Engage in communication with family members at the beginning and end of each day about the child's care, activities, interests, and moods.
- Communicate to family members that they are always welcome to visit or call to check on their child.

Reflective Practice

Explore in discussions with family members both families' and teachers' assumptions about young children and how they learn.^[4]

Moving from Parent Involvement to Family Engagement

Family Engagement as Parent Involvement

Parent involvement refers to parent participation in the systems and activities the early childhood education program in ways that support them as the primary educators, nurturers and advocates for individual children and for all children enrolled in the program. Parent involvement refers to opportunities for parent participation in a variety of program activities that support child and adult development, including policy and program decision-making.

Family engagement refers to ongoing, goal-directed relationships between staff and families that are mutual, culturally responsive, and that support what is best for children and families both individually and collectively. Staff and families share responsibility for the learning and development of children, the progress toward outcomes for children and families, and for parent involvement in the program. Parent involvement is a part of this larger construct of family engagement.

Table 9.1.1: Examples that Illustrate the Shift^[5]

Parent Involvement	Family Engagement
Parent Involvement is primarily the responsibility of family services staff (or parent involvement specialists, home visitors, or transition specialists).	Family engagement is embedded in the work of all staff members, management systems and leadership priorities.
Parent involvement might revolve around outputs—for example, the number of parents who show up at a meeting.	Family engagement focuses on evidence of positive, goal directed relationships, for example, that result in family progress in one (or more) of the seven outcome areas.
Parent involvement works with a small % of families involved in leadership opportunities (policy council, parent meetings, special events).	Through ongoing relationships, family members are engaged in a variety of goal directed ways related to Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes.
Programs that involve parents collect data from children and families—for example, information about parent participation.	Programs that engage families use child and family data to improve services. These programs help families understand and use child data to support their children's progress and development.

Engaging and Collaborating with Families

Programs

- Develop and implement program policies that give families and staff members opportunities to observe and discuss children's development and behavior
- Support families by providing tools and resources that help them contribute to their children's learning.
- Invite families to participate formally and informally in the development, governance, and evaluation of program services and policies, as appropriate.

Teachers

- Recognize that working with families promotes children's development.
- Build relationships with families to ensure meaningful two-way collaboration, supporting the children's learning and development and helping families to understand child development.
- Attentively greet family members when they arrive and depart from the program setting, and use those opportunities to exchange information about the family's child.
- Contribute ideas and resources to promote each child's learning and development in the home and community.
- Collaborate formally and informally with families and colleagues to share observations, describe children's accomplishments, plan for children individually and as a group, and address concerns about children.
- Support families as decision makers for and educators of their children.
- Actively solicit and listen to families' goals, aspirations, and concerns about their children's development.



Figure 9.1.2: Children thrive when their families are engaged and included in their early childhood education program.[6]

Home Language

Programs

- Create strategies to engage family members from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and invite family members to share goals and strategies for supporting children's home languages in the group or classroom. This may require the use of interpreters and translators (please see table 6.2, "Sample Family Languages and Interests Interview," in chapter 6 as a way to gather important information from families).

Teachers

- Learn a few words in each child's home language, such as greetings, names of family members, words of comfort, and important objects or places. Parents and other family members can be good resources for learning their language.
- Seek and use resources to facilitate communication with family members in their home language, ensuring that all families are included.

[7]

"Acknowledge, Ask, and Adapt" By putting into practice the following steps for culturally responsive caregiving, you will gain the information you need to support appropriately the growth of all the children in your care.

Step 1: Acknowledge The first step is a step of recognition in which you use your growing awareness of the existence of different cultural assumptions about child development. A willingness to be open with yourself is essential to the success of this step.

Step 2: Ask The second step is an information-gathering step. The goal is to get the information you need about the parents' and your cultural beliefs and values so that you can solve the problem together during the third step. Do not rush the second step.

Step 3: Adapt In this last problem-solving step, you use the information gathered in step two to resolve conflicts caused by cultural differences and find the most effective way to support each child's growth."

Programs and Teachers Value the Primary Role of Families in Promoting Children's Development.

The family is central in children's lives, as it is through their experiences with their families that children learn about themselves and the world around them (adapted from CDE 2006, 56). Family member is used to define the people who are primarily responsible for a child, including extended family members, teen parents, or foster families (text adapted from CDE 2006, 56). Programs support the healthy growth and development of the child within the context of the family by creating continuity between the home and the early care and education setting. Programs are responsible for learning about the children's home life through communication with family members and, when possible, home visits. As part of this process, programs will learn to work with diverse family structures, including those headed by grandparents, foster families, same-sex parents, and teen parents. An essential aspect of high-quality programs is finding ways to support the growing relationship between the child and the family, and adapting to the strengths and needs of each child-family relationship (CDE 2006, 57). By getting to know families and understanding the importance of children's relationships with caregivers at home, programs and teachers can support the primary role of the family in children's learning and development.

Knowledge of Families

Programs

- Develop or adapt program policies, based on knowledge of the families and on their input and feedback, to support family engagement in the program.

Teachers

- Gather information from family members and engage in direct, effective communication to learn about family composition, values, and traditions to support the primary role of families in their children's care and education and to engage families in the early education setting.
- Learn about each family's values, beliefs, and practices by observing and engaging family members in conversation or by communicating with other staff members as appropriate.
- Find out about each family's language preferences and language goals for the child.
- Refer to and use pertinent family information when responding to needs of children and families.

Parent-Child History and Relationships

Programs

- Develop program policies that support children's relationships with their adult caregivers at home.
- Provide professional development for staff on facilitating parent-child relationships and identifying areas of concern.
- Provide resources or consultation as appropriate to address concerns related to children's relationships with adult caregivers at home.

Teachers

- Understand that all children develop in the context of relationships and that the quality of children's interactions with adult caregivers at home has an impact on child outcomes.
- Follow program policies or practices designed to support relationships between children and adult family members.
- Use a variety of techniques to facilitate and reinforce positive interaction between children and adult family members and support each adult family member's capacity to be responsive and sensitive to the child.
- Understand that culture influences approaches to nurturing young children.
- Identify concerns related to children's relationships with adult family members and follow up as appropriate.

Programs Create a Climate in Which Family Members Feel Empowered and Comfortable as Advocates for Their Children.

When programs and teachers engage in open, respectful communication with family members and strive to develop positive, collaborative relationships with them, family members feel included and empowered. The experience of authentically contributing to their children's experiences in preschool helps family members become advocates for their children both within the program and in interactions with other service providers. For example, they are more likely to seek or request services for their children, such as referrals to special education, when needed or appropriate.

Programs can help families with dual language learners recognize their families' cultural and linguistic strengths and learn the skills to ask for the types of services that they think will benefit their children. Families should be encouraged to share their strengths with the program and be asked to participate in joint goal setting and decision making about their children's education. The entire program benefits when educators incorporate diverse cultures, languages, and talents of families with dual language learners into the program's learning environment and curriculum. Once family members feel their contributions and opinions are valued, programs will benefit from their knowledge and experience.

Empowerment of Families

Programs

- Develop an open-door policy that encourages family members to visit the classroom or center at any time.
- Encourage families to offer recommendations for the program's structure and curriculum and to observe the ways in which their contributions are used in the setting.
- Invite families to share their areas of expertise with the teacher, other families, and the children in the program.
- Ensure all families have the opportunity to participate in a policymaking capacity or leadership role (e.g., as members of a board of directors or advisory board).
- Develop a climate statement that expresses the program's appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity and share the statement with both staff and families.
- Invite families with young dual language learners to participate formally as part of groups that contribute to decisions for the program (e.g., boards, committees, and the like), and to share on an ongoing basis their ideas on how to support and engage with families.

Teachers

- Solicit help from family members in solving problems their child may be having in an early care and education setting.
- Invite families to volunteer regularly and to participate in activities.
- Hold conferences regularly, not just when there is a problem with the child.



Figure 9.1.3: When families are welcome in the early education environment, their children thrive.[8]

Programs Support Teachers' Responsiveness to the Families' Goals for Their Children's Development and School Readiness.

The most successful opportunities for parent engagement are those that address the ideas of parents about their roles in their children's education and their sense of efficacy in helping their children to succeed in early childhood programs (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler 1997). Working with parents to define shared goals helps to strengthen the home-school partnership. In particular, when programs and teachers work to integrate school and family experiences, implement school-readiness practices, and identify strategies for school readiness and transitions, both families and their children benefit.

Researchers have found that preschoolers achieved at higher levels when families and teachers shared similar child centered beliefs and practices. Thus, it is important that programs ask all families to collaborate and participate in joint goal setting for their children, and to ask families with dual language learners and those families who have children with disabilities or other special needs, about effective strategies and the contexts in which their children learn best.

Integrating School and Family Experiences

Programs

- Explain the program's philosophy on school readiness to classroom staff and families, with consideration for each child's level of development.
- Incorporate the role of family members in facilitating their children's transition from preschool to kindergarten.
- Ensure that families with young dual language learners are included as partners in their children's education. Families should be consulted regarding their children's early language learning experiences, their educational goals for their children, and the educational progress of their children.
- Ensure that families of young children with disabilities or other special needs are included as partners in their education. Families should be consulted regarding their children's unique learning needs, their educational goals for their children, and the educational progress of their children.
- Invite families to collaborate with program staff on long-term language development and learning goals for their children. Actively recruit families to participate in classroom activities.

Teachers

- Respond to children and family members in ways that encourage them to share family experiences.
- Share information about children's experiences in the early education setting with families.

- Support each child's home language and culture at home and at school.
- Maintain confidentiality of family and child information as appropriate.
- Design early education environments that reflect the diverse experiences of children and families.

Implementation of School- Readiness Practices

Programs

- Collaborate with local transitional kindergarten and kindergarten programs, schools, and support staff in preparing children and families for upcoming transitions.
- Provide professional development activities for staff on school-readiness issues, including developmentally appropriate practice, communication with families, and social-emotional competence.

Teachers

- Describe the program's philosophy on school readiness and transitions.
- Engage in discussions with families about children's experiences in the group or classroom as the experiences relate to school readiness and transitions.
- Respond to questions from families or refer them to appropriate staff for inquiries related to school readiness.
- Articulate that school entry is one milestone in the context of a developmental and educational continuum.
- Include all families as partners in the education of their children with attentiveness to families whose home language is not English.

Strategies for School Readiness and Transitions

Programs

- Coordinate developmentally appropriate experiences to support children's school readiness in all developmental domains, anticipating upcoming transitions to new programs or schools.

Teachers

- Know the previous early care and education experiences of children in the group and plan for upcoming transitions to new programs or schools.
- Identify indicators of school readiness and developmental precursors of school readiness, as appropriate, for the ages of the children served.

Programs and Teachers Use Effective Communication Strategies That Reflect the Diversity of Families Served

Honoring diversity strengthens relationships with families and children, thereby enhancing the quality of care and education for preschool children (adapted from CDE 2006, 57–58). Being responsive to cultural, linguistic, and economic differences and how these differences affect the ways in which programs and teachers communicate with families demonstrates a program's commitment to each family's unique strengths. Programs and teachers can work to enhance their communication strategies, attending carefully to individual differences in family preferences for communication.

Two-way communication strategies have been found to be particularly effective with families with dual language learners who may otherwise feel disconnected from the program. Two-way communication allows both parties to share information about the learning progress and well-being of the dual language learner and to collaborate on ways to help the child reach important learning goals. This type of communication works well during one-on-one meetings with the teacher or in a more informal setting such as in the community or in a group setting with other families with dual language learners of similar linguistic backgrounds. Regular two-way communication may be the first step toward increasing family engagement and key to developing strong dual language learner family-program partnerships.

Communication Strategies

Programs

- Provide professional development for staff on the principles of and strategies for effective communication with families.
- Ensure confidentiality and privacy in communications throughout the program.
- Develop a language and communication policy that informs families with young dual language learners on the possible modes to communicate with staff.

Teachers

- Respect each family's style and preferred method of communication and interact with families in a transparent, accountable manner.
- Interact with families in a timely and professional manner to establish relationships that encourage mutual, two-way exchange of information about children.
- Maintain confidentiality and ensure privacy in communications regarding children, families, and staff and colleagues.



Figure 9.1.4: Open communication is vital to the relationships between families and teachers.[9]

Family Preferences for Communication

Programs

- Interpret and apply communication policies (as appropriate) to ensure that diverse families are included and complex situations are addressed.
- Help staff to understand and apply communication styles based on each family's expressed needs and preferences.
- Ensure that all communications are accessible and comprehensible to families (i.e., in the family's preferred language).

Teachers

Use various ways to communicate with families (e.g., active listening, e-mail and telephone contact, text messaging), depending on each family's preferences and on the situation.

- Model for families effective strategies for communicating with children, adapt strategies for communicating with children, and adapt strategies (as needed) to meet diverse language and literacy needs.^[10]

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[3] [California Preschool Program Guidelines](#) by the department of Education is used with permission (pg. 40-41)

[4] www.cde.ca.gov/sp/Cd/re/documents/itguidelines.pdf

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[5] <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/fam-engage-parent-inv.pdf>

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9.2: Welcoming Spaces

Creating a Welcoming Space

Programs

- Express a warm welcome by having staff and teachers greet families at the door.
- Offer a *family room*, where family members can *mingle with one another and access* information on child development.
- Make a private space available for families and staff to communicate with one another.
- Arrange for support so families with dual language learners can use the home language to communicate with teachers and other program staff members.

Programs Regularly Provide Family Members with Information about Their Children's Learning and Development, Well-Being, And Everyday Experiences

A key to building successful partnerships with parents is to make them true partners by sharing with them the same kinds of educational information and ideas that are important to the teacher and staff. In a high-quality program, there is ongoing communication between the home and the early care and education center. As much as possible, what the children learn in the program should be supported and reinforced at home.

Family practices in the home are also important for young dual language learners to learn, practice, and reinforce concepts in their home language that were initially introduced in school, such as literacy-building skills. Recent research suggests the use of families' home language is a protective factor for children of immigrant families. When some amount of the family's native language is used regularly in the home, young dual language learners show improved cognitive and social development. Thus, it is important for preschool programs to encourage learning at home in dual language learners' home languages. This may be particularly beneficial in the realm of reading and literacy-building skills.

Information about Learning

Programs

- Offer regular workshops for adult family members that family members helped to design and implement.
- Provide resources for educating the children's family members in various media (print, audio, video) and in the home languages of the families served by the early care and education setting, if appropriate to do so.
- Provide current information about the role of the family in maintaining home language skills.

Teachers

- Inform parents regularly about the purpose and benefits of the activities in the program for their children.
- Provide information regularly to families with dual language learners about the benefits of developing both of the child's languages and promoting bilingualism.

Programs Support and are Advocates for Strong Families

The better that families are able to meet their children's basic need for shelter, food, and clothing, the more that family members will be available to support their child's learning. Effective programs provide support to families who want it, usually by linking families with resources in the community through referrals. To support family functioning and promote resilience in families and young children, programs and teachers can establish community partnerships and identify key resources for families, connecting

them to those resources considered appropriate. In particular, services that help families become self-sufficient and prevent risk of stress or at least reduce ongoing, intense stress, allow family members to become sources of support for each other. Services that promote positive, nurturing relationships among family members enable families to become more resilient and strengthen the children's capacity for learning. Once working relationships with other service providers in the community are established, preschool programs can work to ensure that families receive needed services and children experience continuity in their learning and development.

Strengthening Families: Five Protective Factors

Five protective factors are the foundation of the Strengthening Families Approach: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. Research studies support the common sense notion that when these protective factors are well established in a family, the likelihood of child abuse and neglect diminishes. Research shows that these protective factors are also "promotive" factors that build family strengths and a family environment that promotes optimal child and youth development.

Source: Center for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.

Family Functioning

Programs

- Collaborate with staff, families, and social service providers to develop policies and procedures related to family support.
- Respond to questions or concerns from staff members or other adults and act as a professional resource.
- Provide professional development opportunities to staff on family functioning, protective and risk factors, and community resources.

Teachers

- Articulate an understanding that families function in a variety of ways and that children or families may require support outside the program.
- Demonstrate an understanding of risk, stress, and resiliency factors related to family functioning and how to support all families appropriately.
- Take steps for further inquiry when concerns arise based on observations of a child or family.
- Communicate daily with families about children's well-being.
- Refer questions or concerns to other staff members when appropriate.
- Work with colleagues to respond to signs of risk or stress in children, as developmentally appropriate and individually meaningful.



Figure 9.2.1: Your coworkers can work with you to support families that are experiencing stressors.[1]

Community Partnerships

Programs

- Establish effective relationships with partners to ensure continuity of children's learning and development.
- Maintain professional connections to community and state partners.

Teachers

- Understand the importance of community partnerships in meeting children's needs.
- Form effective partnerships and collaborations with families, professionals, and community representatives.
- Support the needs of children, their success, and their well-being by maintaining professional connections to community and state partners.

Connecting Families with Resources

Programs

- Support staff and families in the referral process as appropriate.
- Work with community resources to conduct outreach or provide services to program families as appropriate.
- Anticipate families' needs for support based on knowledge of the families' circumstances or of current events that may affect them (e.g., economic climate, natural disasters).
- Identify key community resources that support program practices and family needs, including services that support families with dual language learners' communication with the program.
- Share information with colleagues and develop connections to the program.

Teachers

- Demonstrate familiarity with community resources to support children and families.
- Respond to requests from families about community resources and refer questions to appropriate staff members.
- Protect the confidentiality and privacy of families.
- Engage in conversations with families about referrals to community resources and assist in identifying or gaining access to services as needed, with consideration for the diverse linguistic and cultural experiences of families.
- Identify signs that children or families may require support outside the program, maintain documentation, and initiate closer

observation or further inquiry, collaborating with families as appropriate.

- Provide resources linked to classroom instructions to assist families in supporting continued development and maintenance of the home language.



Figure 9.2.2: Families experiencing food insecurity could benefit from this community resource, a food bank.[2]

Use of Community Resources

Teachers

- Gain knowledge about the importance of community resources that can enhance professional expertise and children's learning experiences.
- Use community resources routinely to enhance their knowledge about families and services and classroom learning activities.

Programs and Teachers Engage Families in Supporting Continued Development and Maintenance of the Home Language

Programs and families with dual language learners are critical to children's language development as the sheer amount of words children hear and the richness of the speech they hear is strongly linked to their future language and literacy abilities. Thus, it is critical that programs communicate to families with dual language learners the importance of speaking to children in their home language and suggest that families seize as many opportunities as possible to engage children in conversation. Parents need to help families understand the importance of dual language learning concepts in their home language and engaging in extended language interactions in their home language. In addition, preschool programs can provide families with dual language learners with the necessary provisions and resources to teach new concepts at home in dual language learners' first language.

Home Language

Programs

- Collaborate with families and colleagues to provide a variety of ways throughout the program for young dual language learners and their families to participate.
- Model one-on-one, group, and unstructured peer-to-peer activities.
- Collaborate with families and colleagues to design an educational program
- that incorporates each child's home language(s).
- Encourage families, colleagues, and community members to use children's home languages and provide training or support

as needed.

- Conduct ongoing evaluation of programmatic support for children's home language(s) and use data to guide program improvements.

Teachers

- Assist in offering a variety of developmentally appropriate, individually meaningful, and culturally responsive ways for young dual language learners to participate in the group (CDE 2009).
- Work with colleagues to create various opportunities for young dual language learners and their families to participate in the group throughout the day.
- Demonstrate understanding that the early education setting is often the first place where young dual language learners encounter English and that honoring each child's home language fosters positive social-emotional development and the child's development and learning in all other areas.
- Support home language development.
- Plan with families, colleagues, community members, and others who support children's development and learning.
- Incorporate practices that honor the role of the home language as a vital foundation in English-language development.^[3]

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9.3: Family Engagement and Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships

Positive, goal-oriented relationships develop over time through interactions between programs and families. These relationships

- are fueled by families' passion for their children,
- are based on mutual respect and trust, affirm and celebrate families' cultures and languages,
- provide opportunities for two-way communications,
- include authentic interactions that are meaningful to those who participate in them, and
- often require an awareness of one's personal biases and how those biases can affect mutual respect and trust.



Figure 9.3.1: Two-way communication is the foundation for relationships.[1]

Positive, goal-oriented relationships improve wellness by reducing isolation and stress for both families and staff. When these relationships focus on shared goals for children, staff and families can experience the support that comes from knowing that they all are on the same team. These relationships support the aims of equity, inclusiveness, cultural and linguistic responsiveness.

Why Do Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships Matter?

Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships support progress for children and families. These relationships contribute to positive parent-child relationships, a key predictor of success in early learning and healthy development. Through positive interactions with their most important caregivers, children develop skills for success in school and life. They learn how to manage their emotions and behaviors, solve problems, adjust to new situations, resolve conflicts, and prepare for healthy relationships with other adults and peers.

Healthy relationships between parents and children develop over time through a series of interactions that are primarily warm and positive. There may also be brief disconnections or misunderstandings in relationships. For example, there will be times when parents and children are not perfectly in sync. A toddler may be laughing and playing with her mother and be surprised when her scream of delight is met with her mother's raised voice, telling her to be quieter. An older infant may be enjoying his breakfast of rice cereal but he may be confronted by an unhappy face when he smashes the cereal into his grandmother's work clothes. These temporary disconnections are natural and necessary, and they build a child's capacity for resilience and conflict resolution. As long as interactions are primarily positive, children can learn important skills from the process of reconnecting.

Disconnections and challenges can occur in our relationships with families and colleagues as well. A father arrives to find his toddler finger-painting and immediately becomes upset with the caregiver. He is in a hurry and doesn't have time to change her clothes. A mother is frustrated that her child is not making more progress learning her numbers and letters and blames the caregivers. Imperfect interactions help us learn how to tolerate discomfort and how to resolve challenges. These are important skills for building strong partnerships.

Positive relationships between parents and providers are important as families make progress toward other goals, such as improved health and safety, increased financial stability, and enhanced leadership skills. Strong partnerships can provide a safe place where families can explore their hopes, share their challenges, and let us know how we can help. Staff, community partners, and peers can be resources as families decide what is important to them and how to turn their goals into realities. Parents help us enhance their children's learning and healthy development. When we focus on families' strengths and view parents as partners, we can work more effectively to support parent-child relationships and other outcomes for families and children.

Everything we do is intended to give families the emotional and concrete supports they want and need to reach better outcomes. When a family makes progress, parents have more capacity to give to their children. For example, a family may be struggling financially and constantly worried about where the next meal will come from. The parent may be overwhelmed or embarrassed, unsure of how to ask for help. If the parent trusts the program or a staff member, the parent might share their distress and worry. The program can work with the parent to find and access food and nutrition resources in their community.

As the family stabilizes, the parent might work with staff to identify how to improve the situation in the long term. The parent may decide to go back to school to increase his or her earning potential or might join a group to talk with other families about educational goals. The parent might work with the program and peers to find and access educational resources. As families take steps to reach their goals, they can engage in relationships with their children. Strong relationships between parents and caregivers contribute to better outcomes for children and families.

Recognize What Families, Staff, and Children Contribute

Building a relationship is a dynamic and ongoing process that depends on contributions from everyone involved: families, program staff, and children. Families have a set of beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives that affect relationships with staff. Likewise, providers have a set of beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives, both personal and professional, which affect our relationships with families. Children live and learn in specific environments and are influenced by the parents, families, and other adults and peers in their lives. They also bring their own unique contributions to relationships in the form of behavior, temperament, emotion, and stage of development.

Understand and Appreciate Differences

Successful partnerships are created when families and staff value the perspectives and contributions of one another and care about shared goals and positive outcomes. Programs can partner with parents to understand the child's and family's strengths, goals, interests, and challenges. In each interaction we can learn more about each other and about ourselves as professionals. When we understand and appreciate the family's perspective, we are more likely to set aside our own agenda and create a shared agenda with the family.^[2]

Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Children

Teachers build meaningful relationships with children during ordinary, everyday interactions. A mutual gaze with a four-month-old baby, a moment of eye contact with a twelve-month-old child scooting across the room, the acknowledgment of a two-year-old's interest in his image in the mirror—such actions occur every day in early childhood programs. In one instance a child feels more secure, in another a child becomes more willing to explore, and in a third a child gains a stronger sense of self. Teachers who are responsive as they develop relationships with young children appear to work magic. But underneath the magic are a compassionate interest in each child, careful observations, a commitment to children and families, and a thoughtful approach to supporting development and learning.^[3]



Figure 9.3.2: That magic in action.[4]

[1] Infant/Toddler Caregiving: A Guide to Culturally Sensitive Care by the [California Department of Education](#) is used with permission

[2] [Building Partnerships: Guide to Developing Relationships with Families](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is in the public domain (pg. 2-5)

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9.4: Strengths-based Attitudes and Relationship-based Practices

We all know how important families are in the lives of their children. When we have strong relationships with families, we are helping to promote healthy child development and school readiness. Strong relationships with families also make it easier to have conversations involving uncomfortable feelings or challenging topics. In this section, we will explore tools that we know work well when building relationships with families.

Strengths-based Attitudes for Building Positive Goal-Oriented Relationships

An attitude is a way of thinking or feeling about someone or something that is often reflected in a person's behavior. Our attitudes create a frame of mind that shapes how we behave in our personal and professional life. Attitudes are shaped by experiences, beliefs, and assumptions. When we begin our interactions with positive attitudes, we tend to see families in a more positive light, giving us a strong foundation to build an effective partnership. In contrast, when we approach our interactions with negative attitudes, we are more likely to see fault, make negative judgments, and expect a negative outcome. Adopting a positive attitude does not mean avoiding challenges and only talking about positive observations and ideas. Instead, it includes adopting a frame of mind that begins with a family's strengths. We begin with Strengths-based Attitudes to express our belief that all families can make progress and that we are ready to strive for better outcomes together.^[1]

Table 9.4.1: Strengths-based Attitudes and Interactions

Strengths-based Attitudes	Sample Interactions Reflecting these Attitudes
- Families are the first and most important teachers of their children - Families are our partners with a critical role in their family's development - Families have expertise about their child and their family - Families' contributions are important and valuable	Intake Meeting - Tell me how you think your child learns best. How can you tell when he is really interested in something? - What ideas do you have for how we can best support her when she is here? - What do you do to comfort her when she is upset? - Is there anything else you'd like us to know about you and your family? Follow-up During Informal Discussion - You mentioned that she's a smart girl. Can you tell me more about that? Home Visit - You know him best. What do you imagine it will be like for him when he's in the program with other children? - Can you tell me what you would like for us to know about him? Challenging Behavior - Can you tell what has worked at home when you have seen this behavior? Within an Established Relationship - Can you tell me about your hopes for yourself and your family? - What are your wishes and dreams for your family?

Check-in Time!

Reflect on a time when you used a Strengths-based Attitude with a family or co-worker. Which attitude did you use? What did you say or do that reflected that attitude?

Reflect on a time when a Strengths-based Attitude would have helped you build a relationship with a family or co-worker. Which attitude would have been useful? What could you have said or done to reflect that attitude? How might the outcome have been different if you had used this attitude?

When you engage with a family, you help strengthen the partnership with that family. There are six Relationship-based Practices that can help promote family engagement. These practices are intended to guide what we say and do with families to support open communication and promote better understanding. Reflecting on how we apply Relationship-based Practices can improve our efforts to strengthen our relationships with families.

Table 9.4.2: Relationship-based Attitudes and Interactions

Relationship-based Practices	Sample Interactions Reflecting these Practices
1. Observe and describe the child's behavior to open communication with the family 2. Reflect on the family's perspective 3. Support competence 4. Focus on the family-child relationship 5. Value a family's passion 6. Reflect on your own perspective	Intake Meeting Invite the family's input and use it in making decisions about the child and family. Be aware of your own biases. Follow-up During Informal Discussion Use simple, clear, and objective descriptions of the child's behavior. Acknowledge and share child and parent behavior that demonstrates something about the parent-child relationship. Home Visit Use the family's observations and interpretations to inform how you support the child's development. Invite parents to share their perspective on the child's behavior and development. Challenging Behavior Recognize the child's strengths. Reframe the family's emotions as passion for their child. Within an Established Relationship Share positive and specific information about the child with the family. Attribute the child's progress to the family's efforts.

1. Observe and Describe the Child's Behavior to Open Communication with the Family

Description	Actions
The child is the common focus for families and programs. When staff ask for parents' observations of a child's behavior and share their own, they create opportunities for discussion. Simple, clear descriptions of a child's behavior, without interpretations or judgments, give families and staff the chance to make meaning of that behavior together. This creates a starting point for discussion that can help identify common ground and differences. This practice invites families to guide the conversation about their child. Often families react and respond to the program's ideas or agenda. This strategy gives families the freedom to volunteer and share what they see, know, and want for their child.	Share positive, genuine, and specific information about the child with the family. Recognize the child's strengths and share them with the family. Use simple, clear, and objective descriptions of the child's behavior. Ask for the family's observations and listen to what they think these mean about their child. Begin challenging conversations by asking parents about what they see, what behaviors concern them, and what they think these behaviors may mean. It's important to know what kind of meaning parents make of their child's behavior. Follow up with a description of what you see, and give parents a chance to offer their ideas. Wait before asking too many questions. Instead, start with a description of the child's behavior or a specific situation from the day. • Leave time for the parent to share their ideas rather than be guided by a specific question based on your own agenda. Instead of sharing your interpretation, listen to how the parent makes meaning of the behavior.

Examples

"You and Elizabeth are always ready when the bus arrives. We really appreciate that."

"I saw that Victoria looked at you and grabbed onto your shirt as I came into the house."

"I've been watching Abdul explore with paint and get used to the different brushes. He also tells stories about his paintings. You told me you want him to paint more realistic paintings. I wonder if he'll begin to do that once his painting skills catch up to his ideas. Abdul is really sticking with it, and he loves it! I think we both want to help him work toward the same goal."

"I notice that Christina often pats other children when they are crying."

"I notice that every time you begin a conversation with me, David begins to tug at your arm."

Check-in Time!

Reflect on a time when you used this practice or could use with a family. What did or would you say or do? Reflect on a time when this practice would have helped you build a relationship with a family. What would you have said or done? If you have not had interactions yet with families, how do you feel that it would be helpful?

2. Reflect on the Family's Perspective

Description	Actions
Description Families share their children and themselves with us as soon as they join our program. They trust us with their hopes, fears, and challenges. We can work toward strong partnerships by showing genuine interest in families – their goals, values, and dreams for their family. We can gain a better understanding of the child and family if we listen to the family's perspectives. Both the staff and the family benefit from taking the time to consider each other's perspectives. This practice is particularly useful when cultural differences in child-rearing and family roles emerge. Issues such as education, discipline, social behavior, and even the goals of learning vary a great deal within a multicultural society. All families bring their beliefs and values to discussions about their child.	Actions Invite families to share their perspectives on their child's behavior and development. Use the family's observations and interpretations to inform how to foster the child's healthy development. Before sharing data about a child, consider why you think the information is important and whether it will be important to the child's family in the same ways. Invite families to share insights about their child. Partner with families to set goals and make decisions. Ask family members what they would like to know about the program and other services in the community.

Examples

"I wanted to talk with you about Michael's progress in learning to get along with the other children. I've seen a lot of changes. I wondered what you've been thinking about this."

"Jacqueline is working so hard to learn to do things by herself. This morning she wanted to put her coat on all by herself. She got very frustrated and started to cry. I wanted her to be successful and, at the same time, I needed to go outside to help supervise the other children. She was very determined. I want to learn from you about what you do if you see Jacqueline struggling with this. We'd really like to work together on this with you. What do you do at home?"

"Last month you mentioned that you were going to learn more about the community center in your neighborhood. I'm curious if you found any programs that your family is interested in?"

"I wanted to follow up with you on our conversation about toilet learning last week. Can you tell me how you think it's going for Felipe?"

Check-in Time!

Reflect on the benefits of working with families from their perspective? How would it support the child? How would it support you as a teacher? How will the family benefit? What are some details that the parent could provide that you might not have learned without using this strategy?

3. Support Competence

Description	Actions
This practice helps us to recognize and celebrate a family's successes, progress, and efforts in accomplishing their goals for their child and themselves. We share in their successes, encourage them to recognize their competence, and join them as they aspire to new goals. Sometimes, because of our training, we think we know best and want to show or teach families how to do things better. We need to be careful not to interfere with their sense of competence by suggesting that we know more than they do. We have expertise to share and we want to choose the right time to share our ideas and suggestions. Follow their lead. Ask if they want feedback or suggestions before jumping in with advice. This practice reminds us to embrace the strengths of the cultures and home languages of families. We can tailor opportunities to build on each family's individual strengths and interests. Invite parents to share their home language with children, staff, and families by teaching a song, sharing familiar words, or telling a story.	Recognize and acknowledge family strengths. Celebrate each step taken toward a goal as progress. Help families identify and access personal and community resources. Attribute a child's progress to the family's efforts whenever possible. Build on the family's understanding with new ways to look at the child's behavior. Wait until you establish a relationship with a family, or until they ask, before you share your expertise and knowledge. Ask the family for ideas about how your program can help them achieve the goals they have for themselves and their children.

Examples

"You are doing a great job navigating the bus system to get Teegan to school. Would you be willing to share what you've learned with other parents?"

"I noticed that while we were talking, José and Leila worked together to separate the crayons and markers by color. Look how they separated them into four piles—blue, yellow, green, and red. I remember when they started at the program it was important to you that they be successful in math and science. You must have been working on sorting things with them at home."

"I noticed Christopher gave a make-believe cupcake to another little boy who was sad because he had fallen and scraped his knee. It reminded me of when you brought me flowers when I had been out sick. You both are so thoughtful of others."

"Last time we met you said you wanted to get your General Educational Development (GED) and we came up with some ideas for making that happen. Your husband mentioned that you seemed excited about these ideas. Is there anything I can do to support you in your progress?"

Check-in Time!

Reflect on challenges that can come from teachers taking on the role of the "expert". How does that impact the child and the family? What are the advantages of supporting a child and families competence? Share an example of when a supervisor supported you and focused on your strengths - what impact did it have on your job performance? Or on the opposite end, share an example of when a supervisor focused on your negative attributes or "weaknesses" - what impact did it have on your job performance?

4. Focus on the Family-Child Relationship

Description	Actions
Strong parent-child relationships link with positive learning and social outcomes for children. Staff efforts to strengthen these relationships can help. Parents need to know that their relationship with their child is valued and supported by program staff. Sometimes parents worry that their child may feel closer to program staff than to them, or they may feel that program staff judge their relationship with their child. When you share observations of positive parent-child interactions, you provide reassurance that the relationship between them and their child is more important than any other. This practice reminds us that everything we do is meant to strengthen the relationships between children and their families. When you tie a family's efforts to make progress in their lives to the positive effect it has on their children, it reminds them how working toward their goals benefits the entire family.	Share observations of parent-child interactions that demonstrate something positive about the relationship. Share what you learned about the child from your observations of family-child interactions. Welcome families to visit and volunteer in the classroom. Talk with parents about the things you see them do and say that are responsive to their child's individual temperament and that positively impact the child's development. Acknowledge how a parent's progress positively affect the child's well-being. Discuss how setting and reaching goals models important skills and qualities for their children. Discuss information that reinforces how much the family means to the child (for example, pictures the child draws that include family members, or times when you've observed the child acting as one of the family members in dramatic play).

Examples

"I noticed when I arrived that Sam ran over to you and hugged your leg. I can see he is really connected to you."

"I understand you are concerned that when you pick Abdullah up at the end of the day, he often seems upset or angry. I wonder if it is his way of saying how much he missed you all day. He manages his emotions all day and then gets to let go when he sees you. Maybe it's his way of saying how glad he is that you're back."

"Since you have been reading stories at bedtime together, Sara is spending more time with the books I bring on our home visits. Today she chose the book about dinosaurs. Would you like to borrow that book to read at bedtime this week?"

"I think Fatuma knows that school is important to you. She sees you going back to school, and it makes learning that much more exciting for her because she wants to be like her mom."

Check-in Time!

Reflect on the benefits of creating a family-child relationship. What challenges do you feel could occur in your classroom, if you did not create that connection?

5. Value a Family's Passion

Description	Actions
Raising children and working with families always involves emotions. We can expect parents to have feelings about what is happening in their families, whether they are celebrating a child's successes, worrying about how to pay bills, or showing anger at a child's behavior. And, no matter how professional program staff are, emotions are also part of how we react to the families we work with in our programs. It is important to understand that these emotions— both positive and negative—are parents' and staff's passionate concern for the child and family. Sometimes sharing emotions can be uncomfortable, but it is also a way to deepen partnerships with families. This practice helps us remember that even when parents and staff have very different ideas about what a family needs, they all want what is best for the family. When our shared goal is positive outcomes, families and staff can work together to determine how to celebrate successes, share worries, and resolve disagreements.	Accept and acknowledge the family's emotions, both positive and negative. Reframe the parent's emotions as passion for their family. Listen for what is behind the emotions and work with the family to understand them. Recognize and remember the family's passion from past conversations, and then build on it to provide focus when you set goals together.

Examples

"It is so important to you that Jack succeeds. All of these small successes with toilet learning don't always seem like enough when you are still facing wet laundry at the end of a long day. I want Jack to succeed too, and we can work together to make sure it happens!"

"You certainly want what's best for Jayda. What about you? Are there things you would like to do?"

"Last time we talked you were very concerned that Hiromi is not learning the alphabet as quickly as the other children in her classroom. I wonder if you have thought more about that."

"I can see that you're upset that the bus was late this morning. You've told us that it is important to you that Madeline gets to school on time so that you can get to your class at the college on time."

"I understand why you are upset about Francesca getting bitten today. We're sorry she was hurt and want to reassure you that no skin was broken. We cleaned the area and put on a bandage. We gave her lots of hugs. We know her safety is the most important thing to you."

Check-in Time!

Reflect on your passion for your own family - or future family. Share why you feel it would be important for your child's teacher to understand your families passion and goals?

6. Reflect on Your Own Perspective

Description	Actions
Both the family's perspectives and the staff's perspectives shape the conversation between families and staff. Our own perspectives include many elements—what we have been trained to do, what our program wants from us, our feelings about working with children and families, and, most importantly, the personal beliefs and values gained from our own cultural upbringing. All of these elements, both conscious and unconscious, affect our relationships. It's important to consider our own views when working with families. Although we often are told to put aside our feelings in our work, the reality is that we bring our own beliefs and values into everything we do. Rather than put them aside, we can increase our awareness of them so we are more effective in our relationships with families. This practice encourages us to reflect on our interactions with families, so that we can choose what we say and do to promote positive family and child outcomes. Each decision affects the success of our partnerships and the positive impact we can have	Be aware of your own biases, judgments, and negative assumptions. Identify how biases, judgments, and assumptions may affect your interactions with families. Choose to approach families by holding aside biases, judgments, and assumptions. Adopt one of the strengths-based attitudes to guide you. Identify common perspectives and work together to understand differences. Ask for help from co-workers and supervisors if you need help doing things differently. Make time to reflect on your perspective and how it is affecting your work and your attitudes toward families. Before sharing your views, ask the family to share their perspectives. Share your own when it can help you both come to a common understanding.

Examples

"Sebastian's family says it's our job to teach him letter recognition and they don't have time to do extra at home. They want him to read by the time he is four and that's just unrealistic. I want to partner with them and I'm angry they won't work with us. Can you help me think about how to approach this?"

"I'm excited for Julia to learn English and Spanish, her family's home language. Her family is concerned that learning Spanish will affect her English negatively. I'd like to find a way to share my passion for multiple language learning and the positive effects it has on brain development and still honor their concern."

"I'm so frustrated with Rebecca's family. They tell me all the time they are going to follow through on the referrals I give them, and then they always have excuses. It feels like a waste of time to be working with them on this. I don't understand what they want from me."

"David had a really hard drop-off again this morning. If his mom would just get here earlier and read with him like I suggested, the transition wouldn't be so difficult. She is always running late, and it just makes it harder for him and for us. I don't know what to do."

Check-in Time!

Reflect on the benefits of having a good understanding of your own ideas and perspectives when it comes to parenting practices. Share your thoughts on the saying "First seek to understand then be understood" when it relates to supporting families perspectives in relation to your own.

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