

Preface



In today's increasingly diverse world, it is essential that teachers develop competence in three key areas:

- Understanding important differences among people
- Seeing and appreciating differences as strengths within families, communities, and programs
- Making decisions about care and education that reflect cultural competence

This book is a part of this important evolution in the professional preparation and development of teachers.

This text takes new and experienced early childhood educators on a reflective journey to explore personal attitudes and values related to human diversity and culturally competent teaching. It also identifies and explains effective strategies for supporting and celebrating diverse children and families.

Three facets serve as overarching themes throughout the text: *self*, *others*, and *group*. Reflective activities prompt readers to understand their own biases, background experiences, and values, while interactive experiences prompt readers to explore the similarities and differences of others. A final piece of the three-part puzzle encourages readers to practice instructional strategies that promote belonging and partnership among groups of children, professionals, and families in various early childhood settings.

The purpose of this text is to support professionals as they develop awareness and an appreciation of differences and the confidence to apply culturally competent teaching practices to ensure success for each child and family.

Features of the Text

A key feature of this text is the use of individual stories about diverse family contexts (In My Family) and classroom experiences (Classroom Story Corner). Each story brings a genuine and real-world aspect to the text, offering important glimpses into the unique experiences of individual children, families, and teachers as a way of emphasizing the differences and similarities among us. Each chapter also includes robust practical strategies for applying instructional practices that are culturally relevant and validating both in the classroom



(Curricular Connections) and in partnership with families (Family Partnerships). Videos are woven through each chapter of the Pearson eText to help students understand the content, issues and teaching applications.

Each chapter wraps up with a series of critical thinking discussion prompts and activities to promote self-reflection and interactive perspective-taking. Through these culminating activities, readers are guided to examine their personal ideas and background in the context of the richly diverse world in which we live and work.

Guiding Concepts

First and foremost, this book is wholly focused on the belief that our individual differences and diverse family contexts are tremendous assets to our communities. Beginning from a place of truly valuing, honoring, and celebrating our differences, we can then layer in the important and meaningful ways in which we share similarities. Only from a place of valuing differences and validating similarities can we truly form connected, reciprocal partnerships with colleagues, children, and families, partnerships that are equitable and promote in each and every member a sense of belonging and inclusiveness.

Acknowledgments

I wish to offer my heartfelt appreciation to all my students, past and present. It is for you that I undertook this project. I hope that the inspiration and collegiality we share in our classes continue to fuel your work as they do mine. And for my much-appreciated colleagues across the country: It continues to be an honor to travel this road together. I wish you all a successful and nourishing journey.

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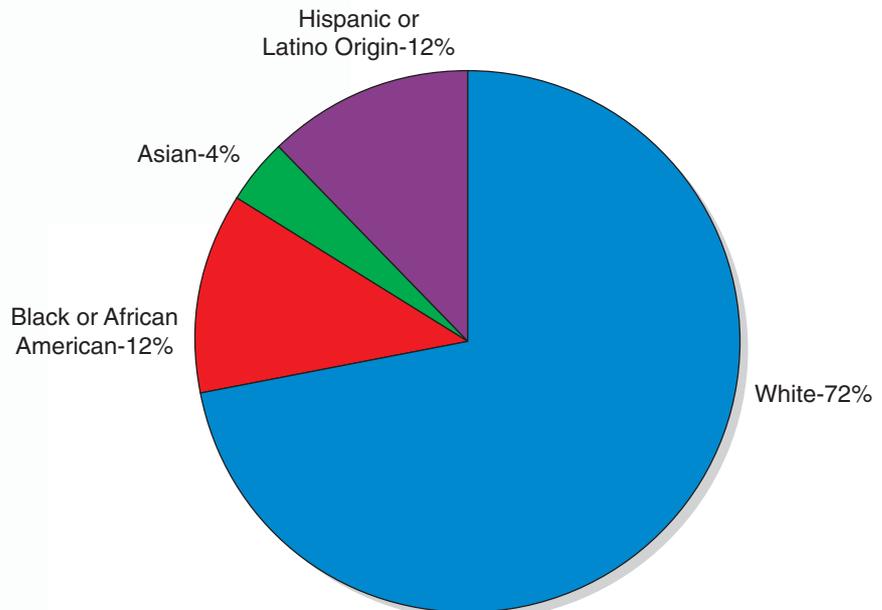
Finally, I lovingly dedicate this project to Greisan, the motivation behind it all.

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The What, Why, *and* How of Exploring Diversity

In every city, town, neighborhood, and classroom there exists a rich array of diversity. At first glance around at the faces in your classroom this might not seem so; the people around you might all appear to reflect a similar background. Or perhaps thinking about the children and families you work with, you are nodding and thinking “There sure is a mix in my room!” Statistically, in many schools and centers the cultural makeup of the children and families comprises more people of color than White, and classrooms are generally evenly split between boys and girls. Yet the vast majority of early childhood teachers are White females (see Figure 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1 *Early Childhood Teacher Workforce by Race/Ethnicity*



Statistics on demographics of educators show that the early childhood teacher workforce is largely White and 98% female (BLS, 2012). For elementary and middle schools, the teacher workforce is 83% White and 76% female (NCES, 2012).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explore the purpose of studying diversity
- Identify key concepts in the study of diversity
- Define *diversity* and related terms, including *culture, identity, ethnicity, cultural competence, equity, social justice*, and more
- Practice strategies to build cultural competence

More than two-thirds of children in full-day child care arrangements nationally represent people of color (including people identifying as having Hispanic origins, or as Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and multiracial); clearly a mismatch exists between the make-up of children and families using early care and education and the make-up of the professionals working in those arrangements (NCES, 2010).

This discord between student demographics and teacher demographics can pose significant challenges that negatively impact children's outcomes. This is especially true when teachers are not well-prepared to appropriately interact with children, families, and colleagues from diverse backgrounds and with widely varying abilities. Many teachers are unaware of how to develop these skills (part of cultural competence), or how to acknowledge differences without further alienating groups.

It all starts with knowledge and awareness, which can grow into attitude and action. As you become aware of diverse perspectives and are willing to walk in another's shoes, you create opportunities every day to act in ways that perpetuate fairness and equity. Finding and using everyday moments to explore and value diversity takes study and practice. Even more important, it takes a personal commitment to the belief that each and every individual—infant, child, adult—is a unique person worth celebrating for all the colorful ways in which he or she is different *and* alike. This book is designed to be a catalyst, an inspiration, a guide, a tool for self-discovery, and a practical resource to provoke this messy, complicated, worthy, and joyful journey.



Today's classrooms robustly represent the increasingly diverse and complex lives of children and families, and it is essential that teachers value these complexities.

Exploring Diversity

The beauty of our human differences really lies in its closeness to our sameness. At the heart of our human experience are the things that unify us all, with relatively subtle characteristics and dynamics that add vivid color to our world. Valuing diversity is about using our common threads as a way to highlight all the wondrous ways that we are different. For example, bookstores and early childhood supply catalogs include children's books containing photographs illustrating different forms of a common item shared by people around the world—like *homes*, *bread*, and *families*. Most children are familiar with these concepts; we all have these things in common. Yet families with children might live in cars, apartments, modest homes, or expensive homes; eat pita, lavosh, or challah breads; and children might live in families with one adult or relative, two adults, siblings, or several generations of adults. The concept of these books is the essence of today's approach to diversity, inclusion, and multicultural education, putting the focus on our sameness and celebrating our diversity through everyday moments and experiences.

Diversity might well feel like a topic of the moment. It is the focus of a great deal of professional research, discourse, and policy, and is a reality of daily teaching practice. We hear and read about *diversity* related to many different concepts, settings, and practices. For many teachers and most people in general, these ideas and terms are vaguely defined and often not part of a shared concept or definition. But answering the question, "What is diversity?" is not simple. What diversity really means is highly complex, personal, and rooted in personal and shared history. The concept holds different meanings for individuals and groups. On the surface, diversity is basically about differences, uniqueness, and the ways people are unlike one another, including culture (which is defined and discussed more below) as well as differences in abilities. Our concept of our own identity is what makes us aware of how someone else is different than us. Because we tend to recognize differences in others in comparison to ourselves, we may respond to someone who seems different from us personally, or in a negative way, and this might be uncomfortable. Awareness of others and our own responses to people who might be different are important parts of the process of valuing diversity. In the next section, take a few minutes to honestly assess your experiences related to diversity.

DIVERSITY INVOLVES COMPARISONS

Beliefs and reactions to definitions, labels, and realities of diversity are very personal and can reveal within us potentially hurtful biases. We often feel unprepared and insecure when faced with an individual, family, or colleague who is different than us in some obvious or subtle way. We may either worry that we will appear biased, or we may be consciously biased

ATTITUDE TO ACTION, BELIEF TO BEHAVIOR 1.1

My Identity and Values



Exploring your own identity, values, expectations, and culture is an essential part of becoming more culturally aware. Use the following questions to prompt

self-reflection and collegial discussion about your own identity and your beliefs.

When prompted (on job applications or for the census), I indicate my race as	
My first language is	
Other languages that I am at least a little familiar with are	
I have or have had friends who were/are classified as having a documented diverse ability (such as an IEP in school)	
If I come across someone with a diverse physical ability or using an assistive device, my initial thought is	
I am aware of what researchers call the <i>achievement gap</i>	
My definition of a <i>family</i> is	
My definition of <i>marriage</i> is	

and prefer our own way of doing or thinking. Our insecurity or bias will influence how we respond to and interact with people in these situations, sometimes influencing us in ways we don't realize but which can have negative consequences.

“Most of us initially define ourselves as nonbiased. When we look more deeply, however, we all find areas where bias exists” (Williams & Cooney, 2006, p. 76). **Biases** are simply the ways we are inclined to think about things. Our biases are a natural part of our own upbringing, values, identity, customs, and socialization. The processes that socialize each of us to internalize certain values begin in both direct and indirect ways before we are even born. Our families, caretakers, and communities have their own deeply ingrained values that are passed along through overt and subtle messages from the very beginning of our lives.

Consider the widespread tradition, sometimes referred to as *instinct*, for parents-to-be to “nest” and prepare a space in the home for a new baby. It might feel like a mainstream custom to create space and select materials based on the gender of the baby. I have heard from parents who decided not to find out their baby's gender before birth and were consequently scolded and met with outright anger from relatives who insisted they could not





Infant care-taking routines, including choices about sleeping and feeding, are often a big part of family culture and traditions, but traditions like infant ear piercing, circumcision, and clothing are also connected to family culture.

prepare for the baby or purchase gifts without knowing the gender. These parents felt attacked for their choices and were met with a clear dominant bias. But beyond thinking about pink ruffled dresses, blue-striped wallpaper borders, or gender-themed baby showers, also think about how messages of cultural identity expectations are shared throughout moments of daily life. Families of different economic status, family/extended-family structure, and different lifestyles prepare for the birth of a baby in their own ways, but all with decisions that imply certain values and expectations of both family and child. A co-sleeper next to mom's bed; a crib in a separate room; a dresser drawer lined with a blanket; a

swaddling board; a sheepskin hide in a corner of a shared hut; or a separate living arrangement where baby will stay with a nonparental caretaker: these are all physical cues of a family's or society's values and indicate different expectations of children and adults.

We often consider normal the certain messages and expectations we are familiar with, and anything that deviates from our perceptions is judged to be abnormal, strange, or wrong (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). Some culture-study researchers even point out that "all contemporary Americans, to some extent, regardless of their national origin or ancestry (often mixed), participate in a common culture (patterned ways of behaving and thinking)" (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2008, p. 10). This shared common culture can serve to unify people but also can cause conflict and distress for individuals who are either new to this country or are met with hostility for not conforming. Biases can be entrenched preferences which lead us to value one way over all others. While it might be a natural reaction to think of our own ways of doing and thinking as normal because they are more familiar, the first step in exploring and learning about what diversity means in education is to become aware of the implications of our biases. When our biases lead to value judgments about what is normal, better, or right, the result will be individuals and, potentially, entire groups of families who we marginalize, dismiss, or try to correct to do things our way. Negative responses to people or groups who are perceived of as "other" by a more dominant group have historically created a vast and painful difference of power between dominant values and subordinate groups (Hyun, 2007).

This domination and marginalization are not part of the important role and ethical obligation that early childhood professionals have to the children and families we work with. At the very core of our professional ethical duty is to do no harm and to support and respect children and families. We begin the journey toward meeting this charge by opening our minds and hearts to a critical exploration of ourselves and others. Your task in this exploration (and in reading this book) is to be honest with yourself; to deeply examine your own background, perspectives, experiences, and reactions; and to recognize the values and biases these elements have instilled in you. In essence, studying diversity involves learning about yourself as much as it involves learning about people and groups who are different than you in some way. Most of all, exploring diversity is about reprogramming how we respond to our own biases—from actions that perpetuate a dominant or one-way-is-better view toward a more pluralistic practice that emphasizes many equally valid ways also exist. As you watch this [video](#), consider examples of individual differences that you have experienced.

Why Study Diversity?

The study of diversity is a three-fold endeavor requiring that you explore definitions of *others*, *self*, and *we*. It involves learning about people you might think of as being different than you, reflecting on yourself and your values, and thinking about what makes a group of people collaboratively construct a community of *we*. Studying diversity is about a culture of listening, transformation, and change. It is about committing to the ongoing work of meaningfully co-constructing new cultures together within each new group (class, neighborhood, school, family, team, office, and more) that reflect authentic individual identities of members as well as a dynamic shared concept of *group*. The exploration and ultimate skill of communicating across cultures requires looking inward to examine our own backgrounds and personal histories while looking outward to listen to and understand those of other individuals (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003).

JOURNEY CAREFULLY

This important journey has some potential dangers. First and foremost, it is imperative to understand and emphasize that looking at differences can lead us to generalize or define people into groups and make assumptions about *all* people we categorize in that group. There can be great harm in using generalized themes to make stereotypes or assumptions about all people who share one or more characteristics. We must be sensitive to the ways that some people feel similar to others but also to how people with some shared characteristics differ.

Here is one example of the more critical approach we need to take in exploring diversity. I often hear in media and research that “Americans raise their children to be independent and to focus on individual achievement.” Some behaviors and messages might validate this observation, but a deeper and more critical reading of this statement has to prompt us to wonder which Americans does this refer to and what does it mean to be *American*? The Americas are a large geographic area made up of two continents, many countries, and vastly different people across and within each country (North America, Central America, South America). Many of us reading this book might agree with those parenting values, and many might immediately think “Well, I don’t think that way, and I live in the United States.” Some might think of the ways that we encourage our children to collaborate or to socialize in an interdependent group, or ways that we were raised to support shared achievement, which is quite different than a sole focus on independent achievement.

Consider the implications of thinking that children with disabilities are special, fragile, and need protection. Children with diverse abilities are sometimes treated unfairly or abusively, certainly. However, both this statement

IN MY FAMILY

Maria’s Family Tradition of Oral Storytelling

I am a college student and am completing my degree part-time while I work as a preschool teacher’s aide part-time. As a Mexican American, English is my second language, but I am fluently bilingual. My early childhood college classes involve a lot of reflection and dialogue, which was a little hard for me at first. I guess I was more used to keeping quiet and doing my work. My professor really prompts us to think a lot about our own background as we develop into professionals. One area that we have talked a lot about is the emphasis on literacy in early childhood.

At first when we talked about our personal memories of our own early literacy development or when the professor read us children’s books and asked if we know the story, I was embarrassed. In my home we never had books. Partly because we were so poor (we didn’t even have running water), but partly because education wasn’t an important thing in my home. My mother stayed at home, and my father worked as a laborer. Only for Christmas did I ever see books. That was when my aunt, who was a teacher, gave me books as a present.

Still, my mother and grandmothers didn’t read them to me. I do remember lots of the old stories and fairy tales though, because my one grandmother would always be telling me stories from her memory—like a storyteller. I have clear memories of sitting at her feet while she rocked in an old, creaky chair telling me all these old stories, the same ones from children’s books. In my college class now we talked about how storytelling is a powerful way to strengthen and build children’s language development, knowledge of stories, and imagination.

I don’t have the same memories of a mom reading bedtime stories or shelves lined with books in my bedroom like a lot of other students in my classes. But I have come to realize that I do have my own memories of experiences that were important ways my family helped build my language development. And here I am—a college student with a 3.95 GPA coming from a dirt-poor, uneducated, immigrant family. Now I am glad I am asked to reflect on my own culture and upbringing in relation to my work as a teacher, and I’m the first one to share personal stories in class!

and the term *disabilities* or *special needs* imply that children with diverse abilities are less capable or needier than other children. Moving around in a wheelchair, using a speaking device or sign language, or receiving food through a feeding tube does not make a person less capable than others; rather the child simply moves, communicates, or eats in a different way.

The more we think about it, the more we may feel boxed in by a narrow label or perhaps insulted by a limiting definition (such as “women are the weaker sex”). This is the risk in learning about defined groups. It is ultimately valuable to learn about some of the characteristics that might be shared by groups of people who may associate themselves with these characteristics. Indeed, expanding our knowledge of various cultures, traditions, and styles is an essential element of becoming a culturally responsive professional. But we should always remember that each person has an individual background that shapes her or him. Our job is to acknowledge and understand group and individual differences as we journey to valuing and celebrating the diversity among us.

Benefits of Studying Diversity

Studying the complex issues, challenges, and opportunities involved in living in a diverse world is more than about keeping up with “hot” topics, being politically correct, or about a passing trend. Diversity involves individual uniqueness, group affiliation, social justice, and striving for equity. It is about valuing each other and both what we share as humans and what makes us unique. It is about being a competent, ethical professional engaged in high-quality practice. What we hear people say is true—times are changing; the realities of family life in the United States are different today than they were years ago. But the makeup of family structures, societies and communities, and population demographics have always been dynamic and changing. Perhaps what feels new today is the wider awareness of the need for stronger policies and practices designed to ensure equity (fairness) and equality (equal access) among people.

BEING CULTURALLY COMPETENT

Exploring the many facets of diversity as they relate to you and how to work with other people has tremendous benefits to you personally. First and foremost, understanding differences among people provides you with a window into communicating better and accomplishing more with others. Being knowledgeable about how differences serve as strengths and being prepared to maximize those strengths toward ultimate common goals (such as ensuring healthy development for children) makes your job easier and more satisfying. Consider the benefits of cultural competence in this [video](#). When you are open to and skilled at fostering family

participation in children’s care and education in all families, you cultivate allies which make your workload lighter. Being more effective in your work prompts you to become a much more confident and successful early childhood professional. Knowledge of diversity really is good for you and good for your students: a win-win!

Teacher Education Standards Relating to Diversity

In addition to your personal commitment to developing your knowledge base about people with diverse backgrounds, proficiency in meaningful engagement of all children is included in state and national teaching standards. Being a culturally competent educator able to teach to diverse learning styles, dual language learners (those learning English in addition to home language), children with diverse abilities and from vastly different family backgrounds is considered a professional expectation as you enter the field of teaching. Professional educator associations unanimously recognize the importance of professional preparation that clearly recognizes and values diverse populations.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), formed in 2010 as a merger of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Teacher Education Accrediting Council (TEAC) and representing both bodies, has developed draft standards for new teacher practice (<http://caepnet.org>). At the time of publication, the draft standards were still under review and open for comment with finalized standards forthcoming. The draft of five standards includes an overarching statement defining the inclusive and encompassing perspective on student diversity with the following note: “In this report, the term ‘all students’ is defined as children or youth attending P-12 schools including students with disabilities or exceptionalities, who are gifted, and students who represent diversity based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, religion, sexual identification, and geographic origin” (CAEP, 2012, p. 19).

Standard 1 includes additional specific reference to a commitment to promote equity through self-reflection and culturally competent practice: “Candidates reflect on their personal biases and access resources that deepen their own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, language, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and to adapt practice to meet the needs of each learner” (CAEP, 2012, p. 16).

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) has likewise identified 10 standards that every new teacher should practice and know proficiently. Each broad standard includes specific indicators for performance. Standard 2 addresses teacher competence in working with students of diverse backgrounds: “The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that allow each learner to reach his/her full potential” (CCSSO, 2011, p. 11). This standard includes key performance, knowledge, and disposition indicators clarifying teacher beliefs and behaviors. Indicators include valuing individual differences, knowledge

of exceptionalities and resources, knowledge of language acquisition processes, and belief in the potential in all students.

Of particular interest to early childhood professionals is the widely accepted benchmark of best practices in early childhood education, the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (DAP) statement from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The most recent updates to this continually reviewed and evolving document include an emphasis on the significant demographic changes in the populations of children served in early childhood education settings. In particular, the statement underscores the increases in linguistically, culturally, and economically diverse families participating in early childhood programs as well as the value of supporting inclusive settings for children of varying ability levels. This pivotal DAP framework is founded on three core values that are the basis for all early childhood practice:

1. What is known about ***child development and learning***—referring to knowledge of age-related characteristics that permits general predictions about what experiences are likely to best promote children’s learning and development.
2. What is known about ***each child as an individual***—referring to what practitioners learn about each child that has implications for how best to adapt and be responsive to that individual variation.
3. What is known about the ***social and cultural contexts in which children live***—referring to the values, expectations, and behavioral and linguistic conventions that shape children’s lives at home and in their communities that practitioners must strive to understand in order to ensure that learning experiences in the program or school are meaningful, relevant, and respectful for each child and family (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009, emphasis added).

Using these three essential foundational building blocks for all professional practice, NAEYC provides research-based recommendations and strong emphasis on individually and culturally constructed teaching. In addition to the DAP, NAEYC has



Inviting families into the classroom for social gatherings is a meaningful way to learn more about children’s varied backgrounds and is an important part of welcoming and valuing families.

published position statements in support of antidiscrimination policies and practices in teacher employment and children’s access to programs and services, as well as focused recommendations for working with children and families with linguistic and cultural diversity (NAEYC, 1995, 2005).

The national standards of these associations demonstrate just how important it is for all educators to develop both knowledge of diverse individuals and proficiency in skillfully and successfully interacting with and meaningfully engaging all learners. All of these standards and statements are freely available online and should become familiar resources for all early childhood professionals.

Defining Diversity and Important Related Terms

One challenge we face on this journey of exploring diversity is right at the start: defining what we mean by the word *diversity* and what diversity means conceptually in teaching practice. As with all effective interpersonal communication, it is important that we start out by creating shared meaning and orient ourselves to the same guideposts for the purposes of the current exploration. Throughout this book the following terms and concepts will be explored in more depth separately and as they interrelate. They are presented in overview here to provide shared background knowledge and to facilitate reflection and dialogue.

DIVERSITY

In its simplest definition, **diversity** is about variety, or the ways people or things are different. In child development and education usage, definitions of diversity are more layered, referring to “the human differences between people including, but not limited to, shape, size, ability, gender, age, skin color, sexual orientation, family background, spiritual beliefs, and political affiliation” (York, 2003, p. 262). In working with teachers and college students in various areas across the United States, I often hear comments that reflect the assumption that diversity refers only or primarily to skin color or geographic origins. However, keep in mind the heart of the definition—simply, *different*. “In short, [diversity] includes whatever we think distinguishes us” (Bucher, 2010, p. 26). This book emphasizes the more broad view and encompasses elements that shape how individuals within a society perceive their individual identity. The attributes that we may think of as being part of our identity or something that distinguishes us can include:

- Economic/social class
- Sex (having male or female genitalia)

- Gender identity
- Age
- Nationality/geography
- Race/ethnicity
- Religion
- Ability
- Body shape or appearance
- Language
- Thinking/learning style
- Family composition

This book will explore all of these aspects of human identity within the scope of valuing diversity. Individual chapters will provide general background knowledge as appropriate, with stories from individuals and ideas for helping ensure successful learning and developmental outcomes for all children.

CULTURE

Definitions of **culture** can include references to excellence of taste in socially valued artifacts and works in fine arts, humanities, and sciences; it can also refer to the characteristic aspects of a group's everyday existence. In essence, culture can refer to highly regarded accomplishments as well as shared knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors that are applicable within a certain time and place and that are passed down through generations. A key component in understanding culture is that it is about “socially transmitted ways of thinking, believing, feeling, and acting within a group” which are taught to younger generations (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 405). Culture refers to potentially everything that influences our lives and shapes our identity (Bucher, 2010). As such, it is so vast and personal that we are unable to narrowly define or compartmentalize the concept of culture into a tidy descriptor. Teachers who are engaged in researcher-facilitated dialogues about how culture relates to their practice have realized that culture is “a complex construction that is contextually based in time, place, and experience” (Eberly, Joshi, & Konzal, 2007, p. 15). Essentially, culture is dynamic; it is created by people, and it changes over time and place. Listen to this [video](#) and consider how definitions of culture change over time.

Culture is meaningful on a larger societal level as well as on a personal level for the windows it provides into societal values as well as its influences on personal identity. Those widely shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that are shared by large groups are powerful forces in shaping societies. Even though culture is vast and conceptually complex, examining both levels of culture is an important part of professional practice. Understanding the two levels of culture (big “C” and small “c”—seen and unseen culture) and key

theoretical frameworks helps us realize what culture means to individuals and how culture is perceived among groups.

IDENTITY AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

Any discussion or exploration of culture needs to revolve around the concept of how culture significantly influences **identity**. “Humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their communities, which also change” (Rogoff, 2003, p. 11). Rogoff’s perspective underscores the dynamic, bidirectional nature of children’s development within families and societal groupings. Identity is so central to culture because our concept of who we are, what we believe, and how we behave is intimately connected to the messages and programming we are raised with as well as the choices we make. Sometimes identity manifests in beliefs and behaviors that run contrary to messages from upbringing or societal expectations.

In working with same-sex parents I have been moved by many of their powerful stories of coming out (revealing their homosexuality to others) and how family, religious leaders, and friends have disowned them in judgment of their relationship partner choices. Children who excitedly talk about family life with two daddies or two mommies may be met with awkward silence from teachers who are unprepared or unwilling to value same-sex parents as “a real family.” When those same-sex parents come to their child’s center or school for meetings or classroom activities, teachers’ discomfort or disapproval can be transferred to other children through lack of eye contact or quickly dismissive comments. This is a similar experience for children whose parent(s) are dual language learners. When we think about our own cultural identity as the “norm,” we are prone to subjugating, marginalizing, and

negatively judging people who act, live, speak, or look differently than we do. These beliefs and behaviors lead to a view that one cultural group is better than every other; this view is referred to as **ethnocentrism** (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009; Rogoff, 2003).

The personal stories throughout this book are intended to highlight one key point: that diversity of culture is present to greater or lesser degrees among everyone we have contact with. Cultural diversity is not about how people from another geographic area are different. As the shaper of our identity, cultural



In order to genuinely and inclusively welcome all children and families into early childhood settings, professionals need to know and appreciate the unique context of every child’s family life.

CLASSROOM STORY CORNER

Hidden Diversity

On a windy fall day, I stand in front of 22 first- and second-year early childhood college students and open up a conversation about diversity by asking them to think about how they might adapt their teaching to embrace diversity. After a short pause and several quizzical looks, one student says “Well, there’s no diversity around this area, so that really doesn’t apply to us, right?” This response, this unrealized misconception, has been a part of every semester for the 10 years I have been teaching college students. Change the date and the weather outside the classroom window, but the underlying idea that there is no diversity in this room of apparently White female students in a town that is seemingly largely Caucasian persists year after year. “Hmmm . . .” I say, eager for the experience we’re about to embark on.

With a brief introduction to the complex concept of the hidden or unseen nature of human diversity and the complexity of the definition of diversity and self-identity, I ask students to make a list of personal responses to 10 aspects of their life and upbringing. A silence falls over the room as the class begins writing their lists, occasionally smiling or looking up reflectively as they remember things about their family life,

their grandparents, travels, and childhood hometowns.

With individual lists complete, they set out in groups to interview each other and to list, graph, and map out the class’s answers. Student groups make large posters of their findings. We hang them, step back, and fall silent again. And, just as it happens every year looking at those posters, my class and I are quietly awestruck by the roster of languages they have been exposed to (from Finnish to Cherokee, Italian to Korean), the map of places they have traveled to, and the similarities and differences in where our ancestors hailed from.

We look around the room again. The faces are the same, but those hidden diversities among us have just become more visible, and we realize a new respect for the vastness of the worlds we each bring to the classroom. This is always my favorite day at school. It is a moment in our semester that not only changes the way students think about each other, but that also changes the way they see and think about everyone they meet. As I listen to them excitedly talk about these cultural identifiers, connecting with others over shared histories and asking questions about differences, I feel a transformation beginning.

diversity exists across borders but also between neighbors, schoolmates, and even within families.

ETHNIC, ETHNICITY

What do you immediately think of when you hear the word *ethnic*? Many people will mention things like foreign food, or perhaps clothing that is not typical for Westerners, or other images that indicate things that are non-White-Western in nature. These images and ideas imply that ethnic things are in some way “other than” what is normal, typical, or familiar. The word **ethnicity** is defined as “membership based on one’s national origin or the national origin of one’s ancestors” (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 406). When we are among a group that identifies with the same national origin, we naturally feel a sense of belonging or a sense of “us.”

We all have national origins and ancestors with national origins, and yet so many people think of something or someone different or exotic when using the word *ethnic*. Considering that each individual has a personal identity that reflects affiliation with the various characteristics that make up our sense of cultural identity, we each then are a part of an ethnic classification. We are all ethnic. We must become aware of the depth of the “us versus them” thinking that is so prevalent within us and widely perpetuated throughout society.

When I have had the pleasure of traveling and meeting with different students or workshop participants, I enjoy having time to talk casually after class or presentations. I am surprised by how many times I find myself being asked, “You’re from New Jersey? Are you sure? You don’t have an accent!” I can’t help but wryly smile at the implication: everyone from New Jersey sounds a certain way, and it’s not like we sound around here. The basic generalization is made for countless assumed ethnicities: “You’re from Africa? But you’re not Black.” “You’re a nurse? But you’re a man.” “You’re his mother? But you’re so old.” “You’re a skier? But you’re in a wheelchair.” The assumptions and personal biases in a generalized view can also sometimes lead to comments that imply a clear devaluing. I have also been the recipient of comments like “You talk weird” when I have presented in areas that have a regional dialect or accent that is different than how I speak. I’ve received confused stares when people address my husband as “Doctor,” and he tells them that it is his wife, in fact, who holds the title. I can see the confusion on their faces: “She’s the doctor? But you’re the man.”

CULTURAL COMPETENCE, CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE, CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cultural competence encompasses these other distinct yet related concepts. Being a culturally competent educator is about being capable of interacting in reciprocal ways with all kinds of people. It starts with being sensitive to how differently people think and communicate and being able to foster open dialogues with families and children. One’s values, experiences, socialization, and personal history influence all facets of interpersonal communication and can vary widely among people. While cultural competence begins with being sensitive to differences among people, successful interaction with people from different cultures requires specific knowledge and skills. It requires commitment to engaging in a process of ongoing personal reflection and professional development that heavily involves learning interpersonal and communication skills (Papadopoulos, Tilki, & Ayling, 2008). As one researcher writes: “Knowledge about cultures (facts and cultural traits) + awareness (of yourself and others) + specific skills (behaviors) = **cultural intelligence**” (Peterson, 2004, p. 13). You can gain knowledge through reading and studying, but awareness and adopting culturally intelligent behaviors

require active, genuine participation on your part. Becoming culturally intelligent, like teaching, is not a spectator sport!

The most important step we need to take toward becoming culturally intelligent and culturally responsive educators is to hone strong interpersonal and **cross-cultural communication** skills. Cross-cultural communication involves recognizing specific behavioral differences between cultures, such as eye contact, smiling, personal space, physical contact, gender expectations, problem solving, directness of speaking, and more, and using a communication style that is appropriate for the audience (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008; Peterson, 2004). In addition, teachers need to recognize the many different ways children communicate ideas, and they must provide multiple opportunities for children to understand and represent their ideas. In this [video](#), the teacher engages diverse learners in exploring a story through many different formats. Ultimately, being skilled in cross-cultural communication reduces misunderstandings and ensures that children's and families' needs are met (Olavarria, Beaulac, Belanger, Young, & Aubry, 2009). Developing your knowledge of the differences in communication behaviors and styles, along with the skills to adapt your own style to reflect your audience, are interrelated strengths of the culturally intelligent practitioner (Liang & Zhang, 2009).

EQUALITY AND EQUITY

At points along the journey toward education and a society that values all its diverse people and groups, emphasis has been placed on seeing people's sameness and avoiding their differences. For many, acknowledging differences felt risky and potentially insulting. However, to view all people as always being the same, with the same background, resources, and needs, can leave specific needs unmet and actually perpetuate imbalance. **Equality** basically means being equal or the same. In the context of education and society, it means promoting equal access to services and institutions—that all individuals must have access to schools, facilities, and services, regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, or ability. Struggles for equality—equal access—by marginalized, oppressed groups, such as people of color, women, and individuals with diverse abilities, have been raging in the United States socially, politically, and legally for many decades. Access to education is codified in United States law through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which seeks to ensure equality for all U.S. citizens (NICHCY, 2012), and Title IX, which bans sex discrimination in school activities (including extracurricular). However, in educational practice, equality does not necessarily mean that every environment is suitable for meeting every individual's needs. It is also important that we don't use ideas about equality to try to erase individual differences or only seek to treat each person as the same in all situations. Individual people are different and have different needs.

Equity, in comparison, is about fairness. Fairness in education or societal settings focuses on recognizing differences and disparities and structuring environments and services to meet diverse individual needs. Fairness is not about an everyone-gets-the-same perspective, but rather about distributing resources so that everyone gets what they need. While these concepts might be complex, at a basic level, even young children can relate to how something feels when it is fair or unfair. Children are also capable of understanding how it feels to have a need that goes unmet and how it feels to have a need met, even if others aren't getting the exact same response.

For example, rotating children in order from a list to determine who gets to sit on the teacher's lap for story time is a system of equality where everyone gets the same when their turn comes. However, if Keishann's mother has been away for a couple of days and he is feeling extra vulnerable and in need of extra cuddles, to meet his needs the teacher might take Keishann on her lap during story time and engage all the children in realizing the fairness in meeting his needs. The teacher might say something like, "Keishann is dealing with something that the rest of us are not. He needs a lap turn today." Or consider how you might deal with a child who always arrives after the start of the program day, seems unfocused and distracted, and repeats that he is hungry. Snack time is over and it's going to be 2.5 hours until lunch. If you give this child a snack from your teacher cabinet, you worry that all the other children will want one too.

In classrooms as in communities, fairness is about understanding that, at different times, people might be dealing with situations, challenges, or needs that others are not currently facing. It is about realizing other perspectives, considering how someone else is feeling, understanding someone else's needs and strengths, and taking action to provide resources for that person. Even very young children are well capable of understanding concepts of fairness and being guided to apply those concepts to the classroom community. Take a moment to think about how children might think about this statement: "Equal isn't always fair." Consider the following scenes and determine an equitable response that is based on validating and meeting children's needs and that reflects equity and cultural competence.



Children are well capable of understanding fairness and equity in their own ways and are particularly receptive to focused dialogues about fairness within the context of the classroom community.

ATTITUDE TO ACTION, BELIEF TO BEHAVIOR 1.2

Finding Fairness

Scene 1: Christos always has trouble sitting still at his desk during work time. He is fidgety and distracting. You realize that his body has extra energy he needs to get out, but you don't want him to be more of a distraction with a stress ball or yoga ball to sit on like your teaching colleague suggests.

Scene 2: James gravitates toward the basket of baby dolls and bottles every afternoon during choice time. He takes loving care of them—feeding, changing, and rocking. He sings them songs and sometimes reads books to them after he lays them in the crib. One day his older brother comes in to pick him up with his mom and teases him for being a sissy and playing with girls' toys. His mom tells you to encourage James to play with blocks or something more “appropriate” for him.

Scene 3: You and your two young children have just moved to a new town. Today is the children's first day of school (preschool and kindergarten). The bus picks up

your older child, and you bring your preschooler to the center. When you walk in, you notice a large Christmas tree in the lobby, complete with elaborately wrapped gifts underneath. In the classroom are stockings with each child's name hanging along one wall and construction-paper Santa collages hung in the window. Your daughter looks confused and you feel your skin turn flushed. Your religious beliefs prohibit acknowledging any holidays. The teacher walks over and introduces himself and the class's Christmas theme for the week.

Scene 4: Xi-shu comes in to the classroom in the morning and appears to have bags under his eyes. At welcome center time he slumps on his carpet square, despite being asked to sit up like the other children. By the end of the circle time, he is laying down curled up on his square. He doesn't appear feverish or flushed, just very tired. It's almost time to go outside, but he just keeps asking for his cot and blanket.



SOCIAL JUSTICE (POWER, PRIVILEGE, PREJUDICE, OPPRESSION)

Social justice is also about fairness. It is a sociopolitical concept in democracy that relates to the equitable distribution of advantages, resources, and power (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). Social justice acknowledges that a power and resource imbalance exists and requires that individuals actively strive to redistribute advantages to compensate for the imbalance. Implicit in the meaning of social justice is the expectation of developing multicultural knowledge and using that knowledge to create a more just world; it is about action (Banks, 2006). To understand social justice requires recognizing the breadth and depth of power and privilege as well as prejudice and oppression in the United States. **Prejudice** means having prejudgments about an individual from a particular cultural group that are not based on actual knowledge of the individual. Prejudice is usually negative opinions, assumptions, or feelings about a whole group of people based on incorrect generalizations, and it always has the potential to be hurtful. Theorists generally agree that negative prejudices are learned (Bergen, 2001). **Discrimination** occurs when prejudice drives negative action targeted at a particular group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009).



It can be very difficult for individuals who have been raised within a culture of privilege to recognize their more powerful status and prejudiced beliefs. Being raised within the privileged dominant culture (middle-class, White, European, Christian, male), an individual then takes their culture for granted as the norm, and dominance is perpetuated for future generations. All cultural backgrounds that are not within the dominant culture are viewed with prejudice—as being inferior. **Oppression** occurs when prejudice and discrimination are encoded as institutionalized norms and used by a powerful group to dominate another (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2009). Examples of oppression include different standards for acceptance into schools based on race, company policies which refuse benefits to certain families, different pay scales for men and women, or refusal to adjust school menus to include approved foods based on religious beliefs. Social justice is about actions people take—particularly people in the dominant culture—to reduce the disparities between privileged and oppressed people.

CULTURAL PLURALISM

From large urban cities through all kinds of suburbs to rolling hills and vast expanses of geographically dispersed rural communities, the population of the United States becomes increasingly diverse each year. For many communities and schools, numbers of non-White members are greater than White members, and researchers estimate that by the year 2050, the country's population will be equally “White alone, not Hispanic” and Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Other Races (non-White; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The term *minority* (meaning a percentage less than half), was once used freely to describe people of color. However, this no longer makes sense given the approaching numeric balance of White people and people of color in the United States. In a country founded as a democratic system and with such rich representation of diverse heritages, values, languages, histories, and lifestyles, the time has come to embrace cultural pluralism.

The word *plural* means multiple, or more than one. The definition of **pluralism** reflects this in its reference to multiple perspectives, cultures, or diverse people living within a shared social context yet retaining their uniqueness, identities, and diversity. More than simply coexisting though, cultural pluralism is really about a more equitable sharing of power and resources among all cultural groups without dominance, privilege, and superiority by one group (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009). A society that promotes cultural pluralism does not pressure individuals to give up personal cultural identity in order to obtain membership in a dominant culture (a process called **acculturation**; Banks, 2006). For example, distinct groups may form “communities within communities,” where their unique ways of life (tradition, language, values) are preserved in contrast but in concert with different ways of life of the larger society. Neighborhoods like Little Italy, Chinatown, and some Indian nations are examples.

ATTITUDE TO ACTION, BELIEF TO BEHAVIOR 1.3

Metaphors of the United States

A good way to think about this concept is to consider some of the ways United States society has been described: a melting pot, a tossed salad, and a quilt. Think about these similes and what each one means for diverse populations by considering the following questions for each:

- Does each individual part (ingredient or piece) retain unique qualities while connecting with a larger whole?
- Do you think individual parts should be retained but connected with a larger whole?
- Do you believe that individuals should mesh seamlessly with larger society and blend into either one established way of life or blend together into a new version of the larger society (impacted and changed by the new members, a process called *assimilation*)?
- Create your own metaphor to describe the population of the United States.



MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

“**Multicultural education** (ME) is an educational strategy in which students’ cultures are used to develop effective classroom instruction and school environments. It supports and extends the concepts of culture, diversity, equity, social justice, and democracy into the school setting” (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009, p. 4). In essence, ME encompasses all of the core concepts summarized here. It is about recognizing differences, valuing them as strengths, and actively working to ensure all children are provided with equal, equitable, discrimination-free educational experiences. ME is about school reform and requires not just commitment from individual teachers but also curriculum, policies, and cohesive action across the span of educational institutions. ME must also engage all members of the school community (Banks, 2006).

Strategies to Build Cultural Competence

PART I: CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Developing cross-cultural communication skills involves being aware of your initial reactions and becoming increasingly intentional in the ways you interact with children and families. To strengthen your cross-cultural communication skills, consider the following scenarios and quickly note



what your initial response would be. It is so important to be honest in this initial response, even if it does not seem like the politically correct response. Being honest about your feelings, even if they are negative, is how you start to uncover biases that you can then choose to change in yourself. After noting your first reaction, consider an alternative way of responding to the situation. Think about taking on the other person’s perspective or “walking in their shoes.”

Scenario 1: Tyanna’s mother approaches you at pick-up time and loudly complains that there is sand in Tyanna’s hair. She demands to know how you could let this happen; she just got Tyanna’s hair put in tiny braids the day before and it took hours. She raises her voice more as she points out that cleaning sand out of her daughter’s braids and scalp is next to impossible and that sand is highly damaging to the hair.

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

Scenario 2: Ada’s aunt is dropping her off today. Ada is out of diapers and wipes, and you have left a note for her parents on the sign-in/out book for three days. You stop the aunt at the classroom door to explain the diaper and wipe situation, but you quickly realize she does not speak English.

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

Scenario 3: Your principal stops by your room as you are tidying up and preparing for tomorrow. She tells you that a new student will be starting in your class next week. She says she doesn’t know much about his school history, just that the mother and children are living in a shelter nearby. As she’s leaving, she reminds you that state testing is in 2 months and she’s expecting strong scores from all of your children.

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

Scenario 4: At your first open house of the school year, the father of twins Elianna and Jacob arrives. He is always the one who drops off and picks up, so you already know him. He mentions that his husband will be joining him soon but that he got stuck in traffic on the way from work. One of the other parents nearby looks up and stares when he overhears the comment.

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

Scenario 5: You have been preparing for a week to welcome a new child into your class. The child was born with severe club feet and, in addition to having endured a dozen surgeries, is currently in a cast and using a wheelchair. His doctors are not sure if he will walk normally, but his parents are optimistic. At circle time on his first day, you warmly introduce him to the class by saying “Class, we have a special new friend joining our class. Let’s all welcome Justin!” To your surprise, Justin frowns, turns to you, and quietly says, “Please don’t call me special.”

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

Scenario 6: Parent conference night is beginning, and families are entering your room. You have planned some demonstrations of what classroom life is like for their 2nd graders and ask the families to sit in the children’s seats, which have attached desks. Ishrat’s father comes in after you have started your presentation and goes to Ishrat’s seat/desk. He is a heavyset man and cannot fit into Ishrat’s seat. He struggles for a moment, then pushes the desk a bit and loudly remarks “This is stupid! I’m not a kid anymore!” His face is flushed. Other families look at him and then at you.

Initial response	
Possible alternative	

PART II: TALKING THE TALK

Part of being a culturally responsive, respectful professional educator is to be thoughtful in the words you use to refer to people. The work we do as early childhood professionals, regardless of our title or capacity, is always about people first: the children and families with and for whom we work. The descriptions or labels that may be associated with them, legitimately or not, are secondary. To emphasize the person and validate our image of each person as valuable, we must adopt the use of *person-first* language that demonstrates valuing the individual as a human being first and using characteristics that describe them second (Gonzalez-Mena, 2008). In addition, I strongly advocate taking care to select the words we use to describe people from empowering options. For example, to call a child “a disabled girl” or “a special-needs boy” perpetuates a negative image both by assigning a label first but also by using a label indicating a deficiency. Using



instead “a child with diverse abilities” focuses on a powerful image of this child and validates her strengths. Another example is to shift from referring to someone as “a low-income mother” or a “subsidy kid.” Instead, we can use a phrase such as “family with limited income” or “family experiencing economic stress” when the family’s income is an appropriate identifier, as in the case of qualification for certain programs.

Consider the following snapshots of classroom life during your first week of teaching, and discuss these scenarios with another student. Discuss the situations, being honest about your first reaction, biases, and what you think might be the challenges and opportunities of working with the children and families in these situations, taking on the role of co-teachers. Working together, discuss the people and situations and use positive, empowering, people-first descriptive language. Discuss what you think would happen next, both with staff and with children and families. Do not overlook the different characteristics of the people in these scenes, but rather focus on them in a way that values the diversity represented.

Scene 1: Eun Mi, 5, and her parents and maternal grandparents have just moved to Phoenix from South Korea. All of the family’s English is slight, though Eun Mi’s mother brings a family friend to translate for her when she comes in to talk. This afternoon at pick-up time, Eun Mi’s mother came in to talk about Eun Mi’s grandmother coming to the program with Eun Mi to support her transition to the center and new country.

Scene 2: Just after lunchtime in your toddler room, Rhadi becomes out of breath, hot, and nauseated. You are still learning the ropes of how to use his insulin pump-backpack system, so you call Rhadi’s dad in to ensure that Rhadi is medicated properly and to test his insulin levels.

Scene 3: Kaitlyn comes in and hands you a note from her mother written on a piece of torn newspaper addressed to “K teachr.” The note says, “No lunch today. got no food.” You go to your director to talk about this, and he sighs and comments that this is one of the hard parts of accepting welfare-sponsored families. He tells you that he will work with the local food bank and also work on winter clothing in case Kaitlyn doesn’t come in with a warm enough coat.

Scene 4: During group planning time, you ask the children what centers they want to play in. Karl says he wants to play at the water table. You mark him down on the chart. Karl wheels his walker over to the water table. Because he must stand behind the walker, he is unable to stretch over it and reach the water and cups. He looks down and goes over to the kitchen area instead.

Developing culturally sensitive ways of communicating is an essential aspect of being a professional educator. Choosing to talk about people carefully and thoughtfully is a start, but must be more than just lip service. The purpose is to let your words reflect your openness to human diversity and your commitment to viewing each person’s uniqueness as a strength. It is much more than about trying to be politically correct; it is about a deeper commitment to actively try to empower each individual.

Summary

EXPLORING DIVERSITY

- Diversity is a complex concept that is defined in terms of individual and shared group characteristics.
- Diversity relates to how people are different from one another.
- Concepts of diversity are shaped by comparing others to our own cultural identity.

WHY STUDY DIVERSITY?

- Studying diversity is about exploring your own identity, sense of personal and family culture, values and beliefs, biases, and potential prejudices.
- The underlying purpose of becoming more knowledgeable about human diversity is to become skilled at communicating respectfully and effectively with people who are different than you in any number of ways.

BENEFITS OF STUDYING DIVERSITY

- Being open to and capable of working collaboratively with all kinds of people is essential in today's increasingly diverse world.
- Teacher education standards unanimously recognize the need for educators to have knowledge, skills, and dispositions that ensure their ability to work effectively with diverse families, children, and colleagues.
- Being more culturally competent increases the likelihood that teachers will have more positive influence and ensure more positive outcomes for all children.

DEFINING DIVERSITY AND IMPORTANT RELATED TERMS

- Diversity is about the many forms of differences between people, which include

a long list of potential attributes and characteristics with which people may identify themselves or be identified by.

- Diversity is often connected to concepts of culture, which is about shared knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors that are passed along from one generation to the next.
- Culture can refer to everything in our daily lives and social environment that shapes our ideas about lifestyle, self, and group expectations.
- Cultural competence or cultural intelligence results from becoming knowledgeable about the variety of human cultures, being aware of your own and others' culture, and honing behaviors and skills which promote open communication.
- A key element of today's multicultural education practice is that it is about recognizing and valuing differences, actively working to promote equity and social justice, and is a curriculum- and school-wide effort.

STRATEGIES TO BUILD CULTURAL COMPETENCE

- Developing cross-cultural communication skills involves being aware of your initial reactions and becoming increasingly intentional in the ways you interact with children and families.
- Person-first language demonstrates valuing the individual as a human being first and secondarily uses characteristics to describe the individual.
- Culturally competent language is an important part of being a professional educator.

Chapter Learning Outcomes: Self-Assessment

Use this space to reflect on how well you have achieved the learning goals for this chapter in terms of evaluating your own competency in the topics below.

List three to five key concepts that you have learned from the chapter.

Explore the purpose of studying diversity.	
Identify key concepts in the study of diversity.	
Define <i>diversity</i> and related terms, including <i>culture</i> , <i>identity</i> , <i>ethnicity</i> , <i>cultural competence</i> , <i>equity</i> , <i>social justice</i> , and more.	
Practice strategies to build cultural competence through classroom scenario analysis.	

Chapter Activities

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some people feel that creating inclusive, multicultural educational environments is a misuse of funds and requires too much time and effort that takes away from children's learning. How would you respond to this concern?
2. Many teachers wonder how to authentically integrate explorations of diversity into programs in which there is a seemingly overwhelming similarity among the children and their families. How would you explore this issue with colleagues?

SELF-REFLECTION

1. How are you feeling about your own abilities as a culturally intelligent professional? Imagine yourself in the various practical scenarios described in this chapter. Were there moments that you felt prepared or unprepared to face?
2. Assess your beliefs and practices using the self-inventories at the EdChange website (www.edchange.org), and complete the four self-assessment multicultural awareness quizzes

linked from the Projects tab. Bring a copy of your completed quizzes to discuss in class. These artifacts are a good addition to your teaching portfolio.

TEACHING DISPOSITION

Students are sometimes confused when it comes to identifying diversity. Many students only think about race or skin color as being representative of diverse cultures. It is important that students recognize and appreciate the many ways each individual brings diversity to the classroom, as well as the ways we share characteristics of diversity. Working individually, list the following aspects of your personal background:

- Three things you remember about family traditions in your home (daily or occasional traditions)
- The way holidays were/are celebrated in your family; which holidays were celebrated in your family
- The family members who were a part of your daily life (parents, siblings, stepfamilies, extended families, guardians)
- Where your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were born and raised (if they know)
- The places you have lived throughout your life
- The places you have visited or traveled to

- The languages you have been exposed to at home, school, on vacations, or at friends' houses
- Whether (yes or no) you have ever received a scholarship, grant, or funding assistance
- Three attributes you would use to describe yourself in broad terms (such as race or ethnicity)
- Three qualities you would use to describe yourself as a unique person (appearance, personality, family background, strengths, skills, hobbies)

In class: Divide into groups and discuss the items on your list that you are comfortable sharing. Talk about how your lives (your lists) are similar or different from one student to the next. Select three things that were different on your lists, and identify ways these differences enhance the classroom experience. Or form groups and select from the bulleted list a few items that are related. Then first interview each class member and gather their answers and create a visual representation of the class's answers. For example, create a large country or world map to plot out all the

places classmates have lived and/or traveled to. Or create a pie chart of the percentage of students who have been recipients of funding assistance.

IN THE FIELD

Contact a local school district administrator and ask if you can interview one of the district's foreign language teachers. Or locate a foreign language teacher at an area college. Ask for her thoughts on and experiences with people who represent diverse cultures and languages. Ask her how she presents diverse cultures to her students and what suggestions she has for educators working with young children on promoting knowledge about diversity. Write a paper summarizing your interview, including an introduction paragraph where you describe the teacher's background, a section to paraphrase the interview responses, and a summary section where you reflect on the teacher's responses in terms of your own beliefs, experiences, and what you have read in this chapter.

Weblinks

EdChange: Professional development, research, and resources for diversity, multiculturalism, and cultural competence. www.edchange.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children: A professional association supporting early childhood professional policy and practice, including advocacy, professional development, frameworks for high-quality practice, and guiding publications. www.naeyc.org

Teaching Tolerance: According to the website: "A place to find thought-provoking news, conversation and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity and respect for differences in schools." www.tolerance.org

2

The Development of Cultural Identity

Understanding the definition of *culture* as any of the values, beliefs, and facets of identity that influence our lives is just the beginning. To be a skilled and successful culturally competent professional, you must understand the theoretical approaches researchers use to study culture, as well as theories about the development of individual and shared cultural identity.



Children's family and community members have a strong influence on their attitudes, beliefs, and cultural identity.

- Explore the frameworks for illustrating cultural identity
- Identify experiences which have influenced the development of your personal cultural identity
- Explain the highlights of development
- Compare theories of how culture influences development
- Incorporate culturally inclusive strategies into practice

“Cultural identity is the feeling of ‘belonging together’ experienced by a group of people. It embodies the sentiments an individual feels of belonging to, or being influenced by, a group or culture” (Nsamenang, 2008, p. 18). Knowing the basic approaches to studying culture and having more knowledge of distinctive cultures themselves enables you to understand others’ perspectives—to walk a mile in their shoes. To help you understand and respect diverse perspectives, it is helpful to understand how cultural identity develops in childhood and understand the forces that shape identity, bias, stereotyping, and prejudice throughout life. This exploration also engages you in critical, ongoing self-reflection of your own dynamic cultural identity and how it has been shaped and changed throughout your life. These are the essential tasks in the development of your “ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person being served”; in other words, the development of your cultural competence (Hanley, 1999, p. 9).

Frameworks and Illustrations for Understanding Culture

Anthropologists are social scientists who study humanity. **Ethnographic research** is an important process for understanding diverse perspectives, values, customs, traditions, and identities. It involves immersed observations (integrating into a group to make close, direct observations), direct interviews, and it can involve the researchers living within the community of individuals being studied. This form of research is intense and especially powerful for providing a window into the lives of indigenous people living in remote geographic areas, though it is also effective for studying other settings, such as organization culture and interactions.

In addition, key insights can be gleaned from survey research, which involves gathering and analyzing statistical data from target groups of people (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2008).

Sociologists, psychologists, and educators also work in people-oriented settings. Many of the key concepts that currently shape multicultural education theory and practice draw on the important work of these social scientists.

In the realm of current research, several models of culture can provide useful visual imagery to convey the dynamic scope of what *culture* means in a practical sense. Three useful and interrelated conceptual frameworks of culture include

- Big C and little c
- Culture as a tree
- Culture as an iceberg

The key concept to understand through the exploration of these frameworks is that individuals and groups exist within cultural identities which tend to have obvious (easily seen) *and* hidden (under the surface) components. The emphasis on this dual layer perspective seeks to validate the complex and deeply rooted nature of cultural identities.

In all intercultural contacts (which is all human interaction, really) are characteristics of an individual's culture that you are aware of when you first meet someone. The characteristics you think you observe might include behavior, race, socioeconomic status, age, or gender, although often assumptions based on initial impressions are inaccurate. Regardless of what you observe, the majority of the factors influencing that person's way of thinking and communicating are not "written on her face." Most often these unobserved factors will have the biggest impact on that person's perception, communication, and understanding. In a learning environment this means that children's learning, development, and thinking will be most heavily influenced by nonobservable cultural factors. Culture involves the complex, socially created rules and ways of life that permeate groups of people, but it also involves the many beliefs, values, and attributes that shape individual identity and behavior. Operating within this complexity of culture are two themes that researchers have described as *big C culture* and *little c culture*.

BIG C AND LITTLE c CULTURE

In the description of big C and little c culture, a distinction is made between grand themes that are historical, political, or masterpieces of the arts (which tend to reflect historical sociopolitical currents) and minor themes that involve aspects of daily life and the ways people perceive and operate in their sociocultural contexts (Bennett, 2011; Petersen, 2004). Big C elements are considered "objective culture," and include architectural design, national-level politics, current legal trends, classical art works, and formal societal values. These elements are often widely recognized and accepted and are regarded with high esteem. Sometimes big C culture is considered highbrow or upper-class by people who think of museums, symphonies, classical literature, or other fine arts (Orlova, 2003). These works of fine art are part of the shared communication of societal values that are actively passed down to future generations in order to convey history and values. While big C culture provides important artifacts of humanity and a specific society's history, focusing on master works that are often defined by dominant or higher status members excludes all other members and overlooks the importance of more "common" aspects of daily life.

It is in these everyday moments that individual, family, and community norms, values, and expectations are revealed and shared. These cultural processes, the "personal" side of culture, are referred to as *little c culture*, in contrast to *big C culture* (Orlova, 2003, p. 180). Little c (or subjective) culture comprises more commonplace aspects such as norms of

ATTITUDE TO ACTION, BELIEF TO BEHAVIOR 2.1

Reflecting on Your Own Little c

Think about the implicit or nonverbal messages that your family life conveyed to you as you grew up and what little c messages you are currently living. Jot down some notes or lists of parenting expectations, peer norms, personal and family traditions, and customs that are part of everyday experiences. Use the following as a start, but feel free to add any other aspects of your daily life that come to mind.

When you have made notes on these more intimate aspects of your values, life goals, and preferences, share them with a classmate or colleague. Compare differences and similarities in your responses and take a moment to connect while sharing a part of your personal background.

What are your favorite meals?	
How do you spend free time?	
How you relax and “recharge”?	
What commitments do you balance? (Work? School? Children? Faith? Volunteering?)	
What personal and professional goals did your family have for you ?	
What personal and professional goals do you have for yourself?	
How do you define marriage both personally and legally?	
If you have children, what hopes do you have for them?	
What three core values do you live by?	
Other	

communication, popular opinion, casual clothing, typical foods and meal-time norms, dialects, and non-verbally conveyed assumptions (Bennett, 2011). Little c culture can be seen in the typical events in homes, such as dinner time routines and favorite food choices, in parenting expectations and behaviors, in popular fads and trends, or in messages within families, schools, and peer networks.

This terminology implies a hierarchy of importance that has been reflected in the value placed on the big C aspects of culture. However, in many practical settings such as schools and health care institutions, the little c aspects of individuals’ and communities’ lives are far more essential for professionals to understand and respect. A subtle but important distinction to recognize is that big C aspects are highly recognizable and overtly taught while little c aspects are more intimate and ingrained in daily life.

To focus on big C culture assumes that culture is something special to learn about—but not necessarily part of everyone’s daily life (Edwards & Farghaly, 2006). It is essential for educators to be knowledgeable about the impact of big C culture but even more familiar with each family’s little c culture—the norms of daily life—in order to sensitively and effectively create communities within classrooms and programs. Only when classrooms are more connected to children’s familiar routines of daily life is it possible for teachers to facilitate authentic, meaningful learning. These commonplace habits and moments of life also provide the richest window for school–family integration.

CULTURE AS A TREE

Using the image of *culture as a tree* to explain that there are seen and unseen aspects of cultural identity can be useful because the tree is a universally recognizable image. This analogy uses the main parts of the tree to explain distinct aspects of cultural identity:

- Highly visible array of leaves
- Sturdy but flexible branches
- Strong and visible trunk at the center or core
- Unseen roots running deep and wide below the surface

The key ideas in the tree analogy are that there may be many different and distinct visible elements (above ground) that have varying degrees of importance for the individual, as well as the unseen root system which can be vast and highly influential. The concept that the unseen roots are extremely important to the strength of the whole tree is easily understood by most people (Peterson, 2004).

As individuals begin to explore and learn about culture, identity, biases, and the impact of prejudice, a simple tree outline is particularly useful to guide self-reflection. In the top third of the tree (the leafy canopy), write down the aspects of your own identity that are visible and obvious to people who either just meet you or don’t know you too well. This might include skin color, sex, general age range, and primary language. In the trunk section, note the aspects of your cultural identity which become apparent to people who you interact with but might not be especially close to. These are important facets that you keep a bit more reserved, like economic status, education (which might also be part of your unseen root system), family makeup, religious beliefs, dialect or additional languages, relationship status, and gender identity. The roots of your image are those deeply held values, beliefs, ideals, goals, and hopes that are extremely important to you but that only people close to you really understand and know about you. Aspects in your root system might include gender expectations, spirituality, family values, life goals, satisfaction with career, beliefs about justice and fairness, moral code, and more. Consider varying the depth or width of your tree roots based on

IN MY FAMILY

Big C Culture

“One thing I always remember about my mother was that she was very worldly and insisted on exposing us to culture” begins Amanni one day as we discuss what culture means to us in an early childhood education class. Amanni stresses the word *culture* in her statement, indicating with her tone of voice that this was a word with a capital “C” and one that referred to important things. When asked what she meant by that, what kinds of experiences was she exposed to in the name of “Culture” with a big C, Amanni spends the next 15 minutes regaling the class with stories from her upbringing.

She lived with her family of four (mom, dad, brother, and herself) in a city suburb her whole young life until she went off to college. Her parents were both well-educated and professionals in the nearby city, self-employed as classical musicians. They were both moderately successful and instilled in the children a belief that “the classics” in the arts are highly valued. “My mom, especially, did

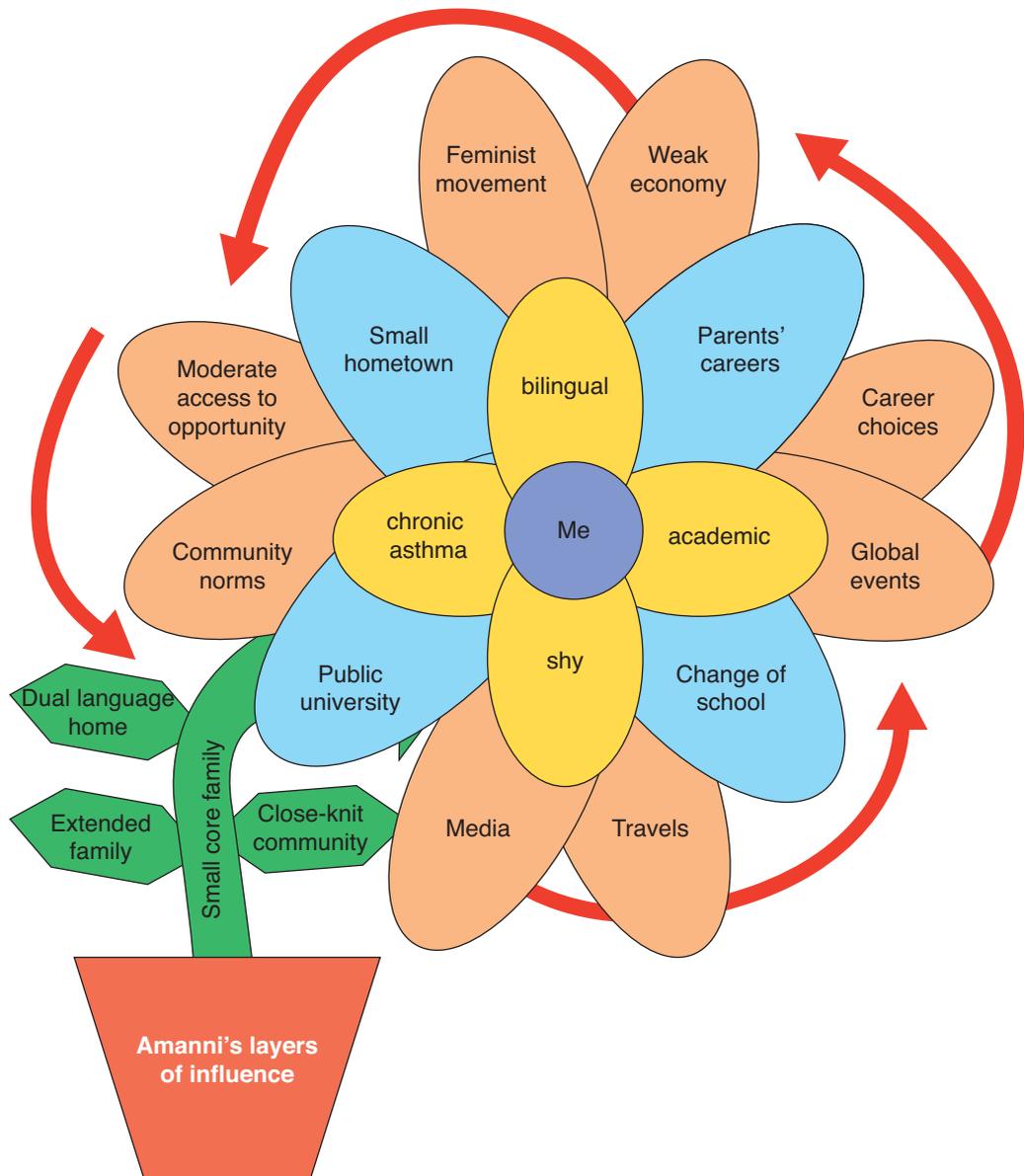
not embrace so-called ‘pop culture’” Amanni continues. “I remember many times that she scoffed at certain kinds of music, and definitely hated any sound of a dialect or non-standard English. I think to her it sounded uneducated. I definitely knew early on that education and refinement were norms to aspire to. We went to as many theaters, museums, and performances as we could afford. I guess for me classical arts—I mean, like masterpieces of arts—are what I was raised to think of when I hear [the word] Culture. I never thought of my peer group growing up and our ‘uniform’ of jeans and pocket-Ts with color-coded socks and penny loafers as culture. Nor did I ever think about Friday pizza, soda, and movie night as culture. I guess I’m realizing that there’s more to it than dressing up nice and going to performances in the city. I drew my culture, like my influences, as a flower, but I also think there is a lot of who I am that would be in the roots under the ground.” (See Figure 2.1.)

importance or influence in your life. Considering all of the levels within your personal tree graphic, imagine what a distorted view someone would have of you if they made assumptions based solely on your “leaves.” Now think about times you have been the one making assumptions.

CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG

The view of culture as having highly visible aspects as well as a large unseen component is well illustrated using the metaphor of *culture as an iceberg* (Weaver, 1986). Most people understand that the tip of an iceberg represents only a small part of the actual total mass of the iceberg, and that the majority of the mass is not visible. You probably also recognize that the unseen section is a huge part of the overall mass and is an essential element in understanding the whole. This metaphor for imbalance, with its emphasis on the massive unseen parts of an iceberg, is an even better visualization for culture than the metaphor of the tree, where the roots are present but not as oversized compared to the visible elements. Weaver points out that people “are often concerned with mastering information about . . . external aspects when, in fact, the most important part of culture is internal and hidden. To this extent, culture is like an iceberg” (Weaver, 1986, p. 133).

FIGURE 2.1 *Amanni's Drawing of the Influences in Her Life*



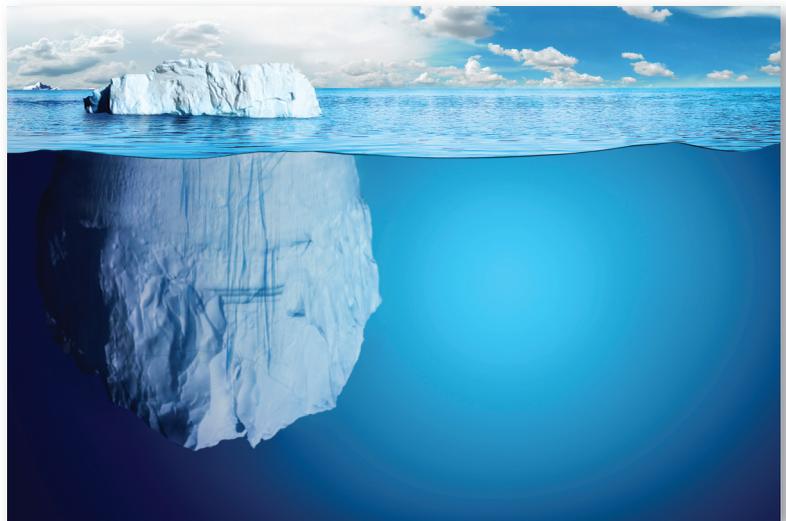
In the culture-as-iceberg diagram, external culture is described as encompassing behavior and objective knowledge. These are the norms that are explicitly taught and learned and are a part of spoken and written expectations and actions. As such, these elements are visible, overtly promoted as illustrations of certain groups; they also change through group action.

An example of this might be the expectation in a Jewish family that at 13 years old, boys and girls go through the coming-into-adulthood tradition of the Bar or Bat Mitzvah.

“But just as nine tenths of an iceberg is out of sight below the water, . . . nine tenths of a culture is also ‘hidden’ from view” (Hanley, 1999, p. 10). The elements under the surface, called internal or deep culture, include more personal beliefs, values, and thoughts. Because these are the norms that are learned implicitly and are not explicitly taught, it takes careful observation and real listening to learn them. Considering that “deep culture includes elements such

as the definition of sin, concept of justice, work ethic, eye behavior . . . approaches to problem solving . . . and approach to interpersonal relationships” (Hanley, 1999, p. 10), we can see how influential deep culture is. How parents interact with you, what they expect you to do with their children, and how children respond to you are all heavily influenced by that vast unseen culture of unspoken beliefs and values. Imagine a teacher of infants who warmly tells a parent at pick-up time about the lovely quiet time the baby and she shared as she rocked the infant to sleep and held him for a long time thereafter, singing softly. The teacher is caught off guard by the parent’s anger and exasperated tone when the parent scolds her saying, “We’re trying hard to teach Riley to be independent and sleep on his own and you’re making things much harder for me!” The teacher feels upset because she believes autonomy develops in other ways in toddlerhood and she is distraught to think of leaving the infant alone to cry to sleep. The teacher and the parent have different views on the development of independence and the role of a caregiver. These views and beliefs are part of their deeper culture and values, the part of their culture that is only learned through building a more intimate relationship. Without this awareness of the under-the-surface culture, this parent and teacher are potentially headed for conflict.

A useful lesson that emerges from using the iceberg analogy is understanding the potential for a perilous crash that can result from not recognizing the importance of the unseen mass. Being able to understand a person’s unseen culture is essential in navigating the sometimes tricky waters of intercultural collaborations. The key message of Weaver’s research is that



Visualizing an iceberg is useful when thinking about the relationship between seen and unseen aspects of a person’s cultural identity and influences.

ATTITUDE TO ACTION, BELIEF TO BEHAVIOR 2.2

Your Above and Below

Thinking about the similar aspects of the above-the-surface and below-the-surface frameworks of culture described previously, take a moment to map out your own layers of culture. How would you finish the statement: "Culture is like a _____"? Think about the aspects of your cultural identity that you feel are visible to people who meet you for the first time or who do not know you very well. Think about the aspects that are known only to people who know you better. Your lists

aren't about what things you think are more or less important but about characteristics of yourself that you think are obvious and those that take getting to know. You may have to add reflective notes about things you think people will *assume* about you early on and those things they may learn more accurately by getting to know you. Consider the following, as well as any other aspects that you think of, and make notes about how these relate to the seen/unseen concept as it applies to you:

	Explicitly observable (seen)	Not directly observable (unseen)
Race		
Sex		
Gender identity		
Geographic origin		
Socioeconomic status		
Education		
Religious beliefs		
Parenting style		
Political beliefs		
Age		
Native language		
Extended family nationality		
Ambition		
Career goals and satisfaction		

Looking at these aspects of yourself, can you begin to trace the development of your cultural identity that

has emerged over your lifetime? Which aspects are especially important to your personal cultural identity?

the necessary ingredient in being able to develop meaningful awareness of others begins with a focus on one's self. As with the "us-them" images many people conjure when reading the word *ethnic*, most people think of culture as belonging to other people. Our first task in becoming more culturally competent is to become more fully aware of our own culture and how it shapes our beliefs and behavior. This provides the essential platform for being able to recognize and value diversity.

Big Impact of Little c: Development of Self-Identity

“Developing positive identities touches on some fundamental questions facing every young child: ‘Who am I?’, ‘Is it OK to be who I am?’ and ‘What is my place in this world?’ Answering these questions is crucial to every child’s well-being” (Vandenbroeck, 2008(a), p. 26). Children internalize the expectations and norms of their unique cultural context through a variety of messages. Families are a key part of children’s learning process and are especially valuable partners for teachers, as this [video](#) explains.

Exploring how children’s identities develop involves delving into sometimes uncomfortable concepts. Using terms like *power*, *prejudice*, *outcast*, and *exclusion* when talking about young children’s behavior and attitudes can be difficult and feel at odds with the view of how a nurturing, loving adult sees children. A major goal of this book is to take you on an inward journey to better know yourself and an outward journey to better understand others. Moments in this exploration might be revealing, surprising, or uncomfortable, but above all, the overarching message is to realize the depth and incredible complexity of how cultural identity develops in childhood. We can’t underestimate the subtlety or complexity of children’s thinking, feelings, and behavior. Looking critically at how children develop prejudice and power hierarchies is a prime example of this surprising complexity and shows just how much more is really going on in children’s sociocultural development than we might ever have thought. Think about what you believe or have learned about children’s development, and make notes, with examples, on the following questions:

- When do children begin to understand differences in
 - boys and girls?
 - skin color?
 - physical attributes and diverse abilities?
 - family income level?
 - attractiveness?
- When do children start treating people differently based on perceived gender?
- How do children treat people differently based on perceived gender, skin color, attractiveness, or physical abilities?
- When do children demonstrate discriminatory behaviors?
- When do classroom cliques, social “power players,” and outcasts emerge?

Theories of development provide a basis for beginning to answer these questions. While each child develops in his or her own particular time

and in differing ways, basic trends of typical development contribute to children's emerging identity and culture. In addition to the meshing of universality and diversity, development is also impacted by the complement of biological drives and cultural influences (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

A key element of cultural identity is that it is taught and learned (Kottak & Kozaitis, 2008), though it also reflects the emergence of innate traits. Biological processes that occur throughout infancy and childhood contribute to a child's knowledge of himself as well as his ideas about others. Paired with naturally unfolding cognitive and socioemotional development are the highly influential sociocultural, environmental cues that are present in each person's life. Early childhood professionals need to have a solid understanding of how typical developmental processes normally occur and are guided by interactions within a child's world. This section reviews normal stages of cognitive and socioemotional development, with emphasis on how identity, awareness of differences, and prejudices develop. Two key theoretical frameworks for the sociocultural influences shaping children's perceptions are also explored: Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Cognitive and Socioemotional Development

Sometimes messages about the values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape cultural identity are conveyed intentionally, but at other times messages are shared unintentionally. This is especially true when infants learn expectations and norms through observation. The process of learning one's culture, called **enculturation**, is internalized through social interactions and particularly by watching and mimicking the people in one's surroundings (Gollnick & Chin, 2009). This process begins in infancy.

HIGHLIGHTS OF INFANT DEVELOPMENT

From birth, infants are sensitive to the reactions and emotions of the caregiver adults in their lives. Before 12 months, infants engage in **social referencing**, where they will specifically look at a parent or caregiver for cues and direction on how to respond to unfamiliar situations (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010). Infants are also already able to notice differences like skin tone and facial features that look familiar or unfamiliar and show preference for the familiar (York, 2003). So, when faced with someone who looks different than what she is familiar with, a baby will look at her parent's face and body language to "read" the parent's feeling about the new person. The infant's behavior will reflect what she has read in her parent's face, body, or voice. The parent's reaction can also ultimately become part of the infant's

beliefs, values, and behavior. When parent reactions convey discomfort, disdain, or fear, infants internalize these feelings and values. Serving an important protective purpose in the case of real danger, social referencing can also instill prejudicial attitudes early in life.

Throughout the first year, an infant goes through a process of developing her sense of herself as an individual separate from her parent. With this beginning sense of individual identity, the older infant/young toddler begins to make decisions and realize her own wants, but she also feels strongly the need for belonging or identification with a group, community, or family (Derman-Sparks, 1989). This very basic need for belonging is a major driving force for ingraining family norms and expectations, which sets the stage for developing biases (identification with and preference for the familiar). This need for belonging is also what shapes later preschool classroom power hierarchies, cliques, and exclusivity. A child's need to feel a valued part of a group can prompt her to reject and exclude others to gain favor with peers she looks up to (Gallas, 1998). And the same drive in the excluded child can make that rejection especially painful. This need for belonging is a human need which continues throughout life.

HIGHLIGHTS OF TODDLER DEVELOPMENT

In their second year, young toddlers already notice differences in appearance (such as skin color, clothing, glasses), mobility, and speech/language, and they respond with curiosity or uncertainty (Derman-Sparks, 1989). They will point to people who look different and show preference for pictures, people, and dolls that look familiar. By later toddlerhood, children begin to ask questions like, "Why is that person's skin so dark?" or "How come that girl is in that funny chair?" or make comments like, "That man is so fat," or "You talk funny."

Once in a hotel breakfast room, I was at the counter getting my then 3-year-old some cereal. Behind me I heard him say "How come you only have one leg?" and turned to see him standing in front of a man with one leg and a crutch and looking up at the man with genuine interest and inquisitiveness. I barely had time to register the moment when the man answered openly and simply, "Because my leg was sick and the doctor removed it. Now I walk around with this [crutch]." My son paused, then said "Oh. I see," and went to our table to eat his cereal. I thanked the man for sharing and was about to apologize, but he quickly replied that he was always glad when kids just asked about it instead of shying away in fear or being shushed and pulled away by a parent. This kind stranger took advantage of a natural teaching moment for my son, who learned that differences, in this case physical differences, are a naturally occurring part of our lives and nothing to be feared or embarrassed about.

This is also the time when young children begin to show a preference for playing with dolls or pictures that are light-skinned when given a choice between light- and dark-skinned. Of particular concern is research evidence indicating that Black children show this preference for

Toy for a Girl or Boy?

A few months ago I was dropping my son (then 20 months old) off at his family child care provider's home for the afternoon, and the other small group of mixed-age children was already busily engaged in building a large town with blocks. My son has been smitten with horses for a long time (we lived among a ranching community at the time), and he was delighted with the little pink pony he had received with a fast food meal the day before. I did have to pause when I ordered his children's meal and the young man behind the counter asked me "For a girl or boy?" I looked at the options and replied "A horse please." The man looked mildly irritated and softly said "A *girl* toy then," to himself as he punched in our order.

Since my son wasn't in earshot to hear the presumptuous question, I didn't really think about it until this moment dropping him off at child care. As he ran into the emerging block village, he began to "gallop" his pink pony around. A 3-year-old boy he routinely plays with happily greeted my son but stopped abruptly upon seeing the pink pony. He looked at me, confused, and asked "Why does Greisan have that *girl's* toy? That's for *girls*!" He emphasized the word *girls* with genuine confusion, as though this moment was violating his understanding of the rules of toys. I replied that my son loves horses, all kinds of horses, and that a color didn't make it only for girls or boys. This little boy also liked to play with the more realistic brown, tan, and black horses, so I asked if he'd like to bring out a few more horses so they all could be corralled together. He was off and back to playing before I even finished my invitation. It was just a passing, quick exchange, the kind that could easily be overlooked by most adults. But it made me realize all too vividly how clearly and how early messages of stereotype, bias, and exclusivity are conveyed to children and from a variety of sources.

That day I realized two very overt sources of biased messages acting on my son's life: the fast food counter and his toddler friend. And the message of



A toddler's curiosity about the world emerges naturally and genuinely, but biases can develop quickly when children are exposed to stereotyping messages.

acceptable behavior for boys and girls was stated clearly and reinforced: pink ponies are for girls, and challenging this gender expectation is not appreciated. Messages like this can create insecurity and lead children to question their choices and preferences. What are the sources and messages of bias, social boundaries, expectations, or tolerance and intolerance that you notice in your community? What are the implications of these messages on children's development?

Source	Message
Implication	
Source	Message
Implication	
Source	Message
Implication	
Source	Message
Implication	

white-skinned dolls and choose white dolls when asked to select the “nice ones” or the “nice color ones” (Bergner, 2009). The preference for light skin is an internalized bias that comes from racist societal messages of preference, value, prejudice, and discrimination.

In addition, by this age toddlers show bias in expectations of gender behavior—things that are OK for boys to do but not girls, and things that are OK for girls to do but not boys. Many teachers report hearing children say things like, “Boys can’t be the mommy to the doll,” or “You can’t wear the dress, you’re a boy!” or “Only boys are allowed to be the fireman,” or “Dolls are for sissies.” In a more subtle way that most teachers don’t often even acknowledge, young children are also becoming aware of and prejudiced against others who appear less wealthy. When asked why they might not be playing with a certain child, children have responded with comments like “Because his clothes are old and dirty,” or “He smells bad.” Can this be an indication of racism, classism, and sexism by 3 years old? Sadly, yes.

HIGHLIGHTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL THROUGH EARLY ELEMENTARY

In the preschool and early elementary years, 4- to 8-year-olds are astute at recognizing observable characteristics and will describe themselves in these terms as well. (Observable characteristics can include skin, hair, and eye color; sex; height and weight; clothing; and diverse abilities.) While this capacity to categorize helps children identify themselves as individuals and can be neutral observation, it can also lead to prejudice when combined with messages from the child’s environment. If adults are not keenly tuned in to signs of children’s thinking process about differences and prepared to address prejudice and guide children to valuing diversity, children’s prejudice continues to grow. By the time children enter school, they have already internalized complex cultural views on themselves and others, which can be both strengthened and challenged in the school years.



Diverse values, beliefs, and traditions are explored through informal and formal experiences, like this class visit and discussion at a local American Indian museum.

Children are not necessarily able to clearly talk about their beliefs, values, and attitudes about diversity. It is up to the adults in their lives to learn how to observe carefully, listen intently, and engage children in experiences in order to guide reflection and discussion. Equally essential in children's lives is the importance of knowing our own values, beliefs, and behaviors about diversity. Our values, often deeply held, influence our behaviors, perceptions of certain children or families, and how we interact with children and families. This influence can exhibit in subtle ways, such as encouraging girls to be less physically active, disciplining Black boys for aggressive behavior more quickly than

White children, or inviting non-English speaking families into the classroom less often than English speaking families.

Children internalize subtle cues more than many people realize and at an earlier age than many people think. But it doesn't all just come from parents. The following two sections highlight perspectives on the multiple influences in children's lives, with an emphasis on the cultural context of children's development.

Influences on Development

Most people readily recognize that caregiver parents typically have a great deal of influence on their infants and children through overt messages as well as subtle cues and messages (things children observe parents doing or saying). But many different sources of influence act in dynamic, bidirectional, and fluid ways. Understanding the nature of these systems of influences and the ways they interact in children's and families' lives will help you better meet the needs of diverse children.

BIOECOLOGICAL MODEL

Urie Bronfenbrenner is known for developing the **bioecological model** of human development. The innovative elements of his view include an

expanded perspective of the many “layers of influences” in children’s lives beyond the immediate family and his view of the bidirectional nature of influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). His was one of the first theoretical frameworks to recognize that children themselves have an influence on their environment and the people in it—not just that they are being influenced. By positioning children in an active and influential role, Bronfenbrenner envisioned a perspective that empowers and validates children’s role within the family and society.

The following is an example I use to illustrate the concept that children have an impact on their world: Think about one of the common concerns for families who are house-hunting. Many families will ask for information about area schools, or select certain communities based on school district reports, area recreation opportunities for families, or how many other families live in the area. In essence, having children guides many parents when choosing an area to live. Having children or planning to have children also guides many adults when choosing a job. Family-friendly policies such as health care benefits, family leave, flexible scheduling, and more liberal personal leave can factor heavily into a parent’s or prospective parent’s job search.

Another important part of Bronfenbrenner’s theory is that he described detailed structure within the systems, organizing influential/influenced forces into an immediate **microsystem** and an extended **macrosystem**. The child’s microsystem, or inside layers, includes the stronger and closer relationships that have a greater degree of influence—and that are more influenced by children—such as immediate family, child care, friends, faith settings, and schools. In these settings children learn and share the majority of the values, expectations, socially acceptable or taboo norms, and early perspectives on their world; this is the unique cultural context of their early life. Moving outward from the core are other influential/influenced aspects such as media, health care, extended family, and family friends. The outer macrosystem encompasses the more ancillary layers in the child’s world, including political structures (local, regional, national), parental workplace policies, and social and welfare services (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Another example of the way in which children influence even these ancillary layers is to consider the legislation and political involvement around educational issues and expectations. Issues related to the health and welfare of children remain at the forefront of presidential and legislative debates and demonstrate the growing influence children hold in society. In turn, the results of these political agendas influence children’s welfare and status within society.

SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY

The sociocultural theory of development, shaped by the work of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, has become increasingly influential in early childhood settings for its emphasis on the interrelationships of children and the cultures they are raised in. Vygotsky recognized that human cognitive development is more than just a biological process that unfolds in a routine manner.

Rather, sociocultural theory states that children who are raised in different societies or environments with different human influences will develop differently. Vygotsky wrote prolifically about the ways that a child's development is initially influenced by the relationships between close people in his life in an external process. As a child observes and imitates adult models, his behavior and beliefs are shaped and reinforced by his interactions with the people around him. Within these interrelationships, adults (including teachers and parents) shape the child's learning through mediated exchanges and guidance, which Vygotsky called **scaffolding**. This same process is used by teachers in formal learning settings. Later, the older child's developmental process becomes an internal one, revisiting socially shaped beliefs through his inner reflections (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, & Miller, 2003).

Vygotsky's writings on the relationship between cognitive development and language are particularly relevant to understanding how cultural identity develops. Two key concepts emerge here: First, as a young child's concept formation moves toward abstraction, she becomes able to categorize things in her world based on attributes (characteristics). Second, "once a child has associated a word with an object, he readily applies it to a new object that impresses him as similar in some way to the first" (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 78). So even as toddlers, young children notice and think about specific differences of attributes and make generalizations about how all things with similar attributes will be the same. This is the same kind of thinking process that can lead to over-generalizations or stereotypes: for example, thinking that all furry animals are doggies because the child has a puppy at home, or people who drive taxis don't speak English because the child has taken a few rides with nonnative English-speaking drivers. Sociocultural perspectives emphasize the depth and complexities in children's cultural development.

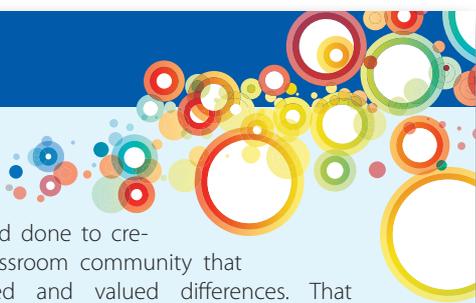


Positive everyday experiences with friends and families promote development of positive beliefs and values.

An interesting implication of these developmental perspectives is to recognize that no child is "raised in a vacuum," meaning that development unfolds on many diverse paths, based on the child and environment. Knowledge about differences in development based on parenting and socialization in diverse communities is relatively new. It is essential to realize that the older foundations of early childhood education, which have been the basis for developmentally based practice, have roots in White, Western, dominant norms of child-rearing

and socialization. The work of early developmental theorists (Piaget, Gesell, Hall) primarily emerged out of Europe and the United States and was based on observations of middle-class White children. So while we have learned a great deal from these theorists, the landscape of today's communities requires that we embrace more global perspectives. As our classrooms, families, and communities continue to become more diverse, we must broaden our theory base to include a larger knowledge base that is more reflective of all our children.

CLASSROOM STORY CORNER



Kaoru's Dried Fish Snacks

In my first year of teaching kindergarten, I was so excited to have a Japanese child in my class. Her father had moved the family to our town for a new job. Mom and the little girl didn't speak very much English. I was fortunate to have learned some Japanese from my own grandparents, who still lived in Japan. The little girl's name was Kaoru and she was understandably shy at first, but observant and interested in learning all about how things worked in our classroom. She quickly picked up new words and I was so pleased with how involved her parents were with me.

One afternoon the children were sitting in their table groups eating lunch while I was at my desk preparing for an afternoon project. I heard some giggling and low talking from one table but that wasn't unusual for our social lunchtimes. Then I overheard one child say, "Eww, gross! You're so weird!" followed by laughing and other children repeating "Eww!" I immediately looked up and saw Kaoru looking down at her table, face flushed and red. I quickly came over, knelt down, and asked the children what was going on. Kaoru abruptly got up and went to the bathroom down the hall. Several children sitting next to Kaoru pointed to the little bag of tiny, dried, whole silvery fish she had brought with her lunch and remarked that, "She eats the grossest things." Kaoru's mom delighted in packing beautiful, traditional foods for Kaoru's lunch, including fish, rice, meats, and vegetables which were not recognizable to other children in the class. Kaoru was a master with her chopsticks too, which the children thought was actually pretty neat.

Today, however, these children had really hurt Kaoru's feelings and had demonstrated for me how

little I had done to create a classroom community that recognized and valued differences. That moment really stays with me. That tiny bag of dried fish snacks sparked an ongoing change in my class and my teaching. I thought I was pretty open to family diversity, but I realized I had not done enough to engender respect and support for differences among my children. In essence, I had focused only on my attitudes and behaviors towards diversity, but had not done my job as far as the children's attitudes, knowledge, and behavior went. I had grossly underestimated how much children notice differences and how negative their reactions can be.

Over the coming months we spent a lot of time exploring our own differences and similarities, finding many things that, at first, the children found strange about each other. We gradually replaced words like *weird* and *strange* with comments like "Oh, that's new to me," and "I've never tried that." I saw my children become eager to find things about themselves, their families, and each other that were different and to really celebrate those things. I loved seeing them take pride in the characteristics of their family traditions that brought something new to our group. They just beamed when their show-and-tell items generated comments like, "Ooh! That's new!" from the other children. I learned a lot that year about how capable young children are at understanding concepts of fairness, cultural appreciation, and social justice. As adults we just have to be willing to validate their capabilities and engage them in the journey. It has to extend beyond just ourselves!

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PREJUDICE OR APPRECIATION

Understanding how young children learn culture is an important start to recognizing the processes through which bias and prejudiced attitudes develop. Processes of normal cognitive development are part of the picture. Beginning within the first few months of life, infants start to develop mental categories, such as gender and skin tone, based on attributes of people. Throughout the earliest years, children develop the ability to categorize people using a growing array of attributes that they associate closely with their own attributes (Bergen, 2001). As children recognize visible differences, they also compare what they notice in others to what they know about themselves, or their identity conception. This recognition turns into children's concept of "people like me" and "people different than me." While simply acknowledging difference can be a neutral cognitive action through the learned messages that surround children, this recognition can quickly become a negative comparison. In other words, noticing that, "Ooh, that person's face looks different than my mama's," can turn into, "Why is that person's skin so dark (or pale)?" or "Eww, that person's skin looks funny (or ugly)." As we know from theories of development, especially those of constructivist theorists like Piaget and Vygotsky, children actively build their concepts, ideas, beliefs, and values through direct experiences that they act on with their own internal cognitive process.

However, as sociocultural theories affirm, maturing cognitive development is one influence, though not the primary contributor to how a child's prejudiced attitudes form. The majority of children's values, biases, and identity conception develops through observation and modeling of everyday experiences of the adults in the child's life (Ball & Simpkins, 2004). Essentially, children have the *capacity* to recognize difference, but adults and society are teaching children negative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors or not teaching them how to overcome these messages and become culturally competent individuals. And these lessons are happening often without adults even realizing it. Think about how messages are conveyed to children as you listen to this [video](#).

Valuing Culture in the Classroom

For many teachers, the goal of integrating multiple cultural elements into the classroom is a high priority. While their intentions may be well meant, many teachers also struggle with identifying appropriate and useful strategies for creating a respectful and culturally responsive learning environment and experience. One of the obstacles even the most well-meaning teachers might face is a lack of knowledge about different cultures, which might make teachers feel insecure about including diversity in the environment and curriculum (York, 2003). A common place for teachers to start is with what is called "the one-shot traveler approach," which focuses on celebrating heroes (famous people) and holidays in a "celebratory subject approach to diversity" (Hyun, 2007, p. 262). In this approach, teachers use

culture-specific celebrations like Cinco de Mayo or Chinese New Year to introduce the concept of nationality diversity to children. Teachers may also spotlight racial diversity by highlighting single historic figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to represent all Black Americans, or targeting certain months or planned lesson units to focus on Women’s History or Native Americans.

On the surface these efforts might seem like a way to introduce children to diverse people and traditions. However, spotlighting either a certain group or a specific celebratory holiday can actually send a message of “other-ness” which can further distance children instead of develop their understanding and appreciation. In addition,

tokenism . . . involves treating the ‘culture’ of a child’s home life as fixed and static. In practice this means that special, yet stereotypical, events or displays are set up for children and families (such as festival celebrating Iraqi New Year with traditional clothing and food). Such activities risk being both patronizing and stigmatizing, in that they overlook the complexities of children’s personal histories and family cultures and ignore socioeconomic and other differences. (Vandenbroeck, 2008(b), p. 28)

The focus is on the big C, or above the surface facets of human experiences, without acknowledging the more vast and personally relevant little c or hidden culture. A tourist approach to exploring diversity rests on the surface, also not delving deeper into the more complex, sometimes unsettling classroom issues of power, prejudice, or disdain. Nor does it emphasize the dual, entwined elements of sameness and differences that are a part of the true human experience.

CREATING PLURALISTIC CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES: STRATEGIES

So what can teachers do to create a more pluralistic, culturally relevant classroom community? “An important way to avoid these pitfalls is to build real and symbolic bridges between the public culture of the early childhood centre and the private cultures of families, by negotiating all practices with the families involved” (Vandenbroeck, 2008(b), p. 28). Think about the imagery of building a bridge: in order for it to



Incorporate a variety of play materials that reflect diversity for children to explore and enjoy.

be functional and strong, a bridge requires a strong foundation on either side of the span. One foundation is you or the classroom, and the other is the child's family and home life. They need to be equally balanced, represented, and present in the relationship in order for the bridge to span the distance and support travel. The beginning of the journey starts with you and the work you are doing in this book to raise your awareness of your own culture and the diversity among the people around you.

Environment and Materials

Environmental design has a powerful impact on all of us, but the messages that environments convey have greatest impact on young children who are not as adept at processing their surroundings in critical ways. Culturally sensitive practice can include simple accommodations such as intentional seating arrangement or calling on children in specific order, as described in this [video](#) about Dual Language Learners. When professionals commit to culturally competent practice, they take time to know each child and family and carefully plan environments and interactions which support all children's strengths and needs.

Because of this sensitivity, intentionally and respectfully designed spaces have the potential to emphasize that cultural pluralism is valued. Teachers should integrate visual images and authentic artifacts which reflect the diversity of the children in relevant ways. An important starting point is with the rich and varied lives of the children in the class, which, in turn, requires getting to know their home and family life. Focus on the *little c* aspects of children's daily lives by engaging children and families in an exploration of:

- The ways they spend their time
- Who their family members are
- What their neighborhood looks, sounds, and feels like
- Who their friends are and what they do together
- Places they go around town
- Things they like to eat at home
- Music, stories, and the ways family and friends play

Consider including materials that focus on daily life, such as photos, artwork, weavings, tools, and literature; add these materials in integrated ways, with authenticity and not insulting caricatures:

- Add a sari and dhoti into the dramatic play area, with photos of Sasha's Indian relatives wearing the clothing and engaging in everyday activities; integrate with discussions, stories, and visits from individuals familiar with India and Indian lifestyles.
- Use a simple tortilla press in the dough/art center along with rolling pins, a pasta press, and bread pans with colorful recipe cards made from photos found online. Explore with children the unique ways that bread-like foods are prepared in homes around the community and

world. Focus on the message: “We all eat bread-like food, it just looks different in different people’s homes.” Bring in Ada, the teacher from down the hall, so that she can demonstrate how her mother taught her to make tortillas.

- Add authentic, diverse, empty food containers with print in multiple languages, such as packages of Udon noodles, beans, kosher crackers, and the like.
- Fill a basket with different textiles, including Alpaca wool—popular in Peruvian clothing; silk—from an Indian Sari; cotton; boiled wool—used in many European countries; hand-tanned leather; beadwork found in both Native American traditions and African nations; weavings; fur; quilts; and more. Research with children the reasons for the different types of materials, how the materials are used, their historical and traditional importance; re-focus children on the materials/textiles used in their own homes and lives (clothing, bedding, tableware, etc.).
- Create a display of assistive devices used by people with diverse communication abilities: for example sign language cards, Braille books, type and speak machine, amplifiers or hearing aids, and picture boards. Invite a local speech language pathologist to share experiences and facilitate children’s exploration of the resources.

Differences in family life	Implications for environmental design
Young children are held more of the time.	Provide baby carriers, ensure that space for napping is not separate.
Children have roles in caretaking and housekeeping.	Provide opportunities for children to visit siblings during the day; provide home-like centers with simple authentic tasks of home life.
Some children live with one parent, a guardian, two same-sex parents, in foster care, in a shelter, or with extended family.	Replace labels like “parent board” and “parent night” with a more inclusive “family” label; begin letters with “Dear Families,” and so on.
Interdependence is stressed as a family value or goal for child.	Consider family-style meals with children grouped to eat together; centers for slightly larger groups; mediated conflict resolution center.
Self-sufficiency and independence are stressed as a family value or goal for the child.	Create more independent small group centers; make materials accessible for self-serve; add a conflict resolution table; encourage child to eat and use the bathroom more independently.
Child care is preparation for school.	Arrange space as one large open room; take a more prominent role in directing activities; focus activities on learning goals.
Child care is an extension of home, or is a “home away from home.”	Arrange space in smaller, intimate nooks and areas; focus activities on tasks of daily life; ensure children socialize together.

In your environmental design, consider changing more than just materials or displays. Think about the cultural differences in how children are raised and the implications for how space, materials, and interactions can be designed to reflect family differences.

Children's Play

Children's social play is not only their primary venue for their learning but also an ideal setting for exploring beliefs they have internalized about roles, social rules, processing internal conflicts, and practicing expression of self-identity. "Shared pretend play is an important resource for developing emotional and moral qualities of friendship and allows children to experiment with a range of social roles and identities. As children participate in role-play they acquire a sense of themselves as future adults and future citizens, as well as experiencing an enhanced sense of their identity as children" (Danby, 2008, p. 36). There is no more powerful tool to assess children's development concepts than observing children at play.

In children's social play, particularly sociodramatic play, careful observers will find an open window into children's identity development and growing prejudices and biases. It is here that adults can hear revealing comments such as "That's a toy for boys," or "A family can't have two daddies," or "You can't be one of the horses because you can't walk," or "All Mexicans wash dishes, so you have to be the dishwasher in our restaurant." These are prime moments for teachers to calmly integrate into children's play and guide the scenes towards a more open-minded framework. These are opportunities to:

- Engage children in new play which can replace prejudiced or exclusionary language (for example, "you can't . . ." or "all Mexicans . . .") with more respectful and reciprocal dialogues ("In real restaurants all kinds of people have each job. How about if we each take a turn being the chef, the customer, the server, and the kitchen staff?").
- Provide support for more empowering self-identity concepts ("I brought in this magazine about people who build buildings, called contractors. There are pictures and articles about men and women who do this work and use these tools. See how these aren't just tools for boys?").
- Offer suggestions for new ways to value and integrate each other's unique culture into play ("Katie's dad is a caterer and he showed Katie how to make fresh bread last weekend. Katie's going to show us how they kneaded and shaped it when we get the clay out today.").
- Expand children's play scenarios with prompts, cues, questions, or specific ideas ("What kinds of things could Rhakim and Samuel (the two daddies) do in our dinnertime play?" "What if Sienna (in a wheelchair) is the lead horse and we follow her in two lines like a sled team?").
- Take on a role in children's play scenarios instead of observing from afar; use cues and prompts to guide children's play in more inclusive directions.

Summary

FRAMEWORKS AND ILLUSTRATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING CULTURE

- Social scientists use research methods that are people-oriented, such as surveys and ethnographic research.
- There are observable and unseen aspects of human culture, both of which influence personal identity, bias, and prejudice.

BIG C AND LITTLE c CULTURE

- Big C culture refers to formal or grand themes that are historical, political, or master works of art.
- Little c culture refers to the minor themes that involve aspects of daily life.
- Little c aspects are the most influential on a person's thinking and behavior.
- Examples of little c culture include typical events in homes such as dinner routines and favorite foods; parenting expectations; popular fads; messages within families; schools; and communities.

CULTURE AS A TREE

- The leafy canopy can represent the most visible components of individual identity, such as skin color, sex, or primary language.
- The trunk represents visible but slightly more intimate elements such as economic status, family style, relationship status, or religious beliefs.
- The unseen root system contains the most intimate values and norms that are not apparent at first sight, but rather take time to discover; these include spirituality, morality, or gender expectations.

CULTURE AS AN ICEBERG

- While we can learn about someone from noting observable characteristics, the most

important elements are hidden from view and require formation of a deeper relationship.

- Failing to carefully consider the deep culture can lead to conflict and prevent reciprocal relationships and interactions.

COGNITIVE AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Cultural identity is taught and learned; it is also impacted by unfolding maturation and development.
- Enculturation is the process through which culture is learned and internalized, impacted especially by watching and mimicking people in our environment.
- Within the first few months, infants are already capable of noticing differences in physical features.
- Throughout toddlerhood and the preschool years, as children's awareness of their own features and attributes emerges, they will notice and ask questions about differences, initially with neutral curiosity.
- Bias and prejudices develop when a child learns from overt or subtle messages in her environment to dislike or be fearful of differences.
- It is important for adults to address children's questions and prejudices with honest answers and the clear message that differences are important and valued.

INFLUENCES ON DEVELOPMENT

- Bronfenbrenner theorized that children are influenced by the many aspects of the environment within which they are raised and that they also influence family life, community structures, and political systems.
- Vygotsky contributed to the growing research base within the larger constructivist theory framework, which focused on the unique

cultural aspects in children's lives and the impact that different cultural environments have on different children.

- Children's early capacity to notice differences, then to categorize attributes based on comparisons to their self-identity (*like me* and *different than me*), can lead to negative attitudes towards people who are different.
- Adults might teach negative beliefs and not be aware of the negative attitudes and prejudices developing in children.
- Teachers must become sensitive, careful observers of and listeners to children and families in order to identify negative attitudes early.

power and prejudice and develop positive attitudes towards diversity.

- Teachers should avoid tourist-style subject spotlights in favor of explorations which focus on commonalities and differences in everyday life experiences.
- Explorations of diversity should begin with the lives of the children in the class and integrate authentic elements of the surrounding community.
- Teachers must become knowledgeable about and sensitive to negative stereotypes or token efforts and instead explore the rich and complex layers of children's and families' lives.

VALUING CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM

- Many teachers lack the knowledge and confidence to appropriately and meaningfully create learning experiences that address

Chapter Learning Outcomes: Self-Assessment

Use this space to reflect on how well you have achieved the learning goals for this chapter by evaluating your own competency in the topics below. List three to five

things that describe key concepts you have learned from the chapter.

Explore frameworks for illustrating cultural identity.	
Identify experiences that have influenced the development of your personal cultural identity.	
Explain the highlights of development.	
Compare theories of how culture influences development.	
Incorporate culturally inclusive strategies into practice.	

Chapter Activities

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Collect a wide variety of popular magazines or access their pages online. What biases do you notice in the images? For example, among different magazines do you notice over- or underrepresentation of women, people of color, individuals with diverse abilities, families in

economic stress, or multiple languages? What messages might be perceived through the examples of overrepresentation or underrepresentation that you noticed?

2. Map out the systems of influence in your life using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model as a guide. Consider the complexities of the

sociocultural context of your life. Share your influences, and discuss differences and similarities within a small group.

SELF-REFLECTION

Using the prompts throughout this chapter, create your own analogy of what you think culture is like and draw a corresponding model. Create your own visual illustration of what your culture means to you and how you want people to get to know the seen and unseen aspects of your personal culture.

TEACHING DISPOSITION

Go to the NAEYC website, to the resources/position statements link, and download the statement entitled “Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity” Using this and any other relevant resources you have access to, create a card file or personal book of at least 20

specific strategies for learning about and integrating all children’s little c experiences into the classroom throughout the day, throughout the year. Also create 10 ideas of how to integrate your own everyday life experiences. Your personal culture is important in the classroom too! This artifact is a good addition to your teaching portfolio.

IN THE FIELD

Go to your school or local library and collect at least three magazines, including a travel or adventure-related source (such as *National Geographic*); a parenting magazine; and a fashion magazine. Browse the images and article titles for content which reflects human diversity. Make a note of the frequency (Prevalent? A fair amount? Scarce?) of the following characteristics and reflect on the appropriateness of the content (authentic, stereotypical, big C or little c):

Characteristic of Diversity	Frequency	Appropriateness (What is the content/message? Is it empowering?)
Skin tone		
Body type		
Sex		
Gender		
Diverse abilities		
Nationality		

Weblinks

Anti-Defamation League: The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry in the United States and abroad through information, education, legislation, and advocacy. www.adl.org

Bernard van Leer Foundation: Grant-making programs support innovative ways to improve

opportunities for young children from families with limited resources. Free publications for practitioners and policy makers shape the debate about early childhood. www.bernardvanleer.org