

# ECE: Diverse and Inclusive Practices in Nova Scotia



# ECE: DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN NOVA SCOTIA

*ECE 1015*

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NSCC

Nova Scotia



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## ABOUT THE BOOK

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### NSCC LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NSCC is physically situated in Mi'kma'ki, the unceded territory and ancestral home of the Mi'kmaq. This territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” between the Mi'kmaq and the British Crown, dating back to 1725.

As Treaty beneficiaries, we recognize that we are all Treaty People.

### CREATION NOTE

Cover Credit: Preschool Program by Seattle Parks and Recreation via Flickr CC BY 2.0 License

*ECE: Diverse and Inclusive Practices in Nova Scotia* uses 2 chapters have been adapted from *The Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education* by Krischa Esquivel, Emily Elam, Jennifer Paris, & Maricela Tafoya published by College of the Canyons shared under a CC BY 4.0 license. Additional content from a variety of sources has been added to make this open textbook connect to early childhood education in Nova Scotia. See Versioning History chapter with content mapping at the end of the book.





PART I.

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**EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

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## CHAPTER 1.

### DIVERSITY

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#### Learning Objectives

After this chapter, you should be able to:

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

### DIVERSITY

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



*Diversity in early childhood education. Image Credit: California Department of Education. A Guide to Culturally Sensitive Care. used with permission.*

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

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

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

Diversity includes, therefore, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of difference are not always fixed but also can be fluid, we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another”.<sup>1</sup>

1. Queensborough Community College. (2019). *Definition for Diversity*. <https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.htm>



*Diversity in schools, including ECE, is beneficial. Image Credit: California Department of Education. P12 in Inclusion Works! Used with permission.*

## SIGNIFICANCE OF DIVERSITY

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

## ADAPTATION CREDIT

Adapted from Looking at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the open textbook *The Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education* by Krischa Esquivel, Emily Elam, Jennifer Paris, & Maricela Tafoya. CC BY license.

## CHAPTER 2.

### EQUITY

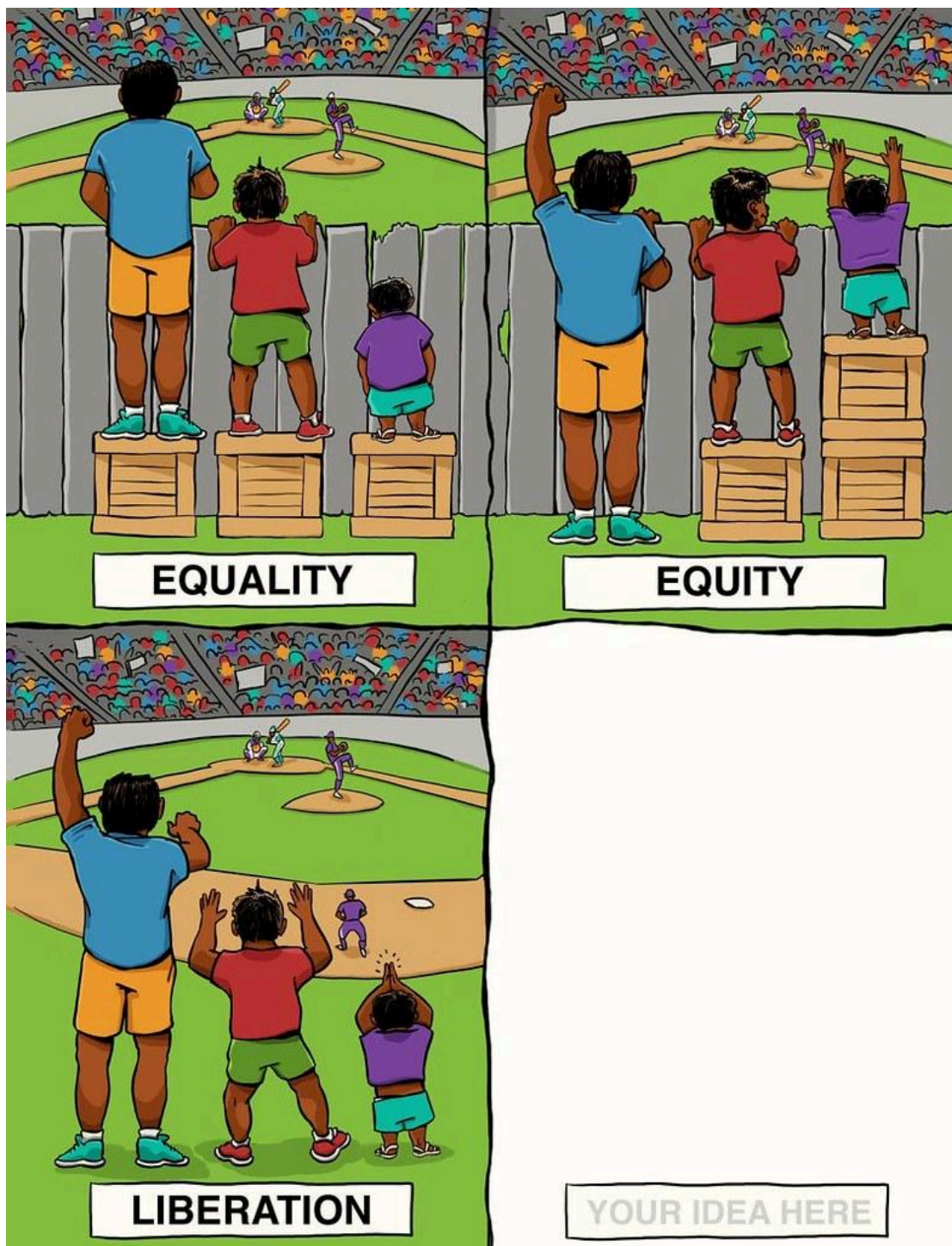
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In education, the term equity refers to the principle of fairness . While it is often used interchangeably with the related principle of equality , equity encompasses a wide variety of educational models, programs, and strategies that may be considered fair, but not necessarily equal. [8] In other words, equity means making sure every student has the support they need to be successful.

Equity in education “requires putting systems in place to ensure that every child has an equal chance for success. That requires understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual students or by populations of students and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers. While this in itself may not ensure equal outcomes , we all should strive to ensure that every child has equal opportunity for success.”<sup>1</sup> Unlike equity, equality ignores the fact that different people begin with different resources and barriers, and therefore will need more or less support as a result.<sup>2</sup>

1. Thought Leaders. (2018). Equity in Education: What it Is and Why it matters. Retrieved from <https://www.thinkingmaps.com/equity-education-matters/>

2. Theme, B. (n.d.). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [blog post]. CC BY 4.0



A simplified visual of equality versus equity. Image Credit: Equality vs Equity by Angus Maguir. CC BY-SA 4.0

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

### WHY DOES EDUCATIONAL EQUITY MATTER?

When we think of a fair and just society one of the defining characteristics is likely to be that all individuals have equal opportunity to realize their potential, irrespective of the circumstances into

which they are born. Education plays a critical role in determining whether or not individuals are given this opportunity. There are a range of reasons why good educational outcomes matter, from the individual; better health and longer life, to the societal; greater social cohesion, inclusion and trust; to the economic, productivity, economic growth, innovation, social wealth and reduced welfare costs. For a society or nation committed to 'creating a fair and egalitarian place in which opportunities exist for all', education is a key lever or vehicle through which this can occur.<sup>3</sup>

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3. ACT Government. (n.d.). *The future of Education*. [https://www.education.act.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/1234657/Future-Of-Education-Why-does-educational-equity-matter.pdf](https://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1234657/Future-Of-Education-Why-does-educational-equity-matter.pdf)



## CHAPTER 3.

### INCLUSION

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When we talk about inclusive early childhood education, we are talking about programs that are designed for children and families from a wide range of backgrounds. A program can serve diverse families, but not be truly inclusive; you can have families from different backgrounds in your program, but do they feel welcome? Are you forcing them to adapt to a program that isn't designed for them or that doesn't take into consideration their social, cultural, and/or racial contexts? Designing an inclusive program translates to everything from physical space to how you interact with children and families.<sup>1</sup>

#### INCLUSION AS IT RELATES TO CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

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

- Access – providing access to a wide range of learning opportunities, activities, settings, and environments
- Participation – even if environments and programs are designed to facilitate access, some children will need additional individualized accommodations and supports to participate fully in play and learning activities with peers and adults.
- Supports – an infrastructure of systems-level supports must be afforded to those providing inclusive services to children and families.<sup>2</sup>

1. California Department of Education . (2013). A Guide to Culturally Sensitive Care (2nd ed.). <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/itguidesensitivecare.pdf>

2. Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). ((2009, April.). Early Childhood Inclusion. A joint position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.[cf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/inclusion\\_statement.pdf](https://cf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/inclusion_statement.pdf)



*All children need to be able to fully participate in the early childhood education environment. Credit: A Guide to Culturally Sensitive Care by the California Department of Education is used with permission*

Children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant barriers to accessing inclusive high-quality early childhood programs and too many preschool children with disabilities are only offered the option of receiving special education services in settings separate from their peers without disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

### Think About It...

Describe your understanding of how diversity, equity, and inclusion are related.

### SUMMARY

Early childhood programs serve a diverse array of children and families. Recognizing the value of

3. U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS). (2015). Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>

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

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## CHAPTER 4.

### NOVA SCOTIA'S FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, AND CULTURES

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#### FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND CULTURE

Children's lives are shaped by their families, communities, and culture. Their earliest development and learning takes place through these relationships, particularly within families, who are children's most influential teachers. As children participate in daily life, they develop interests, construct their own identities, and make meaning of the world they live in.

Families are composed of individuals who are competent and capable, curious, and rich in experience. They love their children and want the best for them; they are experts on their children. Families are the first and most powerful influence on children's learning, development, health, and well-being. Families bring diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives to the learning situation. Families belong, are valuable contributors to their children's learning, and are engaged in a meaningful way.<sup>1</sup>

A sense of belonging is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, then a cultural group, then a neighbourhood, and then their wider community. The framework acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a child's developing sense of self—they shape who children are and who they become.

#### NOVA SCOTIA'S PEOPLE AND CULTURES

Nova Scotia's people reflect diverse cultures, many which are language-based. In relation to child development and learning, culture influences the way that children engage in and form relationships, and how they provide information to and communicate with others. Culture is the understandings, patterns of behaviour, practices, and values shared by a group of people. Collectively, these shared understandings help people make sense of the world and communicate with one another. Culture represents a group's accepted values, traditions, and lifestyles that guide the way people lead their day-to-day lives. Children and families may identify as belonging to more than one culture. Today, more than 100 cultures are represented across the province, providing educators with a wealth of creative opportunities to celebrate the province's peoples and cultures, as well as the responsibility to be inclusive and responsive to children in their programs.

Nova Scotia's Indigenous people, Acadian/Francophone population, African Nova Scotian, and the Gaels communities have greatly underpinned the uniqueness of the province's population. An

1. Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *How does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* (p.7). Toronto, ON: Government of Ontario. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf)

awareness of the history of Nova Scotia's founding cultures is necessary to developing relationships with children's parents, families, and communities, and to creating environments that reflect the cultures and traditions of all Nova Scotians.

Respecting cultural and linguistic differences is more than celebrating different holidays—it involves a deep understanding of the culture's values, the experiences of its members, and their ways of knowing. Cultural identity comes from having access to your own culture—its institutions, land, language, knowledge, social resources, economic resources; the institutions of the community (lifestyle) and its codes for living related to social, environmental, and physical respect such as nutrition, safety, protection of physical, spiritual and emotional integrity of children and families; as well as cultural expression and cultural endorsement.<sup>2</sup>

It is generally accepted that children's cultural backgrounds influence their learning. In early infancy, children do not consciously make sense of and analyze their surroundings—but they very quickly begin to understand patterns of activities, different ways of responding, and the sounds and tones of their first language.

### **Nova Scotia's founding cultures: A brief history**

This section was developed by contributors from the early childhood education field and EECD. It provides brief histories and contexts of four major cultural groups in Nova Scotia: the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and the Gaels.

#### *Mi'kmaq people*

The Mi'kmaq are the original people of Nova Scotia and remain the predominant Indigenous group within the province. Nova Scotia is within the traditional, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq, who, for time immemorial, have lived and prospered on this land. The traditional territory is divided into seven smaller territories across what is known as Mi'kma'ki. The territory stretches from the southern portion of the Gaspé Peninsula eastward to Newfoundland and encompasses New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

Nova Scotia has 13 Mi'kmaw First Nation communities. The culture, language, and Indigenous knowledge of the Mi'kmaq has been passed down orally through hundreds of generations, and still guides Mi'kmaw way of life.

The Mi'kmaw language is an ancient language that has developed over the centuries in Mi'kma'ki. It is a sacred language, given to the people by Kisu'lkw. The Mi'kmaw language is the way in which Mi'kmaw values, customs, beliefs, and attitudes are passed on from generation to generation. To learn the language, therefore, is to deepen one's understanding of Mi'kmaw consciousness and identity.

Mi'kmaw language is a verb-oriented language. This means that all words in a clause are based around the verb and not, as in English, around the subject. Unlike French, there is no gender in the Mi'kmaw language, but there is a clear distinction between animate and inanimate objects. Mi'kmaw language has free word order; there is no predetermined syntax. When the language is written in Nova Scotia, the Smith-Francis orthography is the recognized writing system.

Mi'kmaw language education is holistic in nature and unifies language, knowledge, and culture. Consciousness and identity are at the heart of the Mi'kmaw language. There is no disconnect between language and culture; the culture is embedded in the language. Promoting the understanding and expressions of Mi'kmaw worldview through the use of the Mi'kmaw language is crucial.

Recently, there has been a tremendous increase in the development of technology that supports language development, especially apps, digital books, videos, and web resources. This increase in technologies that reinforce language development will help teachers to support students of all learning modalities. Community support is integral to Mi'kmaw Education. The community has an obligation to support language revitalization, enhancement, promotion, and development. Educators should find ways to involve the community in the school through events and activities in order to enhance language development. Educators should also provide opportunities for Elders to be present in the classroom as a resource, because Elders are the keepers of knowledge and language.

All Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia have Kindergarten–4 (K–4) programs for children the year before they enter primary. These programs are either stand-alone programs or combined with Aboriginal Head Start Programs on Reserve or child care programs.

Early childhood programs in Mi'kmaw communities do not fall under provincial regulations and do not receive provincial funding. However, educators are educated in provincial programs and follow as closely as possible guidelines for provincially regulated care. They also follow guidelines for programs that are specific to First Nation programs. There is a great deal of consistency between provincial programs and those offered in Mi'kmaw communities.

#### *Acadian Nova Scotians*

The Acadian population of Nova Scotia has a unique place in this province's history. They are descendants of one of the first permanent French settlers in North America, having arrived with Samuel de Champlain in Port Royal in 1605. In July 1755, approximately 6,000 Acadians were deported from mainland Nova Scotia, mainly for refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. Most were captured and sent by ship to colonies along the Atlantic Coast. However, some were imprisoned in Halifax, others sent to France and a small number went into hiding or spent many years wandering. By 1764, Acadians were given permission to return to what was then Acadia, but had to settle on lands that were not taken by the British settlers. Today's Acadian communities are dispersed throughout Nova Scotia and located mainly in Digby, Yarmouth, Inverness, Richmond, Antigonish, and Halifax counties.

In the mid 1800s, the Government of Nova Scotia condoned bilingual Acadian schools until after 1969, when the federal government proclaimed the Official Languages Act. The Act gave French-language minorities in Canada official rights to services in their language. In 1982, Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became a major stepping-stone in the advancement of French-language minority education in Canada. It clearly defined the rights of all Canadians to have their children educated in their own official language.

After a Canadian Charter challenge based on the interpretation of Section 23 in 1996, the Government of Nova Scotia created a single school board to manage all Acadian and French schools for the entire province—the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP). It took yet another court challenge that ended in October 1999 to replace the existing bilingual school system with homogeneous French first language schools. In 2004, the Province of Nova Scotia enacted the French-language Services Act, giving official status to the delivery of French-language services by the public service.

Since the 1970s, Acadian and Francophone early childhood education programs have been developed in various French minority language communities across Nova Scotia. They have played an important role in valuing the Acadian language and culture in all aspects of the child's life at home,

in society, and at school. The integration of these French early childhood centres or centres de la petite enfance within French schools has become a fundamental catalyst to redress past injustices and provide the official language minority with equitable access to high-quality education. The French Early Years Centre and the CSAP's allocation of space for many early childhood education programs, including their own 4-year-old language acquisition program *Grandir en français*, are positive indicators of restorative progress.

Due to a bilingual population, there are many challenges facing the Acadian and Francophone community with regard to the early years including assimilation, reclaiming lost language, access to French early years services, training for educators, and exogamous or mixed language (English and French) families. Statistics bring to light an urgent need to support mixed language families in order to ensure the survival and future of the Francophone community of Canada.

In 2006, of the nearly 64,000 right-holder's children from birth to age 4 living in Francophone minority provinces, 61 per cent are part of French exogamous families; and only 38 out of every 100 speak French at least regularly at home. In Nova Scotia, 3.8 per cent of the population possess French as their first language and, for children –from birth to age 4, this falls to a mere 1.9 per cent. In addition, 71.9 per cent of Nova Scotia children are part of exogamous families and French is transmitted to these children less than 20 per cent of the time. For the 2011–2012 school year, Nova Scotia's French schools were faced with nearly 68 per cent of new children who speak little to no French, a direct consequence of these factors.<sup>3</sup>

French being one of Canada's two official languages, it is important that all children and their families have access to equitable services in their language of choice. High-quality French first language early learning programs and environments build strong cultural identities for not only today's children but for future generations as well. By understanding that the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits begins at birth, Acadian and Francophone educators are in a unique and ideal position to counteract the linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Acadian and Francophone population. By effectively addressing the specific cultural and linguistic needs of Nova Scotia's Acadians and Francophones, they can become the instrument of change for the historically downward trajectory of the Acadian Francophone culture and language.

### *African Nova Scotians*

People of African ancestry have deep roots in the history of Nova Scotia. They were part of the earliest non-indigenous settlement of our province and, as a founding culture, African Nova Scotians continue to contribute to the diversity and infrastructure that defines Nova Scotia today. Their history is woven into the very fabric of Nova Scotian culture. They represent a myriad of ethnicities, cultural experiences, and knowledge.

The first recorded African believed to have visited Nova Scotia was Mathieu de Costa. He was hired to serve as an interpreter between the French and Mi'kmaq when the first settlement in Nova Scotia was established at Port-Royal.

By 1769, almost 8,000 New England Planters had settled in Nova Scotia. It is estimated that approximately 200 Africans accompanied the New England Planters. Among them was Barbara Cuffy

3. Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. (2016). *Early Childhood: Fostering the Vitality of Francophone Minority Communities*. Gatineau, QC: Minister of Public Services and Procurement. [www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/other/2016/early-childhood-report](http://www.officiallanguages.gc.ca/en/publications/other/2016/early-childhood-report).

and her family, the only known free Black settlers to arrive with the Planters. Barbara Cuffy is a compelling figure as she was a Black woman landholder in Nova Scotia during the 1760s, fifty years before slavery was extinguished in the province and more than one hundred and fifty years before women got the vote.

The end of the American Revolution prompted the first large wave of immigration to Nova Scotia. Between April and November of 1783, approximately 50,000 Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia. About 10 per cent of them were of African ancestry. Among them were approximately 3,500 free Black Loyalists and 1,500 enslaved Africans. These Black Loyalists had risked their lives to reclaim their freedom. They were people with remarkable determination and survival skills. These brave men and women settled in every Township of the province and they established the first of the more than 50 African Nova Scotian communities in the province including at Guysborough, Granville, Birchtown, Brindley Town (Digby), Little Tracadie, Halifax, and others.

In 1796, 600 exiled Jamaican Maroons settled in the Preston area. Less than four years after their arrival, most of the Maroons set sail for Sierra Leone. Only a few families chose to stay behind. However, their legacy endures, they helped build new fortifications at the Halifax Citadel and they worked at the Government House and the Governor's Farm.

The War of 1812 between the United States and Britain provided more enslaved Africans the opportunity to reclaim their freedom. By 1816, approximately 1,800 Black Refugees had come to Nova Scotia. Most were settled at Preston and Hammonds Plains. Others settled in Halifax and smaller communities around the province including at Cobequid Road, Five Mile Plains, Porter's Lake, Fletcher's Lake, Beechville, and Prospect Road.

Despite almost insurmountable hardships, by the 1830s, Black immigrants to the province had started to create a unique African Nova Scotian identity. Black churches and schools were established in most African Nova Scotian communities. As their communities organized, African Nova Scotians started to become a political force in the province. Led by Richard Preston, African Nova Scotians began an era of activism. They honoured the memory of their motherland Africa and they remembered her in the names of their organizations such as the African Baptist Association and the African Friendly Society.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Nova Scotia's landscape was further enhanced by the immigration of almost 500 men and women from the Caribbean (formerly known as the West Indies). As citizens of the British Commonwealth, these individuals were intentionally recruited for employment within the steel mill and coal mining industries of Cape Breton. Immigrating by choice, they fully expected to receive the same rights and privileges afforded all Commonwealth citizens and Canadians. They included expert tradespeople, entrepreneurs, professionals, and students who hoped to attend university. Most were settled in the Whitney Pier area of Sydney. Others settled in Glace Bay, New Waterford and Sydney Mines. These newcomers to Nova Scotia were educated, resourceful, politically engaged, and trailblazers. Their accomplishments and those of their ancestors positively impacted various facets of the Nova Scotian landscape towards a more equitable society.

People of African ancestry continue to immigrate to Nova Scotia. They come from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States and, just like the earliest Black immigrants to our province, dream of building a better life for themselves and their families in Nova Scotia. These newcomers continue to strengthen Nova Scotia's vibrancy and actively contribute to its economic viability and identity.

African Nova Scotians have made and continue to make important contributions to the political, social and cultural life of our province and our country. They have served with distinction in various



military conflicts and they have captivated audiences with their poetry, singing, acting and writing. They have been leaders and pioneers in every profession and they have served as the vanguard for equal rights in Nova Scotia. With a legacy that spans more than 400 years, African Nova Scotians continue to represent our province with honour and their achievements endure as a great source of pride for all Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

#### *Gaels in Nova Scotia*

From 1773 up to the 1850s an estimated 50,000 Gaels from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland arrived in Nova Scotia. Gaels settled along family and religious lines in Nova Scotia—this phenomenon of uprooting whole communities and relocating in the New World context became referred to as chain migration. Settlement occurred in Colchester, Pictou, Antigonish, Guysborough, Inverness, Richmond, Victoria, and Cape Breton counties. For the majority, Gaelic would have been their only language.

Gaelic language and its cultural expression, family, relatives, the broader community, and the Christian faith are what Gaels valued most and it is these aspects that sustained immigrant Gaels through many challenges in the Nova Scotia context. The Gaels' presence as a people through language, culture, and identity underpinned the social and economic fabric of communities in the province's eastern districts and throughout Cape Breton Island. It is estimated that by the later 1800s there may have been as many as 100,000 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia.

It is estimated that over two dozen Gaelic dialects were introduced into Nova Scotia; 1,000s of fiddle and pipe tunes were composed; regional step dance styles, such as Mabou, Iona, and Glendale, thrived; thousands of songs—some brought over from Scotland and others composed here—were shared; over 300 place names; thousands of personal nicknames; and between 1791–1902; there were one dozen different Gaelic publications initiated.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Gaels experienced marginalization and exclusion as their language was not supported in official institutions, like the government, churches, universities, and public school programs in the province. This resulted in significant loss of Gaelic language and cultural expression, and severely eroded the collective Gaelic identity. While the reasons for language, cultural expression, and identity loss are complex, evidence reveals how low status for Gaelic language directly impacted the loss of cultural expression and identity across Gaelic settlement districts in the province.

UNESCO's position on language loss reflects, in large measure, the experience of Gaels in Nova Scotia:

Cultural/political/economic marginalization/hegemony. This happens when political and economical power is closely tied to a particular language and culture so that there is a strong incentive for individuals to abandon their language (on behalf of themselves and their children) in favor of another more prestigious one. This frequently happens when indigenous populations, in order to achieve a higher social status, have better chance to get employment, or are forced to it in school, adopt the cultural and linguistic traits of a people who have come to dominate them through colonisation, conquest, or invasion.<sup>4</sup>

4. Austin, P. & Sallabank, J. (2011). *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University

During the 20th century, efforts by the Gaelic community and changes in societal attitudes allowed for greater appreciation, acceptance and inclusion of Gaels' language and cultural expression in community, institutions, and government. These efforts and changes led to the creation of Comhairle na Gàidhlig (the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia) in 1990 and the Office of Gaelic Affairs in 2006. By October 2015, over 4,000 Nova Scotians were engaged in Gaelic language programming and 288,180 Nova Scotians or 31.9 per cent indicated Scottish ethnic origins (2006 Canada Census). Over time, social and economic reasons caused some Gaels to migrate, so today there are Nova Scotians who claim Gaelic background in almost all regions of the province.

Nova Scotia's Office of Gaelic Affairs' Gaelic language and cultural programs assist with language acquisition and use, cultural mentorships aimed at reclaiming a Gaelic group identity in the province, and raising greater awareness, appreciation, and understanding of Gaels.

Today, Nova Scotia is the only jurisdiction outside of Europe where a Gaelic language, culture, and identity have been passed down from generation-to-generation in community.

### *Immigration*

Nova Scotia has a rich history of immigration. Halifax is the home of the national immigration museum, Pier 21. In 2016, 5,483 immigrants arrived in Nova Scotia, the highest number of immigrants since the end of the Second World War. The top five source countries respectively included Syria, India, China, Philippines and Nigeria, with the top five mother languages being Arabic, English, Chinese, Tagalog and Arabic-Syria. Of those that arrived in Nova Scotia in 2016, 1,445 were refugees and 670 were between the ages 0 to 4. These statistics are reflective of an evolving population, one that is changing the face of Nova Scotia as we know it and understand it.

A more diverse population certainly will have an impact on communities across Nova Scotia and therefore on early childhood education programs. These programs provide essential supports and resources for all Nova Scotians, including newcomer families. For example, these programs may see an increase in the number of newcomer children attending while their parents attend language training and other types of programs designed to ease their transition to Nova Scotia. Educators will need to find ways to welcome and support newcomer families, and try out new approaches, resources, and strategies necessary to engage and work with newcomer families. Building healthy relationships and establishing safe, inclusive early childhood education programs and practices is essential.

Working and supporting newcomer families brings with it many exciting opportunities for educators with respect to expanding their knowledge and learning. Families will have varying ideas and understanding about how children learn and develop based on their cultural and lived experiences. It is important, therefore, to be respectful of this uniqueness and talk with families about how to integrate these cultural experiences into the early childhood education program. There is an opportunity for educators to create learning environments that reflect the many cultures of the children and families they work with.

### **Attribution**

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Province of Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. (2018).

*Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework*.  
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/nselearningcurriculumframework.pdf>

## CHAPTER 5.

### EARLY INTERVENTION

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#### WHAT ARE EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS?

Early intervention programs help children who are at risk for or have a diagnosis of developmental delay. They help children between the time they are born and when they enter school. They support the child and the family so children lead as independent a life as possible.

The programs also help parents access the resources they need to assist their children. Getting the right help in these early years is key to helping children attain the best outcomes possible. Early intervention programs provide crucial support to children with developmental delays and their families to ensure a successful transition to school.

NS Early Childhood Development Intervention Services (ECDIS) provide province-wide specialized services to families of young children between birth and school entry, who either have a biological risk for or a diagnosis of, developmental delay. Consultation, information, support and services designed to meet the individual needs of each child and family are delivered in the child's home and may extend to community based programs. Services emphasize the enhancement of skills and abilities through planned interactions to promote child development and family capacity.

NS Early Childhood Development Intervention Services are offered in 8 regions across the province within 28 locations.



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#### ATTRIBUTION

Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services. (n.d.). Who we are [webpage]. <https://www.nscdis.ca/>



PART II.

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**SUPPORTING DIVERSE ABILITY NEEDS**

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## CHAPTER 6.

### FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS OR SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

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Children with disabilities or other special needs refers to children with a specific diagnosis, as well as children who do not have a diagnosis but whose behavior, development, and/or health affect their family's ability to maintain child care services. The disability or special need may be as mild as a slight speech delay or as complex as a mixed diagnosis of motor challenges, vision impairment, and cognitive delays. [144] Special health care needs include a variety of conditions such as birth defects, neurological disorders, and chronic illnesses that can be life threatening or impact daily living (e.g., cancer, sickle cell disease [or anemia], cystic fibrosis, hemophilia, AIDS, diabetes, juvenile rheumatoid arthritis).<sup>1</sup>

Families of children with disabilities or other special needs have the same need for child care as do other families. However, families of children with disabilities or special needs often find the search for quality and affordable child care a greater challenge as they face the reluctance of many child care providers to enroll their children. This situation makes it all the more important that child care providers strive to include all children in their programs so as not to increase the immense challenges that such families already face.<sup>2</sup>

It is critical that children with disabilities or other special needs, and their families, are included in quality early childhood education programs that are the natural environments of their peers who are typically developing. Children learn from their interactions with other children and their surroundings while developing a sense of security and self-esteem from caring relationships with program providers and staff. Everyone benefits from quality early childhood education programs that provide inclusive care. Children who have a disability or special need get to know and interact with typically developing peers, while their families benefit from programs and services they need to achieve their parenting goals. Children who are typically developing benefit when they have the opportunity to get to know peers who are atypically developing in the classroom. Everyone has the opportunity to learn about other human beings in regard to their strengths and challenges.

1. California Department of Education. (2016). *Family Partnerships and Culture*. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/familypartnerships.pdf>

2. Ibid.



Children of all abilities should be included in high quality ECE classrooms. Image credit: Child Development Resources by the California Department of Education is used with permission.

Children and families want to be accepted and included in their community regardless of ability. They want to truly belong. But the kind of belonging they desire goes beyond simply “being together.” They want full, unconditional membership in family and community. As Norman Kunc, a disability rights advocate, said so eloquently, “When inclusive education is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become ‘normal’ in order to contribute to the world. Instead, we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherent in all people. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community and, in doing so, begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic sense of belonging.”

Children with disabilities or other special needs may present unique challenges, but the care they need is very similar to that needed by any child. Children with special needs spend most of their time doing what other children do. They have the same curiosity, desire to play, and need to communicate as their peers do. Childcare providers who are providing developmentally appropriate childcare, which is individualized to meet the needs of each and every child, already have many of the skills needed to serve children with disabilities or other special needs.<sup>3</sup>

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3. California Department of Education. (2009). *Inclusion Works! Creating Child Care Programs That Promote Belonging for Children with Special Needs*. <https://rideproject.eu/media/inclusionworks.pdf>



## CHAPTER 7.

### WHAT PROGRAMS CAN DO TO BE INCLUSIVE OF ALL CHILDREN

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Most children identified by special education professionals as having a disability have delays in learning and communication (over 70 percent of children from birth to age 14). What is more important is that learning disabilities are often not recognized or identified until children begin formal schooling. Children who learn differently or have delays in language commonly manifest special needs through their behavior in group settings. Early childhood educators can provide a language-rich environment and make accommodations based on knowledge of the individual child.

#### LEARNING ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN

Information about a specific disability may give an early childhood educator ideas for how to support a child. When serving an individual child, however, the provider should focus on the child's needs, not the disability or its label. A child with cerebral palsy, for example, may walk with leg braces, use a wheelchair, have minor physical symptoms, or demonstrate a delay in using language. The possible variations within this one label are tremendous, demonstrating that no single label or diagnosis can provide enough information about a particular child. Early childhood educators need to learn beyond a textbook definition and ask questions with sensitivity and understanding—particularly in talks with parents.

Early childhood educators can go far toward setting a tone of welcome and understanding. When a family member shares a child's diagnosis, a good follow-up question is often "And how does that affect \_\_\_\_\_'s development?" This approach can help assure a family member that the child care provider is sincerely concerned about the success of the child and is interested in providing appropriate, individually tailored care. The response from the parent will help the child care provider determine what accommodations might be needed, what other questions may be appropriate to ask, and whether specialists are involved or needed.

#### PROMOTING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Even if children with disabilities are not currently enrolled in an early childhood education program, educators can still promote inclusive practices. One way is to have pictures, books, and materials that present children with disabilities in a general setting. How people are alike and different naturally arises in an early childhood education setting; a caregiver can take advantage of these opportunities to discuss them. Language use is also critical in developing an atmosphere of inclusion. The best practice is to use "person-first" language when one is talking about people with disabilities. This practice simply means putting the person before the disability: "a child with autism spectrum disorder" rather than "an autistic child."

The process of exploring inclusion with families, colleagues, and children will suggest other ways to expand inclusive practices. For example, planning staff discussions on specific changes in philosophy, attitudes, and practices goes far toward including children with special needs in a child care setting.

Outside the immediate early childhood education program setting, adults with disabilities in a community might contribute to a care provider's expanding knowledge of issues related specifically to inclusion and to disabilities in general.

## SUCCESSFUL INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

As each child is unique, so is each early childhood education program. There is no magic formula for making inclusion work beyond the creativity, energy, and interest that most early childhood educators already bring to their work. Their uniqueness notwithstanding, every program is able to successfully include children with disabilities. And each makes it work child by child, day by day. A "can-do" attitude among the teachers helps to provide the necessary energy for coming up with solutions to the inevitable challenges. It also helps to have an enthusiastic attitude on how to make inclusion work rather than to simply fulfill a legal obligation.

Some children need small changes to the curriculum or minor supports in order to get the most out of certain activities. These sorts of things may consist of fairly simple accommodations, such as providing a special place or quiet activity for a child who is unable to participate in large-group activities or making available a special snack for a child who needs to eat more frequently than the typical meal or snack schedule.



*Individual children's needs will help you decide what adaptations you need to make. Image credit: Inclusion Works! By the California Department of Education is used with permission*

Other children may require more specific adaptations that might not be readily apparent. A variety of community resources can be helpful in determining what those might be. The family, for example, is always the first and most important guide for what a child might need; after that, an area specialist or a local workshop might be. Beyond the immediate community, a world of literature in books, periodicals, and Web sites devoted to disabilities and inclusion can inform an early childhood educator about appropriate adaptations for a child with a particular condition or need.

Programs that begin with a high-quality, developmentally appropriate foundation; a positive attitude on the part of the care provider; appropriate adult-child ratios; supportive administrators; and adequate training for the provider will be in a good position to creatively solve problems for a child with disabilities or other special needs, exactly as it does for children who are typically developing. If a child already has an established diagnosis, trained intervention personnel may be available to assist in this process. One of the biggest roles for a care provider is to facilitate a sense of belonging and inclusion. Several helpful strategies are as follows:

- Start with the assumption that all children are competent.
- Adapt the environment so that it is developmentally appropriate, challenging, and fits the needs and interests of each child.
- While there may be a need to support a child's mastery of a specific skill, keep the whole child in mind, particularly the child's social-emotional experience.

Consider the following questions when adapting an activity for a child with special needs :

- Does the child have an opportunity to be in control of the learning experience?
- Is there a balance between adult-initiated learning and child-initiated learning?
- Can the child make choices while learning the skill?
- Is the child able to initiate his/her own efforts to practice the skill, with support given by the child care provider?
- Is the child gaining self-confidence and showing the joy of accomplishment while learning?
- Is there room in the activity for the child to make discoveries?

## COLLABORATING FOR INCLUSION

To effectively meet the needs of children with differing abilities and learning characteristics, early childhood educators may need to expand the way in which they reach out to families and link with specialists. These two groups of people have important information to share and can serve as resources to support children in a program. Their suggestions invariably enrich efforts at inclusion. Specialists themselves may even be able to visit a care facility and offer some on-site guidance.



*Collaboration provides valuable support and insight. Image credit: Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Program Guidelines by the California Department of Education is used with permission.*

Providing inclusive early childhood education does not mean a teacher—or even a group of teachers—has to do the work alone. Everyone has a role to play. The primary role of an early childhood educator is to nurture and support the child's development in a loving and caring manner. Partnerships formed with other adults who are caring for the child—the parents, health-care providers, or specialists—can complement the efforts of all concerned, especially when everyone

concentrates on a particular strength. When the expertise of many are combined, ideas develop and strategies emerge that are better than those any one person could have developed alone. The result is the essence of true collaboration.

For collaboration to be successful, the following elements are essential:

- Respect for family's knowledge and experience with the child. They are the first and best resource and should be included in planning and implemented care of their child.
- Clear and regular communication, both informal or planned meetings.
- Time reserved for collaboration, recognizing that everyone is likely going to be pressed for time.
- Everyone having an investment and active involvement.
- Collaborative efforts to provide the appropriate assessments and support services for the child.

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## CHAPTER 8.

### SUMMARY

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Teachers will have children in their classrooms with diagnosed and undiagnosed special needs, including those related to their health. Early childhood programs have legal obligations to provide inclusive programs and inclusion benefits for everyone involved (children with special needs, their peers that do not have special needs, families, and teachers).

Having a solid foundation in developmentally appropriate practice, which includes the importance of learning about and meeting the needs of each individual child, goes a long way to providing inclusive early education. Support, accommodations, and collaboration are essential to providing inclusive early childhood education programming.

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PART III.

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**DISABILITIES DEFINED**

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## INTRODUCTION TO CHILDHOOD DISORDERS

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There are a group of conditions that, when present, are diagnosed early in childhood, often before the time a child enters school. These conditions are listed in the DSM-5 as **neurodevelopmental disorders**, and they involve developmental problems in personal, social, academic, and intellectual functioning (APA, 2013).



Neurodevelopmental disorders are a group of disorders that are typically diagnosed during childhood and are characterized by developmental deficits in personal, social, academic, and intellectual realms; these disorders include attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder. ADHD is characterized by a pervasive pattern of inattention and/or hyperactive and impulsive behavior that interferes with normal functioning. Genetic and neurobiological factors contribute to the development of ADHD, which can persist well into adulthood and is often associated with poor long-term outcomes. The major features of autism spectrum disorder include deficits in social interaction and communication and repetitive movements or interests. As with ADHD, genetic factors appear to play a prominent role in the development of autism spectrum disorder; exposure to environmental pollutants such as mercury have also been linked to the development of this disorder.

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## ADHD

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### ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Diego is always active, from the time he wakes up in the morning until the time he goes to bed at night. His mother reports that he came out the womb kicking and screaming, and he has not stopped moving since. He has a sweet disposition, but always seems to be in trouble with his teachers, parents, and after-school program counselors. He seems to accidentally break things; he lost his jacket three times last winter, and he never seems to sit still. His teachers believe he is a smart child, but he never finishes anything he starts and is so impulsive that he does not seem to learn much in school.

Diego likely has **attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)**. The symptoms of this disorder were first described by Hans Hoffman in the 1920s. While taking care of his son while his wife was in the hospital giving birth to a second child, Hoffman noticed that the boy had trouble concentrating on his homework, had a short attention span, and had to repeatedly go over easy homework to learn the material (Jellinek & Herzog, 1999). Later, it was discovered that many hyperactive children—those who are fidgety, restless, socially disruptive, and have trouble with impulse control—also display short attention spans, problems with concentration, and distractibility. By the 1970s, it had become clear that many children who display attention problems often also exhibit signs of hyperactivity. In recognition of such findings, the DSM-III (published in 1980) included a new disorder: attention deficit disorder with and without hyperactivity, now known as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). A child with ADHD shows a constant pattern of inattention and/or hyperactive and impulsive behavior that interferes with normal functioning (APA, 2013). Some of the signs of inattention include great difficulty with and avoidance of tasks that require sustained attention (such as conversations or reading), failure to follow instructions (often resulting in failure to complete school work and other duties), disorganization (difficulty keeping things in order, poor time management, sloppy and messy work), lack of attention to detail, becoming easily distracted, and forgetfulness. Hyperactivity is characterized by excessive movement, and includes fidgeting or squirming, leaving one's seat in situations when remaining seated is expected, having trouble sitting still (e.g., in a restaurant), running about and climbing on things, blurting out responses before another person's question or statement has been completed, difficulty waiting one's turn for something, and interrupting and intruding on others. Frequently, the hyperactive child comes across as noisy and boisterous. The child's behavior is hasty, impulsive, and seems to occur without much forethought; these characteristics may explain why adolescents and young adults diagnosed with ADHD receive more traffic tickets and have more automobile accidents than do others (Thompson, Molina, Pelham, & Gnagy, 2007). ADHD occurs in about 5% of children (APA, 2013). On the average, boys are 3 times more likely to have ADHD than are girls; however, such findings might reflect the greater propensity of boys to engage in aggressive and antisocial behavior and thus incur a greater likelihood of being referred to psychological clinics (Barkley, 2006). Children with ADHD face severe academic and social challenges. Compared to their non-

ADHD counterparts, children with ADHD have lower grades and standardized test scores and higher rates of expulsion, grade retention, and dropping out (Loe & Feldman, 2007). They also are less well-liked and more often rejected by their peers (Hoza et al., 2005).

Previously, ADHD was thought to fade away by adolescence. However, longitudinal studies have suggested that ADHD is a chronic problem, one that can persist into adolescence and adulthood (Barkley, Fischer, Smallish, & Fletcher, 2002). A recent study found that 29.3% of adults who had been diagnosed with ADHD decades earlier still showed symptoms (Barbarese et al., 2013). Somewhat troubling, this study also reported that nearly 81% of those whose ADHD persisted into adulthood had experienced at least one other comorbid disorder, compared to 47% of those whose ADHD did not persist.

## LIFE PROBLEMS FROM ADHD

Children diagnosed with ADHD face considerably worse long-term outcomes than do those children who do not receive such a diagnosis. In one investigation, 135 adults who had been identified as having ADHD symptoms in the 1970s were contacted decades later and interviewed (Klein et al., 2012). Compared to a control sample of 136 participants who had never been diagnosed with ADHD, those who were diagnosed as children:

- had worse educational attainment (more likely to have dropped out of high school and less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree);
- had lower socioeconomic status;
- held less prestigious occupational positions;
- were more likely to be unemployed;
- made considerably less in salary;
- scored worse on a measure of occupational functioning (indicating, for example, lower job satisfaction, poorer work relationships, and more firings);
- scored worse on a measure of social functioning (indicating, for example, fewer friendships and less involvement in social activities);
- were more likely to be divorced; and
- were more likely to have non-alcohol-related substance abuse problems. (Klein et al., 2012)

Longitudinal studies also show that children diagnosed with ADHD are at higher risk for substance abuse problems. One study reported that childhood ADHD predicted later drinking problems, daily smoking, and use of marijuana and other illicit drugs (Molina & Pelham, 2003). The risk of substance abuse problems appears to be even greater for those with ADHD who also exhibit antisocial tendencies (Marshall & Molina, 2006).

## CAUSES OF ADHD

Family and twin studies indicate that genetics play a significant role in the development of ADHD. Burt (2009), in a review of 26 studies, reported that the median rate of concordance for identical twins was .66 (one study reported a rate of .90), whereas the median concordance rate for fraternal twins

was .20. This study also found that the median concordance rate for unrelated (adoptive) siblings was .09; although this number is small, it is greater than 0, thus suggesting that the environment may have at least some influence. Another review of studies concluded that the heritability of inattention and hyperactivity were 71% and 73%, respectively (Nikolas & Burt, 2010).

The specific genes involved in ADHD are thought to include at least two that are important in the regulation of the neurotransmitter dopamine (Gizer, Ficks, & Waldman, 2009), suggesting that dopamine may be important in ADHD. Indeed, medications used in the treatment of ADHD, such as methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamine with dextroamphetamine (Adderall), have stimulant qualities and elevate dopamine activity. People with ADHD show less dopamine activity in key regions of the brain, especially those associated with motivation and reward (Volkow et al., 2009), which provides support to the theory that dopamine deficits may be a vital factor in the development of this disorder (Swanson et al., 2007).

Brain imaging studies have shown that children with ADHD exhibit abnormalities in their frontal lobes, an area in which dopamine is in abundance. Compared to children without ADHD, those with ADHD appear to have smaller frontal lobe volume, and they show less frontal lobe activation when performing mental tasks. Recall that one of the functions of the frontal lobes is to inhibit our behavior. Thus, abnormalities in this region may go a long way toward explaining the hyperactive, uncontrolled behavior of ADHD.

By the 1970s, many had become aware of the connection between nutritional factors and childhood behavior. At the time, much of the public believed that hyperactivity was caused by sugar and food additives, such as artificial coloring and flavoring. Undoubtedly, part of the appeal of this hypothesis was that it provided a simple explanation of (and treatment for) behavioral problems in children. A statistical review of 16 studies, however, concluded that sugar consumption has no effect at all on the behavioral and cognitive performance of children (Wolraich, Wilson, & White, 1995). Additionally, although food additives have been shown to increase hyperactivity in non-ADHD children, the effect is rather small (McCann et al., 2007). Numerous studies, however, have shown a significant relationship between exposure to nicotine in cigarette smoke during the prenatal period and ADHD (Linnet et al., 2003). Maternal smoking during pregnancy is associated with the development of more severe symptoms of the disorder (Thakur et al., 2013).

Is ADHD caused by poor parenting? Not likely. Remember, the genetics studies discussed above suggested that the family environment does not seem to play much of a role in the development of this disorder; if it did, we would expect the concordance rates to be higher for fraternal twins and adoptive siblings than has been demonstrated. All things considered, the evidence seems to point to the conclusion that ADHD is triggered more by genetic and neurological factors and less by social or environmental ones.

#### Dig Deeper: Why Is the Prevalence Rate of ADHD Increasing?

Many people believe that the rates of ADHD have increased in recent years, and there is evidence to support this contention. In a recent study, investigators found that the parent-reported prevalence of ADHD among children (4–17 years old) in the United States increased by 22% during a 4-year period, from 7.8% in 2003 to 9.5% in 2007 (CDC, 2010). Over time this increase in parent-reported ADHD was observed in all sociodemographic groups and was reflected by substantial increases in 12 states (Indiana, North Carolina, and Colorado were the top three). The increases were greatest for older teens (ages 15–17),

multiracial and Hispanic children, and children with a primary language other than English. Another investigation found that from 1998–2000 through 2007–2009 the parent-reported prevalence of ADHD increased among U.S. children between the ages of 5–17 years old, from 6.9% to 9.0% (Akinbami, Liu, Pastor, & Reuben, 2011).

A major weakness of both studies was that children were not actually given a formal diagnosis. Instead, parents were simply asked whether or not a doctor or other health-care provider had ever told them their child had ADHD; the reported prevalence rates thus may have been affected by the accuracy of parental memory. Nevertheless, the findings from these studies raise important questions concerning what appears to be a demonstrable rise in the prevalence of ADHD. Although the reasons underlying this apparent increase in the rates of ADHD over time are poorly understood and, at best, speculative, several explanations are viable: ADHD may be over-diagnosed by doctors who are too quick to medicate children as a behavior treatment. There is greater awareness of ADHD now than in the past. Nearly everyone has heard of ADHD, and most parents and teachers are aware of its key symptoms. Thus, parents may be quick to take their children to a doctor if they believe their child possesses these symptoms, or teachers may be more likely now than in the past to notice the symptoms and refer the child for evaluation. The use of computers, video games, iPhones, and other electronic devices has become pervasive among children in the early 21st century, and these devices could potentially shorten children's attentions spans. Thus, what might seem like inattention to some parents and teachers could simply reflect exposure to too much technology. ADHD diagnostic criteria have changed over time.



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## CHAPTER 11.

### AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

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A seminal paper published in 1943 by psychiatrist Leo Kanner described an unusual neurodevelopmental condition he observed in a group of children. He called this condition early infantile autism, and it was characterized mainly by an inability to form close emotional ties with others, speech and language abnormalities, repetitive behaviors, and an intolerance of minor changes in the environment and in normal routines (Bregman, 2005). What the DSM-5 refers to as autism spectrum disorder today, is a direct extension of Kanner's work.

**Autism spectrum disorder** is probably the most misunderstood and puzzling of the **neurodevelopmental disorders**. Children with this disorder show signs of significant disturbances in three main areas: (a) deficits in social interaction, (b) deficits in communication, and (c) repetitive patterns of behavior or interests. These disturbances appear early in life and cause serious impairments in functioning (APA, 2013). The child with autism spectrum disorder might exhibit deficits in social interaction by not initiating conversations with other children or turning their head away when spoken to.

These children do not make eye contact with others and seem to prefer playing alone rather than with others. In a certain sense, it is almost as though these individuals live in a personal and isolated social world others are simply not privy to or able to penetrate. Communication deficits can range from a complete lack of speech, to one word responses (e.g., saying "Yes" or "No" when replying to questions or statements that require additional elaboration), to echoed speech (e.g., parroting what another person says, either immediately or several hours or even days later), to difficulty maintaining a conversation because of an inability to reciprocate others' comments. These deficits can also include problems in using and understanding nonverbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, and postures) that facilitate normal communication.

Repetitive patterns of behavior or interests can be exhibited a number of ways. The child might engage in stereotyped, repetitive movements (rocking, head-banging, or repeatedly dropping an object and then picking it up), or she might show great distress at small changes in routine or the environment. For example, the child might throw a temper tantrum if an object is not in its proper place or if a regularly-scheduled activity is rescheduled. In some cases, the person with autism spectrum disorder might show highly restricted and fixated interests that appear to be abnormal in their intensity. For instance, the person might learn and memorize every detail about something even though doing so serves no apparent purpose. Importantly, autism spectrum disorder is not the same thing as intellectual disability, although these two conditions are often comorbid. The DSM-5 specifies that the symptoms of autism spectrum disorder are not caused or explained by intellectual disability.

### LIFE PROBLEMS FROM AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Autism spectrum disorder is referred to in everyday language as autism; in fact, the disorder was



termed “autistic disorder” in earlier editions of the DSM, and its diagnostic criteria were much narrower than those of autism spectrum disorder. The qualifier “spectrum” in autism spectrum disorder is used to indicate that individuals with the disorder can show a range, or spectrum, of symptoms that vary in their magnitude and severity: some severe, others less severe. The previous edition of the DSM included a diagnosis of Asperger’s disorder, generally recognized as a less severe form of autistic disorder; individuals diagnosed with Asperger’s disorder were described as having average or high intelligence and a strong vocabulary, but exhibiting impairments in social interaction and social communication, such as talking only about their special interests (Wing, Gould, & Gillberg, 2011).

However, because research has failed to demonstrate that Asperger’s disorder differs qualitatively from autistic disorder, the DSM-5 does not include it, which is prompting concerns among some parents that their children may no longer be eligible for special services (“Asperger’s Syndrome Dropped,” 2012). Some individuals with autism spectrum disorder, particularly those with better language and intellectual skills, can live and work independently as adults. However, most do not because the symptoms remain sufficient to cause serious impairment in many realms of life (APA, 2013).

#### Link to Learning

Here is an instructive and poignant video highlighting severe autism.

Currently, estimates indicate that nearly 1 in 88 children in the United States has autism spectrum disorder; the disorder is 5 times more common in boys (1 out of 54) than girls (1 out of 252) (CDC, 2012). Rates of autistic spectrum disorder have increased dramatically since the 1980s. For example, California saw an increase of 273% in reported cases from 1987 through 1998 (Byrd, 2002); between 2000 and 2008, the rate of autism diagnoses in the United States increased 78% (CDC, 2012).

Although it is difficult to interpret this increase, it is possible that the rise in prevalence is the result of the broadening of the diagnosis, increased efforts to identify cases in the community, and greater awareness and acceptance of the diagnosis. In addition, mental health professionals are now more knowledgeable about autism spectrum disorder and are better equipped to make the diagnosis, even in subtle cases (Novella, 2008).



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## CAUSES OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Early theories of autism placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the child's parents, particularly the mother. Bruno Bettelheim (an Austrian-born American child psychologist who was heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud's ideas) suggested that a mother's ambivalent attitudes and her frozen and rigid emotions toward her child were the main causal factors in childhood autism. In what must certainly stand as one of the more controversial assertions in psychology over the last 50 years, he wrote, "I state my belief that the precipitating factor in infantile autism is the parent's wish that his child should not exist" (Bettelheim, 1967, p. 125). As you might imagine, Bettelheim did not endear himself to a lot of people with this position; incidentally, no scientific evidence exists supporting his claims.

The exact causes of autism spectrum disorder remain unknown despite massive research efforts over the last two decades (Meek, Lemery-Chalfant, Jahromi, & Valiente, 2013). Autism appears to be strongly influenced by genetics, as identical twins show concordance rates of 60%–90%, whereas concordance rates for fraternal twins and siblings are 5%–10% (Autism Genome Project Consortium, 2007). Many different genes and gene mutations have been implicated in autism (Meek et al., 2013). Among the genes involved are those important in the formation of synaptic circuits that facilitate communication between different areas of the brain (Gauthier et al., 2011). A number of environmental factors are also thought to be associated with increased risk for autism spectrum disorder, at least in part, because they contribute to new mutations. These factors include exposure to pollutants, such as plant emissions and mercury, urban versus rural residence, and vitamin D deficiency (Kinney, Barch, Chayka, Napoleon, & Munir, 2009).

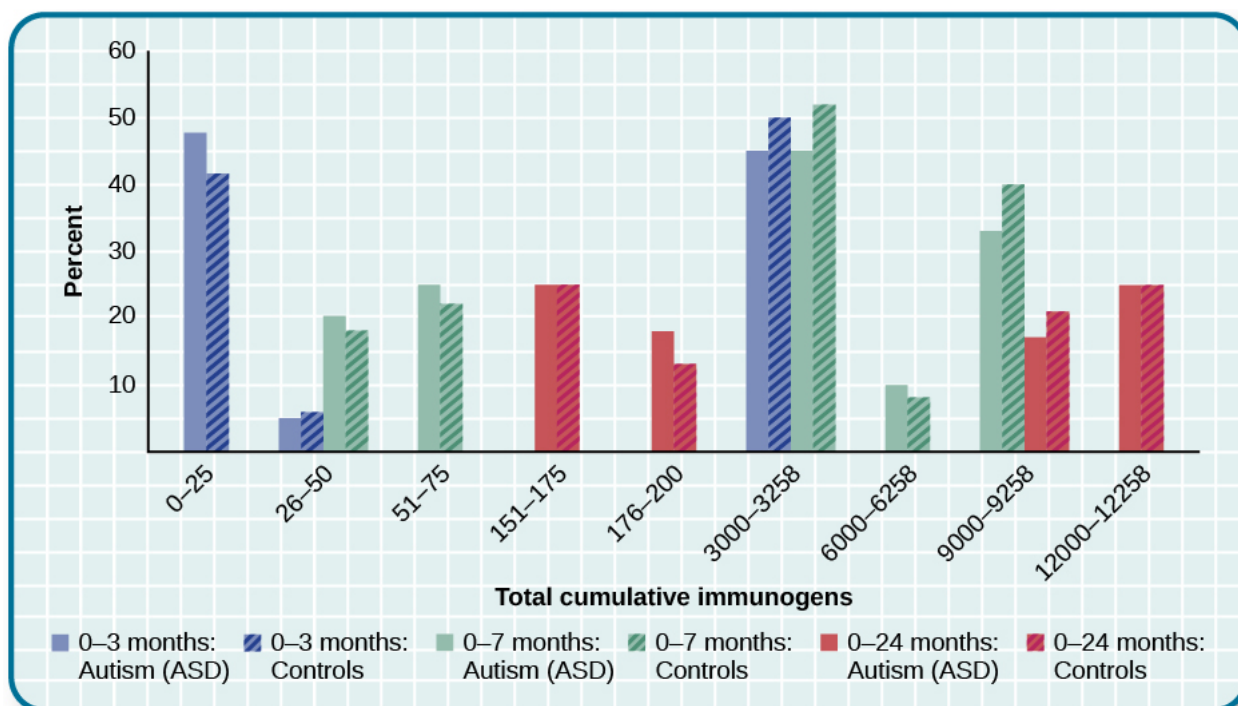
## CHILD VACCINATIONS AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

In the late 1990s, a prestigious medical journal published an article purportedly showing that autism is triggered by the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. These findings were very controversial and drew a great deal of attention, sparking an international forum on whether children should be vaccinated. In a shocking turn of events, some years later the article was retracted by the journal that had published it after accusations of fraud on the part of the lead researcher. Despite the retraction, the reporting in popular media led to concerns about a possible link between vaccines and autism persisting.

A recent survey of parents, for example, found that roughly a third of respondents expressed such a concern (Kennedy, LaVail, Nowak, Basket, & Landry, 2011); and perhaps fearing that their children would develop autism, more than 10% of parents of young children refuse or delay vaccinations (Dempsey et al., 2011). Some parents of children with autism mounted a campaign against scientists who refuted the vaccine-autism link. Even politicians and several well-known celebrities weighed in; for example, actress Jenny McCarthy (who believed that a vaccination caused her son's autism) co-authored a book on the matter. However, there is no scientific evidence that a link exists between autism and vaccinations (Hughes, 2007).

Indeed, a recent study compared the vaccination histories of 256 children with autism spectrum disorder with that of 752 control children across three time periods during their first two years of life (birth to 3 months, birth to 7 months, and birth to 2 years) (DeStefano, Price, & Weintraub, 2013). At the time of the study, the children were between 6 and 13 years old, and their prior vaccination records were obtained. Because vaccines contain immunogens (substances that fight infections), the

investigators examined medical records to see how many immunogens children received to determine if those children who received more immunogens were at greater risk for developing autism spectrum disorder. The results of this study, a portion of which are shown in Figure 1, clearly demonstrate that the quantity of immunogens from vaccines received during the first two years of life were not at all related to the development of autism spectrum disorder. There is not a relationship between vaccinations and autism spectrum disorders.



**Figure 1.** In terms of their exposure to immunogens in vaccines, overall, there is not a significant difference between children with autism spectrum disorder and their age-matched controls without the disorder (DeStefano et al., 2013).

Why does concern over vaccines and autism spectrum disorder persist? Since the proliferation of the Internet in the 1990s, parents have been constantly bombarded with online information that can become magnified and take on a life of its own. The enormous volume of electronic information pertaining to autism spectrum disorder, combined with how difficult it can be to grasp complex scientific concepts, can make separating good research from bad challenging (Downs, 2008). Notably, the study that fueled the controversy reported that 8 out of 12 children—according to their parents—developed symptoms consistent with autism spectrum disorder shortly after receiving a vaccination. To conclude that vaccines cause autism spectrum disorder on this basis, as many did, is clearly incorrect for a number of reasons, not the least of which is because correlation does not imply causation, as you’ve learned.

Additionally, as was the case with diet and ADHD in the 1970s, the notion that autism spectrum disorder is caused by vaccinations is appealing to some because it provides a simple explanation for this condition. Like all disorders, however, there are no simple explanations for autism spectrum disorder. Although the research discussed above has shed some light on its causes, science is still a long way from complete understanding of the disorder.



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## UNIT ATTRIBUTION

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## CHAPTER 12.

### CEREBRAL PALSY

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#### WHAT IS CEREBRAL PALSY?

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a permanent physical condition that affects movement. There are three main types of CP and each involves the way a child moves. Movements can be unpredictable, muscles can be stiff or tight and in some cases children can have shaky movements or tremors. CP can be as mild as just a weakness in one hand ranging to almost complete lack of movement.

Children with CP may have seizures and other impairments affecting their speech, vision, hearing and/or intellect.

CP, except in its mildest forms, can be seen in the first 12-18 months of life. It presents when children fail to reach movement milestones. Babies most at risk of cerebral palsy are those born prematurely or with low birth weight.

Worldwide, the incidence of CP is 1 in 400 births. There is no known cure and severity is on the increase. For most, the cause of CP is unknown.

#### TYPES OF CP

There are three main types of CP:

- Spastic cerebral palsy – This is the most common type of CP. Spasticity means stiffness or tightness of muscles. The muscles are stiff because the message to the muscles is sent incorrectly through the damaged part of the brain.  
When children without CP perform a movement, some groups of muscles become tighter and some groups of muscles relax. In children with spastic CP, both groups of muscles may become tighter. This makes movement difficult or even impossible.
- Athetoid cerebral palsy – Athetosis is the word used for involuntary unpredictable movements that occur in this type of CP. This involuntary movement is present even at rest and is often most noticeable when the person moves. Children with athetoid cerebral palsy often have very weak muscles or feel floppy when carried.
- Ataxic cerebral palsy – This is the least common type of CP. Ataxia is the word used for unsteady shaky movements or tremor. Children with ataxia also have trouble keeping their balance. Many children do not have just one type, but a mixture of several of these movement patterns.

#### WHAT PART OF THE BODY IS AFFECTED BY CP?

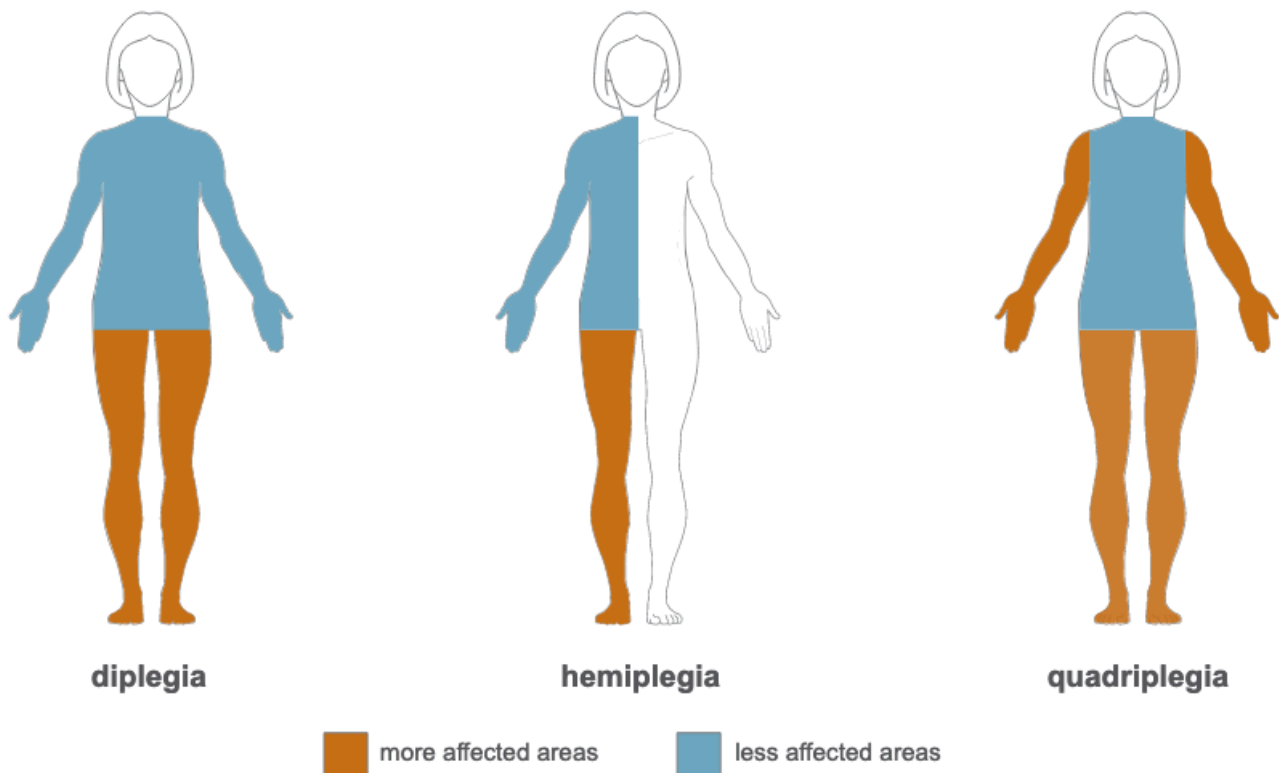
This is different from one person to another. In CP, certain words are used to describe the parts affected:

- **Hemiplegia** – the leg and arm on one side of the body are affected. See Factsheet 13 for more information on Hemiplegia.
- **Diplegia** – both legs are affected significantly more than the arms. Children with diplegia usually have some clumsiness with their hand movements.
- **Quadriplegia** – Both arms and legs are affected. The muscles of the trunk, face and mouth can also be affected.

## WHAT CAUSES CP?

CP results from damage to part of the brain. The term is used when the problem has occurred to the developing brain, usually before birth. For most children with CP, the cause is unknown. The risk is greater in babies born preterm and with low birthweight. Whilst the reasons for this remain unclear, CP may occur as a result of problems associated with preterm birth or may indicate an injury has occurred during the pregnancy that has caused the baby to be born early. In some cases, damage to the brain may occur:

### Parts of the body affected by cerebral palsy



*Parts of the body affected by cerebral palsy*

## WHAT CAN THE CHILDCARE/PRESCHOOL DO TO HELP?

The preschool / childcare centre can enhance a child's development by:

- Remembering a child with cerebral palsy is very much like any other child. The child gets the

same enjoyment as other children from play.

- Focussing on what a child can do and the ways in which the child's capabilities can be developed to his/her maximum potential.
- Allowing the child the opportunity to participate in all aspects of the program.
- Remaining optimistic yet realistic about the child's progress.
- Working closely with parents and early childhood intervention professionals to help the child maximise his/her potential.

## WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION.

### **Facilitating Successful Inclusion**

One of the most important aims of including children with cerebral palsy into mainstream childcare settings is the development of social competence and self-esteem.

Successful inclusion means being included in all the daily activities of the early childhood setting including free play, group times, routines and transition between activities.

As with any child, a child with cerebral palsy may develop at different rates in different areas. It is important to get to know the child's strengths and needs in all areas of development, as well as interests, likes and dislikes, to plan and support learning, and to include the child as fully as possible.

It is advisable that families and all agencies involved, including centre staff, cooperate in planning a smooth transition to the centre. This can be done through sharing information and arranging visits before the child starts at the centre. At a later stage, an Individualised Education Program (IEP) can be developed through joint meetings.

Ideas to consider:

- Ensure that all staff members at the centre are familiar with the strengths and needs of the child with cerebral palsy and can be involved in supporting the child. This reduces dependence on any one staff member.
- Appropriate positioning of children with cerebral palsy enhances participation and maximises skill development, social interactions and independence. It also decreases the need for a constant 1:1 child staff ratio with them.
- It is important not to leave a child at the same activity or in the same position for extended periods.
- Plan ahead by having any equipment or modifications that may be needed by the child ready at the appropriate activities. Also, ensure that all activities are easily accessible with clear spaces allowing access with walking frame or sticks.
- Some children with cerebral palsy may not be motivated to play and explore and may require some help to learn to play.
- Provide opportunities to allow the child to participate as fully and independently as possible. Plan to allow play without an adult always in immediate proximity – this encourages other children to view the child in his / her own right as part of their group and provides opportunities for social interactions which may otherwise not occur.

- Children with cerebral palsy may need to be allowed more time to complete activities and move from one activity to another. They may also need opportunities to demonstrate understanding in their own ways.
- Making the most of routines: by incorporating the preschool routine into programming, children with additional needs are provided with further opportunities to practise specific skills in a busy group situation. As with all children at the centre, it is important to expect the child with cerebral palsy to follow the rules and routines of the group.

### Further Reading

- *Preschool Fact Pack: A Guide for Early Childhood Staff* by the New South Wales Cerebral Palsy Alliance
- What is Cerebral Palsy Infographic

### UNIT ATTRIBUTION

Adapted from Cerebral Palsy Alliance (2018). *Preschool Fact Pack: A Guide for Early Childhood Staff*.  
[https://worldcpday.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/preschool\\_fact\\_pack.pdf](https://worldcpday.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/preschool_fact_pack.pdf)



## CHAPTER 13.

### DOWN SYNDROME

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Just like everyone else, students with Down syndrome have their own abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. They might have some additional needs, but they also have many of the same needs as other students in their age group.

Down syndrome is a naturally occurring chromosomal arrangement that has always existed and crosses all racial, gender, and socio-economic lines.



*Credit: Step Up for Down Syndrome. Rich Johnson via Flickr CC BY-NC-SA*

Approximately one in every 781 babies born in Canada has Down syndrome.

There are three types of Down syndrome: The type is identified from the chromosome studies done at birth to confirm the diagnosis of

Down syndrome:

- Trisomy 21 is the most common type of Down syndrome- it includes 95% of the Down syndrome population.
- Translocation occurs in 2-3% of those born with Down syndrome, where an extra part or whole extra copy of chromosome 21 is attached to a different chromosome.
- Mosaicism is the least common type of Down syndrome. In about one percent of children with Down syndrome there is an extra whole chromosome 21 in only a percentage of their body cells- the rest of the cells do not have the extra chromosome.

No matter which type of Down syndrome the student has, the effects of the extra genetic material will be unique to them. They will have their own strengths, likes, dislikes, talents, personality, and temperament. Down syndrome is just part of who they are.

### People with Down syndrome have:

- Some intellectual disability
- Some delay in development which may include speech and motor skills
- Some characteristic physical features, including a recognizable facial appearance and short stature

People with Down syndrome might look similar and share some common physical features. But most of all, they will look like their family members and will have their own unique personality. With new medical interventions and treatment, most people with Down syndrome can live healthy lives. There is no definitive life span and some people with Down syndrome now live well into their 70s.

### PHYSICAL AND HEALTH CONDITIONS

Students with Down syndrome may experience issues related to their health and this can affect their classroom experiences and attendance. Some students may have chronic health needs, others will have occasional needs, and some will be as healthy as any other student in your classroom.

When a student with Down syndrome joins your classroom, review the student's file and talk to the parents about their medical history. Determine if there are any precautions or supports needed. If a student is taking medication, find out what it is and how it works. If you see any signs or changes, communicate with the parents and inform them of what you are seeing.

Some health concerns for people with Down syndrome may include:

- Congenital heart conditions
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Increased risk of developing childhood leukemia
- Respiratory infections
- Sleep issues
- Thyroid problems
- Vision and hearing problems

Watch ***What is Down Syndrome?*** by Down Syndrome Resource Foundation Canada (DSRFC) via YouTube,



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Watch *Down Syndrome – Ability Awareness* about Down Syndrome from the National Down Syndrome Society:



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## UNIT ATTRIBUTION

Adapted from *About Down Syndrome :Quick Guide* by the Canadian Down Syndrome Society

## CHAPTER 14.

### OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER ODD

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#### WHAT IS OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER?<sup>1</sup>

Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is a children's mental health disorder that involves defying parents, breaking rules, and other serious behavior problems. All children act out sometimes, but kids who have oppositional defiant disorder struggle with their behavior regularly. They are often angry or irritable. Their behavior problems are also more extreme. For example, a child with ODD might yell at authority figures or throw tantrums if they don't get their way.<sup>2</sup> Enter your footnote content here.

In order to be diagnosed with ODD, a child needs to have extreme behavior issues for at least six months.

Watch *What Is Oppositional Defiant Disorder?* by ADDitude Magazine via YouTube.



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#### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER?

Children with ODD have a pattern of behaviour problems. Here are some common symptoms:

- Being unusually angry and irritable
- Frequently losing their temper
- Being easily annoyed
- Arguing with authority figures
- Refusing to follow rules
- Annoying people on purpose
- Blaming others for mistakes

Some children with ODD struggle with disruptive behavior in school. Others only struggle at home with family.

1. Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). *Quick Guide to Oppositional Defiant Disorder*. <https://childmind.org/guide/>

2. [quick-guide-to-oppositional-defiant-disorder/](https://childmind.org/guide/quick-guide-to-oppositional-defiant-disorder/)

## UNIT ATTRIBUTION

Adapted from Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). *Quick Guide to Oppositional Defiant Disorder*.  
<https://childmind.org/guide/quick-guide-to-oppositional-defiant-disorder/>



PART IV.

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**PLANING AND TEACHING AN EQUITABLE  
PROGRAM**

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## TEACHING AND PLANNING AN EQUITABLE PROGRAM

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***Power, Space, and Place in Early Childhood Education*** by Cory Jobb published in the Summer 2022 issue of *Canadian Journal of Sociology* (Vol. 44, Issue 3).

### INTRODUCTION

Power relations are enacted within early childhood settings through both interactions between individuals, and interactions between individuals and the material environment (Vuorisalo, Rutanen & Raittila 2015). Power relations are complicated by what Lenz Taguchi (2010) characterizes as the theory/practice divide in early childhood studies that manifest themselves in pervading binarized ways of thinking and doing early childhood education. Significant conceptual and pedagogical shifts within the field continue to reinscribe either/or thinking about early childhood practice. For example, in present-day discourses of early childhood education, it is common to find educators invoking the stance of child-centred pedagogy (or derivatives such as emergent curriculum or inquiry-based learning) that position children as active and competent agents (Wood 2014). The discourse represents shifting perspectives regarding who has power and knowledge within the early childhood classroom but has resulted in pedagogical orientations that are often categorized within a binarized view of child-centred pedagogies as situated in direct opposition to teacher-directed pedagogies. Teacher-directed pedagogies can be traditionally conceived of as top-down, authoritative power structures, whereas child-centred pedagogies are viewed as more emergent and responsive to the interests of young children in ways that resist standardization and predictable outcomes (Nxumalo, Vintimilla & Nelson 2018). While the divide has manifested itself across early childhood environments as a philosophical and pedagogical shift away from teacher-directed pedagogy toward child-centred orientations, there remain questions as to where power is located and how shifting orientations may continue to reinscribe hierarchical notions of power. The possibilities have ontological and epistemological implications for both pedagogy and philosophy in early childhood settings.

Concurrently, place-based education is a still-emerging philosophical and pedagogical approach to early childhood education, but one that Duhn (2012) argues is often assumed, rather than interrogated, in theory and practice. Emerging from human geography, early childhood discourses surrounding space and place posit children's relations with their everyday geographies as always-already entangled (Nairn & Kraftl 2016). Situating early childhood environments as both space and place is intentional and, in this paper, I demarcate space and place as necessarily separate entities as a means of working through the binaries to move toward a more situated and fluid thinking of power relations with/in children's spatialities. Although the importance of the physical space—both within and outside of traditional learning environments—of early childhood settings has been extensively studied (Christensen 2008; Gandini 1998; Torquati & Ernst 2013) and there is a growing body of research into place-attuned education and pedagogies (Duhn 2012; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015;

Strong-Wilson & Ellis 2007; Taylor & Giugni 2012), in this paper I connect notions of space and place with a Foucauldian notion of power to examine possibilities for reconceptualizing pedagogies.

Viewing the environment as space through a Foucauldian lens complicates child-centred pedagogies when the locus of control remains conceived with the individual(s), usually educators, who enact their power to direct, shift, and adapt the physical space. An understanding of power as a unidirectional flow from educators to children fails to account for the ways in which young children are attuned to and shape the spaces in which they exist. Thus, there is a need to contest the binarized ways of conceiving power as unilateral in early childhood spaces. To the contrary, re-thinking the material and discursive encounters with/in early childhood environments—when situated as place—denotes a sense of shared power through “felt value” (Tuan 1977: 4). Space is physical, but place emphasizes an emotional connection that is produced and potentially put into conflict through socio-material-political structures, or what Doreen Massey (2005) refers to as power-geometries. To experience place is to co-construct meaning and be co-constructed through interactions between individuals and the spatial in differing and often unequal ways (Massey 2005; Tuan 1977).

In this article I discuss the findings and implications from a three-phase qualitative case study that explored the ways in which a team of early childhood educators in one preschool classroom in Southern Ontario perceive how power operates between themselves, young children, and the material environment. Following arguments from human geography, I address space and place as conceptually distinct ideas that cultivate, respectively, a distinction between the physicality of early childhood locales and the meaning imparted upon that locale by educators and young children. In doing so, I argue that power relations are more fluid than suggested by binarized child-centred or teacher-directed orientations and suggest that thinking with a place-based orientation to reconceptualize early childhood spaces as early childhood places is a meaningful demarcation to aid in repositioning the fluidity and circulation of power. I also address how rethinking hierarchical or binarized perspectives on power relations may be possible when reconceptualizing early childhood locales from spaces to places. I use a reconceptualist theoretical framework (Iannacci & Whitty 2009; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence 2005) that weaves together the work of Michel Foucault (1980), and theories of space and place in children’s geographies (Christensen 2008; Duhn 2012; Hackett, Proctor & Seymour 2015; Nairn & Kraftl 2016; Tuan 1977) to interrogate early childhood educators’ perceptions of the power relations between children and educators.

## UNTANGLING SPACE AND PLACE

Briefly, before delving into power relations, it is first useful to make clear the distinctions between space and place. According to Harrison and Dourish (1996: 2), “Space is the structure of the world; it is the three-dimensional environment, in which objects and events occur, and in which they have relative position and direction.” This description of space is sufficient for situating the physicality and locality of early childhood environments as geographical space, but further parsing of the meaning of space is necessary to establish a conceptualization of early childhood spaces as locales of power. I distinguish the early childhood environment as place – as conceptually distinct from space – not to further cement the pervading binarized ways of doing early childhood studies, but rather to advance the understanding of the environment as a place imbued with fluidity, embodied and enacted power relations, and to advance the idea of possibilities for reconceptualizing power relations in place.

Where space may be conceived as rigid and defined by the strictures of its physicality, I echo

Massey (2005) in suggesting that place is mutable, fluid, and deeply situated and contextual, and so upon distinguishing space as the physicality of a locale, it is then necessary to briefly define place. Harrison and Dourish (1996: 3) argue that, “physically, a place is a space which is invested with understandings of behavioural appropriateness, cultural expectations, and so forth. We are located in ‘space’, but we act in ‘place’. Furthermore, ‘places’ are spaces that are valued.” Similarly, Nairn and Kraftl (2016: 5) argue: “places gain meaning—through human action, through dwelling, through emotional attachments, through events, and through memories attached to them.” Massey (2005) draws from feminist and postcolonial theory to point to the ways in which unequal power relations are produced within spatialities; her framing of power in place and space is useful for contextualizing the fluidity of power in early childhood settings. Transposing these key distinctions between place and space in human geography (Cresswell 2004; Cresswell 2008; Harrison & Dourish 1996; Massey 2005; Nairn & Kraftl 2016; Tuan 1977) into early childhood contexts is useful for rethinking place as relational and constructed through interactions between educators, young children, and the physical environment—where power is negotiated, refuted, and assumed.

## PERSPECTIVES ON POWER RELATIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The work of Michel Foucault is central to the arguments I advance in this paper; that space and place are conceptually distinct, and that the conceptual shift from space to place in early childhood contexts may be useful for rethinking binarized, hierarchical power relations between educators and young children. Foucault (1980) sought to understand how power and knowledge circulate through society and his genealogical work on power and knowledge is a useful framework for exploring power relations within early childhood education. For example, the resounding ‘laugh of Foucault’ in early childhood discourse builds on de Certeau’s (1986) analysis to describe how “discourse can manifest in ways contrary to that anticipated by its original exponents” (Fenech, Sumsion & Goodfellow 2008: 45) and is observable in uneven and unstable power dynamics. Power, according to Foucault (1980), is a circulating entity that does not consolidate itself within one individual, class, or institution, and it flows amidst and between individuals, as the subject is both constituted by power and, “at the same time its vehicle” (p. 98). This point is imperative for thinking with a Foucauldian conception of power in early childhood spaces, as it suggests that despite the seeming hierarchy that exists within traditional conceptualizations of adult-child interactions, both adults and children are simultaneously experiencing and exerting power. In the current landscape of early childhood education, many educators have made efforts toward enacting a philosophical and practical shift away from teacher-directed pedagogies to disrupt traditionally conceived authoritative power structures, but questions regarding how power is enacted, and how power is experienced through interactions with the spaces and places of early childhood are of ongoing importance. Research in critical early childhood studies (see Bloch 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence 2005; Tesar, 2014) has emerged to address such questions, including power relations, through orientations that seek to refigure early childhood theory and practice.

Reconceptualist perspectives in early childhood education closely mirror those of continental philosophy, namely, as Critchley (2001: 64) explains, “if human experience is a contingent creation, then it can be recreated in other ways.” The interactions between children and educators are enacted within socially-and-culturally-situated ontological assumptions. Historically, obedience to the authority of adults has been the dominant expectation of children and childhood (Raby 2014). However, reconceptualist perspectives have drawn on Foucauldian analyses of power as neither,

“monolithic nor total” (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence 1999: 33), but rather as an entity to resist and challenge and, in doing so, contribute to a more fluid and circulating conception of power in early childhood education (MacNaughton 2005). Reconceptualist scholars have advanced new perspectives to shift the discourse toward what Pacini-Ketchabaw and Pence (2005: 6) characterize as a willingness on the part of some educators to accept a, “loss of certainty, control and predictability, openness to the presence of many voices and views, and the need to engage with those other views and explore a world of profound diversity.” However, the striated nature of the ongoing theory/practice divide (Lenz Taguchi 2010) has resulted in uncertainty in classroom practice, where educators may espouse a child-centred pedagogical orientation while enacting teacher-directed pedagogies (Langford 2010). This striation between theory and practice can reproduce the inequitable power relations child-centred orientations purport to redress.

## FOUCAULT, POWER AND CHILDREN’S SPATIALITIES

Though Foucault did not theorize power in childhood contexts, his work has been taken up by reconceptualist scholars (Kummen 2010; MacNaughton 2005) as a means of theorizing both childhood and childhood locales as environments within which the social production of power is constituted. At times, Foucault’s (1980) work expounded upon power as constituted within spatialities and geographies, and similarly, scholars have used his work to construct an understanding of power within spatial experiences (Crampton & Elden 2007). Foucault’s and other scholars’ writings on power and spatialities (Agnew 2011; Crampton & Elden 2007; Elden 2001; Philo 2010; Smith 2014) are useful for observing how power is constituted within both the physical expanse of space and the notion of place, demarcated within much of the literature on place as space imbued with discursive and material meaning.

In a 1976 interview with the French Marxist-Geography journal *Herodote*, Foucault discussed the role of space and geography in his conceptualization of power. Though initially hesitant to ascribe power to spatialities, Foucault (1980: 71) ultimately relented and acknowledged that, “the spatializing description of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power.” In other words, geography, for Foucault, becomes one component of the discourse of power, in which subjects are constituted and governed by the power in spatialities to guide and govern human activity. Crampton and Elden (2007) contend that though Foucault did not explicitly acknowledge the importance of geography and spatiality in his work, it was nonetheless a significant and essential component of his ontology of power. Foucault’s work on the role of power within places—hospitals, prisons, institutions, and schools to name a few—indicates his positioning of power within specific locales. Scholars have acknowledged Foucault’s influence on the discourse of power in places and undertake a critical reading of his work (Crampton & Elden 2007; Elden 2001). They have characterized his analyses of power within spaces and places as particularly rigorous for an academic not intimately familiar with the field of geography, and in an interesting rhetorical turn suggest that Foucault wrote, “spatial histories” rather than “histories of space” which used “space itself as a critical tool of analysis” (Elden 2001: 118-119). They argue that because Foucault himself had an unsteady conceptualization of place, space, and power, it remains an undeveloped—but significant—aspect to his work, and thus, after his death, it has become the role of geographers and philosophers to move his work into the study of spatialities.

Elsewhere, both Philo (1992; 2010) and Agnew (2011) have taken on the task of drawing attention to the spatial histories of Foucault and argue that his analyses of power within space is significant

to the field of geography and spatialities. Philo (1992; 2010), following Foucault's analytic strategies, provides an overview of the works that constitute Foucault's spatial histories and argues that from a Foucauldian perspective, "the enactment of spatial innovations across all manner of institutions" (2010: 167) are used as tools and strategies of governance and power. Agnew's (2011) analysis of the power of spatialities is contingent on interactions between space and humans. Agnew (2011) offers a conceptual shift away from most Foucauldian geographers and does not ascribe power or agency to space; instead Agnew insists that a spatial history must consider the role of human interaction with the material-spatial world.

Smith (2012; 2014) moves a Foucauldian view of spatiality into early childhood contexts, arguing that Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of disciplinary power is crucial to understanding the embodiment and enactment of power within children's spatialities. According to Smith (2014: 123), Foucault called this embodiment the "art of distributions", and that disciplinary power is enacted within spatialities. The art of distributions refers to the ways in which individuals who govern children's movements and actions—parents and educators, for example—use space to control children's experiences. Smith (2014) also follows Gore's (1998) reading of Foucault, in which surveillance is identified as a key tool of power in spatialities and argues that power is enacted within space by distributing children throughout spatialities to maximize supervision, or surveillance, thereby maximizing control and disciplinary power.

## CHILDREN'S SPATIALITIES AND RECONCEPTUALIST WORK IN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Young children learn about space through their interactions with the physicality of space: both the expanse and the possibilities of wide-open spaces, and the tangible restrictions of spatialities (Tovey 2007)—for example, a playpen during infancy. Spatial theory has contributed to understanding the multiplicity of young children's lived experiences through space and place (Hackett, Proctor, & Seymour 2015). Hackett et al. (2015) argue that children's experiences unfold through agentic interactions with their surrounding environment. Space, in the context of childhood, according to Tovey (2007), is not limited to the notion of expanse, but also encompasses size and shape and can enable or restrict movement. Along similar lines, Satta (2015) argues that children's spaces are often conceptualized as separate, and that children's play spaces in particular are understood and positioned as spaces for children—distinct from adult spaces—but in practice are often controlled and restricted by adults positioned as "in charge" (p. 179). Kernan (2010) echoes this perspective, suggesting that the conceptual demarcation between children's spatialities and adult spatialities has contributed to children's loss of independence. Critical reconceptualist early childhood scholarship has advanced a common worlds orientation (Hamm 2015; Taylor & Giugni 2012) to reframe space as place in order to think of children's lives and experiences as relational, situated, and entangled with/in place.

In human geography, Tuan (1977) writes of the interconnected nature of space and place, stating that neither can exist without its counterpoint. Place as a conceptual center is rich with geographical, physical, and philosophical connotations all of which are useful for understanding children's geographies (Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor 2015). Agnew (2011) suggests that three defining characteristics constitute place: (1) location, or a physical space where people and materials are located, (2) locales, or the locations where social life is enacted, and (3) a sense of place, or meaning ascribed to a physical space by those who use or inhabit it. Similarly, on place, Cresswell (2008) ascribes the importance of materiality, functionality, and the attachment of meaning. In early

childhood contexts, Tuan (1977) argues that children's understanding of place is developed through temporal, material, and spatial interactions with the world. Tuan suggests that children's identities and understandings of the world are constructed through space, in relation to those around them, similar to the arguments advanced by common worlds scholars in reconceptualist early childhood education (Hamm 2015; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor 2015; Taylor & Giugni 2012).

There are critical implications for reconceptualizing early childhood spaces as early childhood places, and there are difficult socio-political and historical contexts to reckon with in studying childhood spaces and places. Pacini-Ketchabaw and Taylor (2015) point to the challenges of reconciling past and present notions of space and place in the context of Indigenous worldviews as contrasted with the ongoing legacy of settler-colonialism. Harrison and Hutton (2014) explore the design of space and place in educational environments and argue that a place-based approach to designing learning environments is conducive to shared power. Hognestad and Boe (2012) developed a framework for understanding early learning environments as place, representing a methodological shift away from the traditional data collection of researcher-child practice and toward researcher-place practice. The value in this methodological shift is understanding the power of place, and the capacity of educators and children to construct shared knowledge through intra-actions (Lenz Taguchi 2010) with place. Agnew (2011) argues that knowledge is produced and reproduced in place, indicative of the power of place when imbued with meaning. Meanwhile, Duhn (2012: 104) suggests pedagogical considerations for reconceptualizing early childhood settings as place, stating that "pedagogies of places negotiate flows and create spaces where matter, desire, human and more-than-human come together to modulate the self in relation to the world." Place, Duhn (2012) argues, implies attachment for both children and educators, and the pedagogical implications require a critical reframing of power dynamics made possible through a sense of place in early childhood settings.

To be clear, there is power in conceptualizations of both space and place (Cresswell 2004; 2008; Massey 2005); however, my contention is that contesting hierarchical power relations requires reconceptualizing early childhood spaces as early childhood places, as it suggests a shared intimacy and shared meaning within the context of spatialities. Hackett et al. (2015) and Hackett (2016) observed children's movements through museums and suggest that children's meaning-making is an embodied process, enacted through agentic movements during repeated encounters with/in the space of the museum, representing a conceptual shift to place. In Hackett's research, data were collected as children moved through a museum, but research on emplacement (Christensen 2003) suggests that the findings may be replicable across children's spatialities. Children and educators experience place through shared movements in space where it is possible to subvert traditional power relations, but it remains unclear where power is located within the social and spatial experiences of the shared places of early childhood educators and young children.

Aligning myself with and following reconceptualist and Foucauldian perspectives that reject universalities (Bloch 2013; Foucault 1980; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence 2005), or generalizable findings, this qualitative research focused on specific problems within the available literature on the theory and practice divide (see Lenz Taguchi 2010) to explore how perceptions of the environment as place and space contribute to how power relations are enacted in early childhood contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to explore how power relations are perceived and enacted in one

early childhood classroom in Southern Ontario. I describe my findings from this case study (Creswell & Poth 2017; Merriam 2009; Stake 2000) of interactions between educators and young children, as well as the broader context of the early learning environment when it is situated as place and space. The two participants–Niki and Brar–are a preschool teaching team in a large organization in Southern Ontario and were recruited using a purposive sampling procedure for participation in the study. At the time of the research Niki had been an early childhood educator for 17 years, while Brar was qualified as both a teacher and an early childhood educator and had worked in the field for two years upon completing his teaching degree and his diploma in early childhood education. Together, Brar and Niki had co-taught for less than one year. To frame the discussion of the findings, I draw from three data sources which include one semi-structured interview conducted with both participants simultaneously that lasted approximately 75 minutes; a reflective journaling exercise where both participants submitted written responses to four weekly journal prompts; and classroom observations that I gathered to examine educators’ perceptions of how power operates between children and early childhood educators in one preschool classroom in Southern Ontario.

## POWER, SPACE, AND PLACE: FINDINGS

The role of the physical environment in how power operates between educators and young children is considerable in the perceptions and practices of Niki and Brar. During our interview, Niki indicated that she believes that there is a clear distinction between space and place, and her perception is their classroom is felt by the educators and children as being somewhere in between, with characteristics of both. Here, as before, I have differentiated between space and place as a way to provide clarity on the ways in which individuals’ interactions with the physical environment are constituted by power relations, and how power relations may be viewed as less binary and more mutable. The findings are organized in this article under two key conceptual themes: the classroom as space, and the classroom as place. There are two important considerations to make clear before I describe the findings.

First, many of the examples throughout the three phases of data collection that I describe as examples of power are innocuous, quotidian happenings, and similar examples would likely be observable across early learning environments and contexts globally. Nonetheless, these examples represent an interaction with either an individual, or the environment that is constituted by the enactment of power and it is important to highlight that the actions of the individual(s) at the center of the interaction are altered due to the influence of other forces, including interactions with others, regulations, time, and the physical environment. To this point, Niki and Brar’s interactions with the children were respectful and encouraging and it would be inaccurate to describe the power relations in their classroom as authoritarian. Niki and Brar spoke with authority at times, but never in ways that were domineering or that diminished the dignity of the children in their program. Similarly, where I have indicated that the preparation of the physical environment–moving chairs and setting out beds, for example–is an example of the educators’ power in the classroom, it is not an authoritarian act: it is pragmatic. Children need chairs to sit on and beds to sleep in, but it was evidence of power in the classroom in that their arrangement appeared to be a decision made only by Brar and Niki, and those decisions influenced where and how children spent their time.

Second, there is considerable thematic overlap within the analysis and grouping of concepts in a way that creates a full picture of how power operates in Niki and Brar’s classroom. In many instances, it was challenging to decide how best to group a particular instance of observed or described power. For example, when Niki and Brar explained that there are times of the day–e.g., lunch time, outdoor

time, sleep time—that are decided by their organization, it could be construed as both an example of power through temporality and power through regulations. In the context of how Niki and Brar described these examples, it was about how they perceived the power of their organization rather than an example of how power is enacted through time. In this and similar instances, I looked to the context of the conversation, journal entries, or the onsite observation, to determine how best to present these narratively.

#### The classroom as space.

There was some overlap between the findings relating to power in the classroom when conceptualized as space and the positioning and use of materials and furniture in the classroom. While Niki led circle time, for instance, Brar prepared the room for sleep time. He moved furniture out of the way to accommodate the children's beds, and he placed the beds throughout the room. I asked him who decides where the children's beds are placed, and he acknowledged that he and Niki determine their placement, and that it is determined by multiple factors, including the layout of the room and their perceptions of the personality and needs of individual children.

At times, there was conceptual overlapping within the participants' perceptions of the physical environment. Brar shared many thoughts on the classroom as either a space or a place. His perceptions on conceptualizing the classroom as either space or place related to who held power in a particular situation. In his journal, Brar wrote, "I call it a space because space is something that is particularly designed for some particular purpose and that is what our classroom and curriculums are for." When Brar discussed the need to keep the children safe, he discussed this in the context of the environment as a space. He seemed frustrated with this point, as he tried to articulate his philosophy of teaching, and how at times it is incompatible with regulations, and how this indicates that the environment is a "space we made. It's safe for them, it's not a place for them, it's safe." He spoke of how even inside, he steps in as children play to say, "ok, you have to be away from [a physical obstacle—i.e. a toy left on the footpath] because it's going to hurt you" and how this acts against his philosophy of, as he says, "making their mind strong. That's not going to make their mind strong because they are never seeing any hurdle." Here, he appeared frustrated with the ways in which the environment as a regulated space informed the power relations between himself and the children.

Similarly, there was some overlap between the findings relating to power in the classroom when conceptualized as space, and the role of regulations, and of power outside of the control of the educators. That is, Brar and Niki were more likely to consider their environment as a space when thinking about regulatory oversight: both theirs and the regulations that exist outside of their power. The educators described aspects of their daily routines and the space in which these aspects are carried out that are inscribed by the expectations of their organization, or of ministerial regulations—i.e., outdoor play, or sleep time. Niki suggested, "when we think about our classroom as a space, we think of limitations, we think of Ministry [of Education], we think of the rules... our codes, licensing, capacity... then we've got rules and regulations that we have to follow." I asked whose power is enacted when the room is considered a space. Niki was quick to answer with, "It's everybody else's power except for ours."

#### The classroom as place.

Both Niki and Brar indicate that they see their classroom as a place, and that their perceptions are that the children's interactions with the classroom are evidence of feeling a sense of place. During the interview Niki explained that her conceptualization of place is driven by a desire to create a



“home away from home” within their classroom, a phrase she repeated when describing the children’s comfort in their classroom and as her guiding principle for cultivating a sense of place. Niki’s phrasing is purposeful when she described how she and Brar “interact along with them to gather more ideas and information we need” to plan. The phrasing indicates a communal effort to plan, contributing to Niki’s sense of shared power within the classroom, and the classroom as one where its inhabitants experience a sense of place.

Yet, there appears to be a hesitancy to supplant the notion of space entirely, in a way that blurs the boundaries between space and place. Brar’s thoughts on the environment as place seemed to shift depending on who was enacting power. During the interview, Brar suggested, for instance, “if you think from above [i.e., regulations], it’s a space, if you think for yourself, as a classroom [and] what you’re trying to do, it’s a place.” Here, he seemed to be suggesting that the classroom can be both a space and a place simultaneously, and that where power is situated is dependent upon whose perspective one takes. In this way, power, as Brar said, may come from above them, or alternately, the power in the classroom when they are alone with the children. Brar offered that, in their classroom, “we try to make a place for them, but still it’s a space because we created it.” In this statement, Brar’s phrasing appears to situate the power in establishing a sense of place within his and Niki’s efforts in the classroom.

In the final phase of data collection, Niki and Brar’s reflective journals provided an interesting contrast in perception. Both Niki and Brar responded to a journal prompt that asked the participants to reflect on how they might re-think the environment in terms of space and place.

Niki’s reflection centred on the role of the educators, and while the children are mentioned, her perception appears to be one of what she and Brar can do to alter the environment to meet the needs and interests of the children. Conversely, Brar acknowledged that one way they might re-think their practice is by inviting the children to participate in the preparation of the environment and the materials. He indicated that by doing so, “they would feel freer and feel that it’s their place... It will create a sense of belonging and well-being in the classroom.” Here, Brar appears to accept the conceptualization of the environment as place, but concedes that despite the potential for sharing power, he feels a—real and perceived—obligation to the regulations imposed upon the learning environment. The power these regulations exert over the actions and experiences of the educators and children shape the encounters that take place in their room.

## POSSIBILITIES FOR RECONCEPTUALIZING POWER, SPACE, AND PLACE

One challenge to reconceptualizing early childhood settings from space into place is the reticence on the part of early childhood educators to adopt shifting pedagogical stances, particularly ones that reflect a vision of shared power and shared meaning. Niki and Brar admit as much, indicating that discourses of accountability and regulatory practices flow downward and shape classroom practice. Place-based education may be one way to resituate power, as the place is not viewed as one for hierarchical, top-down learning, but one where knowledge and a sense of place are constructed and shared democratically (Brillante & Mankiw 2015; Duhn 2012). Knowledge constructed under the auspices of space is, as Christensen (2003) suggests, not emplaced, but guided by adult perceptions of children as receptacles for knowledge, waiting to be filled by skilled educators. Power that produces inequities or hierarchies within spatialities requires critical reframing (Kernan 2010), and to do so reflects an ontological and epistemological commitment to educators and children sharing and enacting power, acting relationally in places with shared meaning.

One key conceptual argument to this paper is that power operates differently when early learning environments are viewed as places rather than spaces. Brillante and Mankiw (2015) write of a place-based approach to early learning environments and argue that children's power and agency is fostered in environments where they experience purposeful interactions between themselves, others, and the physical environment. The findings from this research suggest that while the participants articulated how power is situated between space and place, the ways in which techniques of power (Gore 1998) intersect may complicate and constrain how educators conceptualize their classroom in the context of space and place. Where are the openings for educators to contest and refuse hierarchical power in the pursuit of a place-based orientation to early childhood education? What might it mean to consider the complex ways in which techniques of power operate not as an inevitability, but instead as a possibility for reimagining philosophy and practice? Dovey (2010: 3) suggests that, "a large part of what distinguishes place from space is that place has an intensity that connects sociality to spatiality in everyday life." It would appear possible, then, to conceptualize early childhood settings as places that bridge the gap between social and spatial practices; however, Brar and Niki described the challenges in reframing their classroom as an issue of where power is situated and how it is enacted within the context of space and place.

Examining the way power in Niki and Brar's classroom is situated within a conceptualization of place is purposeful, because as Satta (2015: 182) explains, early learning environments are often "constructed following the adults' rather than the children's way of seeing things." When Niki and Brar described their perceptions of the differences between space and place, each acknowledged the conceptual, or philosophical difference, but ultimately, described how it is their power over the physical environment that governed decisions, such as environmental preparation, or in some cases, how and when the children encountered the environment. This has both ontological and epistemological implications, as Hackett (2016: 169) suggests, that, "movement through place creates embodied, tacit ways of knowing and experiencing the world," and that young children experience place as a site for learning and being within. This is not to suggest that children do not learn or experience a sense of being in place within Niki and Brar's classroom, but in early childhood contexts, power is situated much differently in environments where decisions concerning the physical environment are made for children, rather than with children. Here, I'll draw on one example from my observations of Niki and Brar's pedagogical movements to consider how pedagogy works to produce governable subjects in early childhood (Nxumalo, Vintimilla & Nelson 2018; Smith 2012; 2014) and propose some questions as to how the situation might be imagined differently.

During the classroom observation phase of the research, Brar and Niki opted to stay indoors on a rainy day and move to the hallway of the school, just beyond their immediate classroom. Brar selected a bag of assorted balls for the children to play with in the hallways, and he and Niki positioned themselves at opposing ends of the long, narrow hallway as a physical manifestation of the boundaries within which children could play. Their bodies, in effect, were markers of the boundaries, a physical cue that announced and enforced the boundaries of the children's spatial range. When Niki and Brar describe their role as arbiters over children's safety and thus the spaces in which the children play, their governance inhibits the possibilities for children to share power within their experiences. Following this example, while the children were generally compliant with Niki and Brar's boundaries, it is possible to imagine a scenario where they are not compliant and actively resist. When Brar announced that it was time to leave the classroom to go play in the hall, selected the materials they would use, and he and Niki assumed their positions at the opposing ends of the hallway, these were

decisions in which the children were not consulted. The children complied with their directions, but in an environment where power is reimagined within a more fluid pedagogical stance of shared or negotiated power, educators may encounter resistance with children asserting their power by refusing to accept the physical boundaries and negotiating an expansive understanding of the shared place. What pedagogical movements might have been made possible had the children and educators decided together on which materials they'd use, and in which place they'd be used? What might have been made possible if Niki and Brar were situated not at opposing ends, but together in the middle of the hallway? How might thinking pedagogically through a place-based orientation help refigure power relations between early childhood educators and young children? This is not to suggest a relativist pedagogy of anything goes, but that conceptualizing early childhood settings as place is one way in which educators and children think with one another, in ontological and epistemological stances where power is enacted in shared and negotiated ways.

Exploring how power is situated in early childhood settings within the context of place matters because, as Curtis (2015: 40) argues, a sense of place "is key to the development of a deep understanding of time in terms of both personal and collective ideas of history, being the context in which people experience it." When children and educators complicate traditional notions of power hierarchies and cultivate a sense of place together, it is an effort that affords each participant power over what is valued. When Niki and Brar described their perceptions of the classroom, and their relation to the concept of place, their descriptions were largely projections of how they feel in the classroom and how they feel the children perceive the classroom. Their perceptions and descriptions of practice were continually accompanied by the caveat that there are forces with power beyond their control—regulatory oversight, or organizational oversight, or time constraints—that limited their capacity to share or negotiate power with the children in cultivating a sense of place. Throughout the interview and their journals Niki and Brar indicated that their efforts are purposeful: they want children to feel comfortable, and there was no indication from the onsite observation that the opposite is true, but it is worth continually reflecting upon how the process of place-making (Hackett et al. 2015) happens as a collaborative and negotiated practice.

The argument for rethinking early childhood spaces as early childhood places is of continual import in light of the findings within the context of the available scholarship, as researchers continue to situate the responsibility of cultivating a sense of place within the role of educators (Brillante & Mankiw 2015). As place-based orientations for education (Duhn 2012; Strong-Wilson & Ellis 2007; Taylor & Giugni 2012) are developed further, it is necessary to ask who has power in determining what makes a space a place. In early childhood contexts that purport to be child-centred spaces or that honour children's capacity to share and enact power, it is presumptive when educators arrange and prepare the physical environment without the input of the children whose experiences are embodied within early childhood settings. The crux of the argument for reframing early childhood spaces as early childhood places is that doing so matters deeply for rethinking binaried pedagogical orientations. When children and educators cultivate a sense of place together, it is an effort that responds to the fluidity of who has power over what is valued. I argue, in light of the findings, that while early childhood educators may understand intuitively the demarcation between space and place, external constraints—both real and perceived—are a barrier to actionable change.

## CONCLUSION

While binarized conceptions of child-led or teacher directed pedagogies pervade—both with their

own assumptions about where power is located—some discourses in early childhood philosophy have shifted to reflect an ontological and epistemological stance that views children as competent and agentic participants in their learning. The theorizing and enactment of responsive pedagogies has followed suit, and early childhood educators have worked to develop and enact pedagogical practices that reconceptualize power relations in early childhood environments. However, despite the profound philosophical and pedagogical changes that early childhood educators have undertaken, it would seem that the pendulum-swing away from teacher-directed pedagogies toward child-centred pedagogies has not always materialized in equitable power dynamics. In some cases, the shift has resulted in the power imbalances being more explicitly observable due to the obvious contrasts between what is theorized and what is practiced. By avoiding binarized pedagogical stances, both children and educators are afforded time and space to share and negotiate power.

Power relations are further complicated by thinking of early childhood locales as geographical sites. The philosophical and geographical distinctions between space and place (Tuan 1977) are significant and are made more-so by interrogating where power is situated in both distinct conceptualizations. When I argue that power is more likely to be viewed as shared or negotiated when the environment is conceptualized as a place, it is precisely because the notion of ‘felt value’ that Tuan (1977) attributes to place, is, in social environments, a co-constructed feeling. Examining power relations through the lens of children’s geographies and spatialities may be a valuable practice for educators who eschew hierarchical power relations between themselves and young children. Such reflections may prompt meaningful changes in the way environments are prepared and used, with power viewed as a negotiated or shared force resulting in more relational and entangled encounters with place.

In this research, while Niki and Brar provided thoughtful reflections on their own perceptions of power relations, the absence of children’s participation in the research was a key limitation that points to directions for future research. The concept of power between early childhood educators and the intersections between power relations, space, and place, are significant, and require longer, more sustained research. Longer-term, ethnographic research into power relations across single or multiple sites would add further to ongoing conversations in reconceptualist early childhood theory and pedagogy.

Ultimately, the enactment of power is a negotiated act in early childhood settings. Power is rarely unidirectional, but often complicated by external factors. Educators act in accordance with the regulations and standards of their profession and their organizations, while the divide between what happens in practice and the discourses of children’s power results in philosophical and pedagogical practices that exist within muddled ontological and epistemological stances. Early childhood educators can think with place as one possible way to reconceptualize early childhood environments to avoid obvious hierarchical power relations between themselves, young children, and the physical environment. Philosophies and pedagogies that reflect an understanding of early childhood locales as places with shared meaning can contribute to the cultivation of early childhood places where the enactment of power and the construction of knowledge is shared between educators and young children.

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## UNIT ATTRIBUTION

Jobb, C. (2019). *Power, Space, and Place in Early Childhood Education*. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 44(3), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs29596>  
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## UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

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### UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS<sup>1</sup>

#### **Picture This: Universal Design for Learning in an Inclusive Preschool**

Today Teresa Parker is planning to talk with the children in her class about different types of vehicles and their uses as a way to introduce new vocabulary and help the children make observations about and comparisons between objects.

It is circle time, and the preschool children in Ms. Teresa's classroom are excited. Children begin to gather on the rug, pull out a pillow to sit on, or sit on their chairs to sing familiar songs together. During "Wheels on the Bus," they use their homemade plastic egg shakers. They shake down low, up high, side to side, and around in a circle, responding to Ms. Teresa's instructions and following her cues (moving her shaker in a circle and saying "wheels go round and round" before the verse begins). They read the story *Away We Go!* by Rebecca Kai Dotlich about different kinds of transportation vehicles.

Two children—Jason and Mylee—are seated on inflatable disc cushions. They use these cushions to help with stabilization, muscle control, and balance. The extra support helps them participate successfully in the group activity. Once the story is over, Ms. Teresa brings out a big brown "magic" bag and asks the children to guess what is inside. She shows a picture on the Smart Board of a firefighter driving a fire truck. "What does a firefighter drive?" she asks. Sari says, "Fire truck," and Ms. Teresa takes a fire truck out of the magic bag and hands it to Sari to hold.

After each child is given a vehicle from the magic bag, Ms. Teresa and her assistant have the children take their vehicles to an area where they can race them down a variety of ramps and chutes that have been set up at different levels to allow the children to reach them if they are standing or seated. During this time, the children can also work in the writing area and the art area to write stories and make pictures of their cars and trucks. They can use markers, finger paints, glitter glue, or a computer program to make their picture.

Later in the day, the children will have an opportunity to dictate, draw, or use a computer program to share stories of trips in cars, buses, and airplanes. The computer program will prompt the children to choose items from a picture library and create a story about them that can be printed out. The children can click on each picture, and it will say the name of the object in the picture out loud.

The program, which can be used to record children's speech and even a song they may want to sing or hum to accompany their drawings, accommodates the needs of Jamal, who has a speech delay; Asaam, who is learning English as a second language; and Hanna, who is visually impaired.

1. Birtling, J. Darrah, M., Lyon, D. & Jackson, S. (2018). Early childhood building blocks: Universal design in early childhood inclusive classrooms. Ohio Resource Center & Ohio Department of Education. <https://tats.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2018/05/Buildingblocks.pdf>



## WHY UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING?<sup>2</sup>

Young children have many different physical and learning needs. A growing number of these children are spending their days in programs similar to the one in the opening classroom scenario. Jason and Mylee have muscle development problems, Jamal has a speech delay, Asaam is just learning English, and Hanna is visually impaired. These five children are only a few of the children in the classroom. Each child has strengths and challenges; all children do.

How can the teachers hope to meet the needs of all these children? Many early childhood teachers have adopted the principles of universal design for learning (UDL), but others are feeling lost and overwhelmed. They need information and support. This brief Building Blocks article will outline some UDL basics in an attempt to address those feelings and provide access to tools that teachers can use to meet children's needs in the classroom so that they can learn successfully.

The Building Inclusive Child Care website states that “the concept of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) facilitates an inclusive early childhood environment by ensuring equitable access and meaningful participation through flexible and creative approaches within a developmentally appropriate setting” (BICC, p. 1). The phrase universal design for learning was adopted by the Center for Applied Special Technology, CAST, to differentiate between universal access, which makes materials available to children, and the actual gain in knowledge and skills involved in learning.

The focus moves from the right of children to be physically in the room to the right of all children to be in the room and also be included and engaged in the general curriculum. Isn't that what teachers want—an environment where all the children learn?

## ORIGIN OF UDL<sup>3</sup>

In the 1980s, architect Ronald Mace introduced the term Universal Design (UD). In its original application, UD refers to “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Connell et al., 1997). For example, consider the barriers presented by entering a building that has steps up to a door with handles. Who would have difficulty accessing such a building?

In the 1990s, David Rose, Anne Meyer, and their colleagues at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) developed the UDL framework<sup>Opens in a new tab.</sup>, which is the only UD framework that is based on research on cognitive neuroscience (Meyer, et al. 2002; Rose, Rouhani, et al., 2013; Rose, 2016). CAST is an organization whose mission is to eliminate barriers to learning and support the development of expert learners while addressing aspects of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility.

A key aspect of UDL is understanding that all learners are variable and that the “average student” simply does not exist. We cannot plan for every learner variable, but we can design, develop, and deliver our curriculum knowing our learners will have diverse needs and providing them options to ensure everyone's needs are met.

Todd Rose explains that when organizations plan for the “average” they are not, in fact, planning to meet anyone's needs. Education can struggle with this concept; as educators, we often design curriculum for “average” post-secondary students. Instead, if we plan to support learners at the

2. Ibid

3. Origins of UDL from Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) by Darla Benton Kearney is licensed under a Creative Commons 4.0 International License

margins, we go a long way to creating more equitable, accessible, and inclusive learning environments for all diverse student populations. Watch Todd’s video to fully appreciate the need to rid ourselves of the idea of “average”.

The TEDx (2013) video, *The Myth of the Average: Todd Rose at TEDx Sonoma County* [18:26], explains why we should rid ourselves of the idea of the “average”.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://pressbooks.nsc.ca/ecediversepractice/?p=94>

Once we accept that there is no average, we can start to find teaching and learning strategies to support all of our students. The UDL guidelines provide the strategies we need and offer a path for curriculum design, development and delivery that embeds equity, diversity, access and inclusion.

### Defining Features of Inclusive Environments

**Access:** All children have access to the general education curriculum and learning environment.

**Participation:** All children can participate in all activities and routines through scaffolding and intervention.

**Support:** All teachers have the tools they need to help all young children, who have unique strengths and needs.

## UDL BASICS<sup>4</sup>

What is UDL? UDL is an approach used in many classrooms that allows children to create, explore, and manipulate materials that will foster learning commensurate with their development and comfort levels, which can be dictated by their strengths and needs.

The goal of UDL in education as described by CAST is to provide “(1) multiple means of representation (the ‘what’ of learning), (2) multiple means of action and expression (the ‘how’ of learning), and (3) multiple means of engagement (the ‘why’ of learning).” To provide these multiple avenues of learning, the early childhood team needs to consider the learning differences of all children—including children with disabilities or different learning styles and children who are English language learners.<sup>5</sup>

In a program following UDL guidelines, children should be able to access and engage in all learning opportunities provided in the classroom and in other early childhood environments (e.g., outdoor

4. Birtling, J. Darrah, M., Lyon, D. & Jackson, S. (2018). Early childhood building blocks: Universal design in early childhood inclusive classrooms. Ohio Resource Center & Ohio Department of Education. <https://tats.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2018/05/Buildingblocks.pdf>

5. CAST. (date). .....

playgrounds, gyms, art studios). To make this happen, teachers need to reevaluate the curriculum, physical environment, and relationships among teachers, children, families, and the community.<sup>6</sup>

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

How can we support our children regardless of their ability so that each child can have the opportunity to “participate in a broad range of activities and contexts”? There are some key components that teachers need to look for when choosing a strategy to help them utilize UDL.

The strategy should:

- Foster collaboration with community partners
- Utilize high-quality, evidence-based practices
- Make use of a range of service delivery options (large group, small group, and individual; in the classroom, at home)
- Support differentiation of instruction

In addition, the following three elements allow teachers to frame learning experiences and classroom environments so that they are accessible to all children. These elements also rely on the children’s strengths, preferences, and interests to encourage optimum engagement in the learning experience.

### 1. MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION

In order to support the many ways children learn, teachers need to introduce and share concepts in formats that make sense to the children. You might begin a discussion with your team by asking how everyone is currently relaying information to the children. It gives you a starting point from which you can move out in many directions. You might think in terms of the five senses to reach learners in different ways. Be aware that multiple formats are most effective when they are presented simultaneously; still, not all formats are needed every time or in every activity. The learning goals may be embedded across activities and daily routines, but it is important that somewhere, somehow, sometime, children can experience what they are supposed to be learning in different formats.

#### Representation in Ms. Teresa’s Classroom

To present the concept of vehicles, Ms. Teresa gave children the opportunity to see, hear, touch, move, create, use technology, and verbalize.

- **See and hear:** Hear others singing “The Wheels on the Bus” song along with seeing the teacher’s visuals, listen to teacher reading *Away We Go!* while looking at illustrations in book or on Smart Board
- **Touch:** Play with vehicles they got from the magic bag
- **Move:** Race vehicles
- **Create:** Draw and paint vehicle pictures; write and dictate labels and stories
- **Use technology:** Create personal vehicle stories

6. Enter your footnote content here.

- **Verbalize:** Sing “The Wheels on the Bus”; tell personal vehicle stories to other children

## 2. MULTIPLE MEANS OF ACTION AND EXPRESSION

The second element of UDL refers to the opportunities that we give to children that allow them to show us what they know and what they are able to do in different ways. We want an accurate picture of children’s understanding of concepts, right? Then we need to allow children to show us what they know in ways that

work for them but also allow us to get a more accurate assessment of their knowledge and skills.

Giving children multiple means of expression is not just about having many ways for children to share what they have learned. It’s also important to give them options as they begin to organize and evaluate for themselves by setting goals and monitoring their progress. On the National Center on Universal Design for Learning (NCUDL) website you can read more about these executive functions.

### Multiple Means of Expression in Ms. Teresa’s Classroom

Ms. Teresa gave her children many different opportunities to share what they had learned. She and the other staff collected the evidence of those expressions as they:

- Observed varied participatory behaviors: Singing and moving to the music, listening to the story, guessing vehicles during the magic bag game, racing vehicles on ramps
- Collected varied types of work: Personal vehicle stories, vehicle drawings, computer printouts
- Listened to or recorded children’s voices: Personal vehicle stories shared with other children

## 3. MULTIPLE MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT

This element of UDL focuses on building children’s motivation and interest in a concept by providing the children with choices on how they want

to engage in the concept and at what level and by helping them engage for a sustained period of time and be persistent in their learning efforts. Just as children have preferred learning styles, they also have preferred ways to engage with activities. And these “rules of engagement” change with the type of concepts involved and as the children’s interest in the activity changes. Teachers need to be prepared to support all different kinds of learning preferences.

It is important to remember, however, that one of the most powerful interest motivators is the relevance the concept has to the child’s personal life. A child who lives in an Ohio city is likely to be interested in cars, buses, and trucks, because he or she sees them every day and rides in them to go to and from home on a daily basis. A child living on a farm in Ohio might also be interested in cars and trucks, but also tractors and other farm vehicles because they are used by adults nearby and the child sees them often. You can use that interest to motivate children to learn multiple concepts that are connected to transportation and vehicles—for example, mathematics, language, and science.

It is not only important to be relevant and interesting. It is also important that all learning activities and areas connect with the concepts you are trying to teach—for example, people use different kinds of vehicles and transportation— so that the concept persists across time and place. And activities need to vary on levels of challenge and support so that some self-regulation is being encouraged. The longer a child is able to engage with a concept, the more connections and deeper the learning can occur.

## **Engagement in Ms. Teresa's Classroom**

Ms. Teresa gave children the opportunity to engage with an interesting and relevant topic.

### **interest and Relevance**

Cars and trucks, racing cars, guessing game, and technology

### **Persistence across times and places**

- Time: Early morning. Place: Class meeting area, where children sing “Wheels on the Bus” and use shakers; listen to story during circle time; play magic bag game with vehicles
- Time: Later morning. Place: Large open area used for vehicle races and individual exploration, various learning and activity centers around the room
- Time: Afternoon. Place: Various learning and activity centers around the room, where children compose, illustrate, and share personal vehicle stories, draw vehicles

### **Levels of challenge and support needed**

- Low support and challenge: Explore ramps and vehicles
- Medium support and challenge: Sing, draw, play magic bag game
- High support and challenge: Compose personal stories

## **CHALLENGING BUT DOABLE!**

There are many challenges that must be met in implementing UDL in an early childhood setting. Teachers need to provide a range of flexible learning materials and activities incorporated through visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile opportunities. Teachers and other early childhood staff need to offer multiple methods for their students to process information. They need to also provide a range of ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and learning. Does it sound like a daunting task? Perhaps, but take a step back. Look at the whole picture. Don't try to do it alone. Engage others on the staff in the process. Get parents involved. Begin to ask yourself:

- How else can I present this?
- How else could the children do this?

## RESOURCES

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL): A teacher's guide by Allison Posey, CAST posted to Understood for All
- A Parent's Guide to UDL by the National Center for Learning Disabilities
- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center UDL webpage

## UNIT CREDIT

## CHAPTER 17.

### CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

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#### GLORIA LADSON-BILLINGS<sup>1</sup>

- Coined the phrase Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- Proposed the theory of education debt
- Advocates for critical race theory

#### HOW DO YOU DEFINE CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING IN 2022?

There are three components.

1. Student learning you have to have a focus on student learning, that's the reason people send their kids to school, that's our reason for being.
2. Cultural Competence. The ability of students to draw on their own backgrounds, languages, histories, customs, and experiences as they gain fluency and facility in at least one other culture. If you think in terms of Black and brown kids, that one other culture is usually going to be the mainstream culture, but we don't want their home language denigrated, we don't want their home customs denigrated. We often use those home customs and traditions as analogies or metaphors for understanding this new culture. Also, I want to be clear that when I say cultural competence, it doesn't leave white middle class kids off the hook. Even though schools are pretty much organized around their culture, they are going to have to be able to communicate with people in a lot of different places, in a lot of different circumstances.
3. Critical consciousness. People think, "Oh, I don't want to get involved in that. I shouldn't have anything to do with politics." Well, you shouldn't have anything to do with partisanship. But the truth of the matter is, we live in a political context. The critical consciousness is what I call the "so what" piece. We teach kids all kinds of things, and kids will say, "OK, so we learned this, so what? Were not going to have to use this, what is this any good for?" And we tend to give them very weak answers. We tell them things like, Oh, you're going to need this one day.? Well, somewhere around 4th grade, they figure out, "I'm not ever going to need this." So we've got to be able to show our students that what they are learning can have applications to the problems that they are confronting in their daily lives.

Watch the video Introduction to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by Learning for Justice

1. Gloria Ladson-Billings.(n.d.). In Wikipedia. Retrieved April 4, 2022, From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria\\_Ladson-Billings?msclkid=d3fd2e86b42a11ecab8186300e4177a](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloria_Ladson-Billings?msclkid=d3fd2e86b42a11ecab8186300e4177a)



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## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY READING

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***Start with Us! Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Preschool Classroom*** by Tonia R. Durden, Elsie Escalante, and Kimberly Blitch.

### INTRODUCTION

For more than 30 years, there have been a vast number of inquiries and scholarly conversations on how to improve the educational experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse students. These conversations were sparked by the increase in diverse students and the discontinuity between the experiences of the teaching force and the students they teach (Carter 2008). Approximately 49 % of children entering Kindergarten in the US are from culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds and this percentage is expected to continue to increase rapidly within the next 15 years propelling CLD children as the majority student population in US public schools (National Center for Educational Statistics 2013). There is much rhetoric on preparing teachers to teach within a globally connected society, but we argue that many classrooms and communities today are global and international. Despite evidence of teachers becoming more aware of ethnic diversity in our society (Castro 2010), challenges still exist in developing and supporting teachers who are equipped with the professional competences and skills to provide high quality, responsive educational experiences for CLD children (Carter 2008). This study takes a deeper look at teachers developing conceptions of a culturally relevant education by asking how children's socio-cultural development is encouraged in the early childhood classroom.

### CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

Social cultural theory views learning as socially and culturally mediated (Wink and Putney 2002). Therefore, looking through the lens of the child requires teachers to implement curriculum and instructional practices that are culturally sensitive and relative to the child's experience. According to Ladson-Billings (1994) culturally relevant teaching is a "pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17–18). Also pedagogy—specifically cultural relevant pedagogy—entails relational, curricular and ideological dimensions. To effectively implement a culturally relevant and sustainable pedagogy, teachers must first believe that all students can succeed, maintain an affirming student teacher relationship and see excellence as a complex standard that takes student diversity and individual difference into account (Paris 2012). The pedagogical practices must not only be relevant to children's lives and experiences but also be sustainable over time and withstand changes in early childhood policy, educational reform, curricular and/or assessment trends.

Furthermore, Hilliard (2006) argues that schools should abandon labels for diverse students such as at risk and disadvantaged and instead adopt beliefs that speak to the brilliance and cultural tools

children from diverse backgrounds bring to the classroom. Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is rooted in the belief that learning is a socially mediated process explicitly connecting to students cultural and linguistic experiences (Groulx and Silva 2010). Gay (2000) and Howard (2003) contend CRP involves teachers connecting classroom experiences and learning to childrens home experiences and native language. However, CRP is more than making connections. It requires teachers to intentionally and effectively use and support the languages, literacies and cultural tools of students who represent the dominant and marginalized sectors of our society (Beauboeuf-LaFontant 1999). CRP requires teachers to not only be able to effectively implement best practices but also have the belief that such practices are essential to quality teaching and learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 2014).

As representative of the early work of James Banks who identified ve dimensions of multicultural educational reform, in order for teachers to reach beyond content integration (dimension one) to empowering and influencing school and social structure (dimension ve), it is important to not trivialize CRP as a practice of learning cultures. Instead culturally relevant pedagogy also involves a teachers deep understanding of how teaching is a socio-political act and how the classroom can serve as a place for equity, justice and opportunity (Banks 1993a). As Ladson-Billings (2014) recently charged:

Many practitioners, and those who claim to translate research to practice, seem stuck in very limited and superficial notions of culture. Thus, the fluidity and variety within cultural groups has regularly been lost in discussions and implementations of culturally relevant pedagogy. Even when people have demonstrated a more expansive knowledge of culture, few have taken up the sociopolitical dimensions of the work, instead dulling its critical edge or omitting it altogether (p. 77).

To take up the sociopolitical dimensions of ones work requires teachers to engage in two critically consciousness processes. The first requires teachers to examine how social identities children bring with them to the classroom (i.e. race, native language, etc.) predisposes them and/or their families to isms or privileges within the larger society. Secondly the teacher must engage in critical reflective practice to examine her own ideological stance towards the children in her classroom (What are my beliefs about bilingual education in the American Classroom? What racial stereotypes do I have?). Without such critical and intentionally reective practice, teachers run the risk of perpetuating and justifying personal actions and beliefs that could be culturally and educationally harmful to students (Gay and Kirkland 2003). We therefore argue that culturally relevant teaching requires critically reective and intentional teachers. Epstein (2007) tells us how intentional teachers are those who use their knowledge, judgment, and expertise to organize learning experiences for children; when an unexpected situation arises (as it always does), they can recognize a teaching opportunity and are able to take advantage of it, too. (p. 1).

In teacher education, it is critical to develop and prepare a cadre teachers who bring with them such knowledge, intentionality and commitment in supporting the cultural awareness and socio-cultural development of the children in their classrooms.

The term itself, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) was first coined as a result of a series of research studies examining best practices of Master Teachers within urban, elementary and secondary public schools in the US (Ladson-Billings 1995, 1999). It is a very popular term among multi-cultural researchers examining school age classroom practices. We argue, however, that starting young, in applying such intentional, culturally relevant teaching is crucial for the early socio-cultural development and future educational success of young children.

## METHODS

Using an ethnographic case study approach, we examined how teachers, parents and children within a quality, ethnically diverse early childhood program conceptualized and implemented culturally relevant pedagogy. We asked:

- What are teachers and parents beliefs about and experiences with culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) within an ethnically diverse early childhood program?
- How are childrens socio-cultural development and awareness encouraged in a quality early childhood program?

## SAMPLING AND CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

This study took place within an ethnically diverse early childhood program in the Midwest, USA for 1 year.

Hereafter called Kids Play, this program is nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and offers full day childcare services for children 18 months through 5 years of age. As a teacher training facility, university students assist in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities with children, under the supervision of the Master and Lead teachers in the classrooms. In this study, the duration of the internship experiences ranged from 2 months to the entire year, with an average of 5 months as the normative stay for pre-service teachers and graduate assistants. Furthermore, Kids Play exceeds state licensing requirements and NAEYC recommendations for the adult to child ratio in the classrooms with the goal of providing each child individualized attention. Kids Play is also a primary site for local, national and international research initiatives and experiential learning experiences for early childhood scholars, faculty and researchers.

## PARTICIPANTS

Under the auspices of IRB, the researchers collected data from two preschool classrooms (25-year-olds) over the course of ve semester sessions. Participants included 28 children, nine parents, 51 teachers (center director, master, lead, graduate students and pre-service teachers), and one program director with a total sample of 88 participants. The children and families at Kids Play represented over eight different nationalities and spoke languages ranging from English, Spanish, Turkish, Korean, Greek, Polish, Russian, and Chinese. The children and families also are diverse in socio-economics and religious afliation. Similar to most university laboratory schools, a majority of the children have one or more parents who are employed by or a student of the University. 98 % of the teachers and the director self-identified as White with a middle or upper class socioeconomic status. There was one male teacher participant. 85 % of teachers were also born either in the state in which the study took place and/or the Midwest, USA. Two percent of the teacher population represented ethnic groups of African American, Chinese and bi-racial in which Mandarin was the only language other than English represented.

## DATA SOURCES: SURVEY, INTERVIEWS, AND OBSERVATIONS

Data sources included 29 descriptive survey memos (Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010; Love and Kruger 2005); 16 individual teacher interview transcripts; seven group interview transcripts (teacher

and parent); and 13 observational field notes (classroom and community). The purpose of the surveys was to descriptively identify the teachers attitudes towards and efficacy in implementing CRP in the classroom and their exposure to and experience with diverse cultural groups. Individual semi-structured interviews (approximately an hour per teacher participant) were then conducted providing an opportunity for each teacher to expand and clarify responses from the survey and provide insights on his or her beliefs and experiences facilitating CRP.

The classroom observations identified how the physical classroom environment, teacher-child interactions, and non-verbal communication represented (or not) culturally relevant teaching and learning. The researchers used the Anti-Bias Checklist to examine the physical environment (Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010) and principles of CRP to examine the teacher-child and peer-peer interactions (Ladson-Billings 1994). The community observations included monthly family nights sponsored by the early childhood program and community cultural events. They provided insights on how teachers interacted and engaged with children and their families within a more informal social and cultural context. Lastly, parent group interviews were conducted (two mid year and one end of the year). These interviews allowed an opportunity for parents of the children in the study to share their beliefs and experiences about facilitating the socio-cultural development of their young child both within the home and in collaboration with the classroom teacher. To ensure that authentic voices of participants were captured, we engaged in follow up member checking sessions with a sample of participants during each phase of the data collection from each subgroup (pre-service teachers, lead/Master teachers, director, and parents).

## DATA ANALYSIS

A two-tiered coding system was used to analyze the interview transcripts, observational field notes and descriptive memos of survey data. Data were divided into meaningful units consisting of phrases in interview transcripts or written records anywhere from one sentence to a page and a half. These data units were indicative of the participants experiences and beliefs in supporting children's socio-cultural development. After units were identified, we conducted a topical analysis. The first level of analysis identified practices or beliefs (spoken and/or observed) in which participants reflected on culturally responsive pedagogy, personal beliefs, and/or teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The second level of analysis involved open coding (Miles and Huberman 1994) in which we developed patterns to describe each participants understandings and beliefs about culturally relevant pedagogy while simultaneously connecting these beliefs to ways in which children's socio-cultural development was being encouraged. Descriptive memos were written throughout the analysis process to track emergent findings and themes and were not analyzed themselves.

## RESULTS

Study participants included children, teachers and parents within an ethnically diverse early childhood program. However, in this article we will focus on presenting the experiences and beliefs of the teacher sample as they engaged in teaching and learning from the children and families at Kids Play. There were multiple ways in which the teachers helped to facilitate the socio-cultural growth of the young children in their care. Our findings are presented in the what and the how. The what represents the teacher tools or resources used to help facilitate CRP in the preschool classroom whereas the how represents the process from which these tools were used to implement

CRP and support children's socio-cultural development. The three primary categories to represent what strategies teachers used to facilitate children's social and cultural development include: curriculum resources, classroom environmental supports and instructional approaches.

Furthermore, we discovered there were mediating factors that impacted the experiences and opportunities for teachers to actually implement CRP in the early childhood classroom. In particular, we categorize this finding as the how or the process from which teachers were developing a culturally relevant teacher identity.

## CURRICULUM RESOURCES

### **Reggio Emilia Curriculum**

To fully capture the unique experiences and voices of teachers at various levels in their professional and educational careers, we collected and analyzed data in three teacher sets that included pre-service teachers and graduate students; inservice teachers (Master and Lead Teachers) and a center director. Across teacher developmental spectrum, all teacher participants reflected during the interviews and member checking sessions how the emergent, child-centered foci of the curriculum allowed them more flexibility to engage in children's curiosity concerning their social and cultural differences and similarities. The curricular approach promoted at Kids Play was the Reggio Emilia Approach. Reggio Emilia is an educational philosophy developed by Loris Malaguzzi and parents in Reggio Emilia, Italy in the 1940s. According to this philosophy of teaching and learning, children are given opportunities to engage in developing problem solving skills by participating in open dialogs and debates within the preschool classroom (Edwards and Forman 2011).

Families and children are encouraged to participate in democratic meetings in which they discuss and express ideas and are encouraged to become active and contributing members of the learning community within the early childhood program. From a curriculum perspective, the role of the teacher in this democratic process is to support children as they explore and investigate the world around them by providing intentional, child-centered interactions and instructional opportunities.

The Reggio Emilia approach was instrumental in setting the foundational framework for teachers to espouse a culturally relevant ethos. Take for example, the following reflection by the program director during an individual interview session in which she explains how the program helps young children value the diversity of self and others:

I think it [curriculum] facilitates easily to be open to all components of diversity. We are asking the teacher to be planning experiences that are child centered and so that takes us knowing who the child is and how do we best support the child.

In another example one of the Master Teachers said the following concerning how children's culture and diversity is valued in the classroom and represented in learning experiences:

within our curriculum we are asking the teachers to be planning experiences that are child-centered, and so what that takes the student teacher and us knowing who the child is and how do we best support the child that includes how was the family impacting the child maybe is a disability and even just different hair colors sometimes may have impact on the experiences they are having. So for me, I am seeing diversity as a teacher being intentional, and their approaches and strategies of what they are choosing provide the best experiences for children.

As articulated in these two quotes and further expressed by multiple teacher participants throughout

the study, the Reggio Emilia curricular approach used at Kids Play was identified as the key mechanism or strategy for supporting children's social and cultural development. According to the observational data the Reggio Emilia approach prompted teachers to implement developmentally appropriate practice that was socially constructivist, intentional and child centered (individual and collective learning and play experiences). As we explored further how the curriculum and instructional tools represented elements of CRP, we noticed that the instructional activities were situated within a local cultural context. For example, one of the primary topics children were interested in exploring was nature and weather. Teachers facilitated children's exploration of this topic by using books, finger plays, small group activities, outdoor and dramatic play experiences. Parents were invited during a family night to take a nature walk with their child and engage in activities focused on observing insects and plants in Kids Play outdoor play area and garden.

While the teachers intentionally created social spaces for children to explore this collective topic of interest, there were no documented observations of ways in which these materials, interactions and scaffolding of children's learning were culturally relevant. For example, none of the books or resources used were bilingual or represented any of the languages children and their families spoke. Also, only local weather patterns and explorations of nature were presented. Exploring the natural habitats and weather conditions in Korea, Greece or the other countries children and their families immigrated from were not observed. Therefore, while we observed culturally relevant practices such as teachers building upon children's interests, opportunities for social engagement and critical examination of the topic (What would happen if all the butterflies went away?), and implementing activities focused on children's immediate cultural environment, there were missed opportunities to expand this instructional cultural context to be inclusive of the international diversity in culture, geography and language the children and families represented.

## CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

As we explored how the teachers supported children's social and cultural development we found that there were several classroom environmental resources that were rich with cultural and linguistic diversity. For example, over 50

books in the classroom libraries and resource center focused explicitly on multiple elements of diversity such as language, gender diversity, and children with special needs. The classroom library also included books children brought from home. One pre-service teacher reflected:

I think [Kids Play] does a great job showing diverse backgrounds. We're constantly rotating our books and I notice that our children chose books that show like different ethnicities or represent their own ethnicity. One child brought a book home from her home language and was really excited to share with us even though we can't read it.

Also, pictures of children and their families were displayed in the classroom and around the building. Particularly in each classroom there were photos of the families and a message written by the family and a display wall depicting cultures represented in the classroom. Some of these messages were in both English and the family's native language, communicating the international and linguistic diversity that exists (past and present) at Kids Play. There were also puzzles, toys, dolls and dramatic play items representing age, racial and gender diversity.

See Fig. 1 for examples of ways Kids Play represented cultural diversity in the physical environment.



*Fig. 1 Classroom environmental supports*

However, based on observational and interview data very little teacher-child interaction with these environmental tools was observed throughout the study. Take below the reflection of one of the Lead teachers when asked during an individual interview on ways in which the classroom environment included images of diverse people and also how teaching at Kids Play was intentional about discouraging stereotypes:

I don't feel that we do an adequate enough job in our environment that representing those qualities [cultural diversity]. However we do know that we have materials such as puzzles that might have a woman doctor, or might have a Chinese family. Materials are available, but they are not always accessible and used in the classroom.

Survey and interview data suggest that intentional and consistent use of these resources were not due to a lack of interest or pedagogical priority for the teachers but rather a question of the level of efficacy in actually using these resources appropriately and effectively with children to create and respond to teachable moments around topics of diversity.

## INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES

Instructional approaches can be defined as specific teaching strategies directly implemented by the teacher with his or her students. Such culturally relevant teaching builds upon children's cultural knowledge while also increasing their awareness of the cultural experiences of others (Espinosa 2005). However, culturally relevant educational practices within a diverse cultural context like Kids Play necessitates teachers to seek additional professional support systems. For example, a partnership was formed with the local Confucius Institute to have a Chinese teacher come 1 day a week to teach children Chinese language and culture for 20 min. This was an intentional opportunity by teachers to introduce children to a language and culture represented in the center (18 % of child/family population). This community partnership also provides an example of the challenge many teachers in the study faced in implementing developmentally and culturally appropriate practices around topics of culture and language. A Master teacher reflects on such instructional challenge:

We have a Chinese student that comes in every week and she has been teaching the students her language from China. Its been really hard for her to get it down to the preschool level but we could say not to do it but its been good to have that exposure and shes been so good with talking about her culture and have immersed them in it. This is where Im from, you do this I do that, and not the differences but the similarities of how we do things, but come at it in different ways.

When asked by the lead researcher how children responded to the Chinese lessons, the teacher reflected They love it, even our [kids with special needs], even if they cant understand since its so different, they like that difference. Here we see how the teachers have expressed an interest in not only building upon a language and culture represented by some of the children and families in their program, but demonstrating the value in exposing other children to different cultures as well; a great example of supporting children's social and cultural development and awareness.

As teachers attempted to affirm the linguistic tools of the children in their classrooms, they did, however, experience pedagogical challenges with assessment and instruction. As one pre-service teacher reflected groups of kids talk Chinese to each other, which is great. We love that. But it is hard for us, you know, we cant necessarily do that [speak Chinese]. When asked to identify ways their teaching was culturally responsive, 80 % of the teachers identified the instructional approach of encouraging and in some cases allowing children to speak their native language during portions of the small group activities each day. We observed clusters of children dialoging in their native language both during small group and free play activities and in some cases the entire instructional period. This is a practice recognized as being culturally relevant and helps to honor and value children's home language (Gonzalez-Mena 2009). However, while the teachers encouraged children's use of their native language in the classroom, a more sustainable and inclusive practice would have been to intentionally learn phrases from students in order to build upon their linguistic skills during assessment and instruction. Also, there were multiple opportunities for teachers to encourage children to teach each other their native languages but instead language silos emerged and very few attempts by the teachers to learn the languages of the children in their care were observed. We know that teachers who can ask and answer basic questions in a second language can often make the classroom a psychologically safe and welcoming environment for speakers of that language (Ladson-Billings 1995, 1999; Souto-Manning 2013). As is the case at Kids Play, how would a teacher effectively implement this best practice with a classroom of children representing more than ve languages if such practice maybe outside of the zone of proximal development for this teacher-pedagogically and culturally? Therefore, a critical question for us as researchers became, what is the process from which teachers develop a culturally relevant identity?

## CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Scholars suggest that in order for teachers to maintain a culturally relevant early childhood program, they must have a conscious awareness of their own multiple identities -ethnic, linguistic, cultural, gender, and socio-economic in relation to the identities of the children they teach (Cochran-Smith 2004; Darling-Hammond and Bransford 2005). As we explored teachers perceptions and experiences with culturally relevant education, we found there were mediating factors that influenced how and whether they implemented CRP. For example, we found that by engaging in this research study, they became more aware and observant of children's culture and language. As teachers began to talk and reflect explicitly on the role of culture and language in their teaching practices with the researchers, over the course of the year we were able to observe a transformative process between many of the participants in the study. Such transformative and observational opportunity was made possible, however, by the diverse context of the early childhood program; another critical mediating and influential factor in teachers understanding and implementation of CRP.

Therefore, our findings suggest that the diverse context of the early childhood program inevitably impacted teachers personal and professional growth. Ninety percent of the teacher sample were



White, middle class females whereas 70 % of their student and family populations were ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse. For many of the teacher participants, this was their first experience as the minority; culturally and linguistically. Also in most cases the research study was the first time teachers actually reflected explicitly on this cultural dissonance. Therefore, throughout the study we observed how teachers were becoming more conscious of the cultural duality of how I see myself-culturally and how I see my students culturally. As teachers reflected on this cultural mismatch and differences, they were prompted to also share ways in which they did (or didn't) implement best practices that were inclusive of the child's cultural experience. Prior to the study they were already reflecting upon the cultural and linguistic differences and its impact on the teaching and learning of the young children in their care by engaging in weekly reflection meetings. However, throughout the study, we intentionally prompted teachers to consider the role of their own cultural identity and whether they were imposing their cultural lens onto the students in their care-a more critically reflective practice (Gay and Kirkland 2003). As teachers reflected upon their challenges being responsive and relevant to the diverse students in their classroom, we begin to see some teachers attempting to see through the cultural lens of the children in their classroom in order to improve cultural connectivity.

## PROCESSES OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING

Based on survey, interview and observational data analysis, the teachers identified as being more culturally relevant in the classroom had two shared characteristics. Teachers with previous interactions with and exposure to diverse populations reflected more critically during interview sessions about their role in supporting the social and cultural development of the children in their care. These teachers also intentionally and consistently connected with families on how best to integrate children's language, culture and home experiences into the classroom. Also, teachers committed to creating a cultural relevant environment were eager and expected to learn from children and their families. They were often named specifically by parent participants as intentionally seeking resources and information about the family's culture and home life.

Lastly, these teachers reflected on the importance of becoming a cultural learner of children in which their reflections represented what Paris (2012) and Banks (1993b) would contend as uncovering the socio-political lens and experiences of the learner-a much more complex and macro-systemic view of children and their positionality in this society due to their race, language and/or ethnicity.

Figure 2 represents the process we observed as teachers attempted to implement CRP. As identified in the figure, there were three noted steps in this process. First, (step 1) teachers planned instruction and assessment based on the philosophy of the curriculum and culturally relevant practices (i.e. building upon children's native language in literacy instruction). However, (step 2) dissonance usually occurred between their own cultural identity and that of their students impacting the successful implementation of the culturally relevant practice (i.e. teachers do not speak child's native language and unable or unsure of how to implement bilingual educational practices). Lastly (step 3), a heightened awareness of self and child occurs (i.e. teachers reflect on difficulties and opportunities in instructing and assessing culturally and linguistically diverse children). Teachers who were more culturally relevant in their beliefs and practices did not stop at step 3 but continued the cycle of critical reflection by seeking and exploring best practices that were effective and culturally relevant. In other words the

process was continuous, an ongoing cycle of inquiry and a reciprocal learning experience between child and teacher.



*Fig. 2 Processes of constructing and understanding culturally relevant pedagogy*

## DESENSITIZATION OF CLASSROOM CULTURE

One of the primary principles of CRP is a belief that children's culture and language is essential to educational planning, instruction and assessment (Ladson-Billings 1999). We intentionally selected Kids Play because of the diversity in language, culture and exceptionality represented by children and families in the program. We were equally excited to learn how the teachers were influenced professionally and personally by such rich diversity. While such exposure to internationally diverse children and their families provided optimal opportunities to develop and grow as culturally relevant teachers, we found that, in some cases, the diverse child population actually desensitized some of the teachers. For these teachers, instead of being an opportunity for professional growth, children's cultural tools and identities were perceived as a barrier to delivering instruction, assessment and to their own development as a teacher. Therefore, unlike the current rhetoric in multicultural education concerning how a majority of White pre-service and in-service teachers adopt a color-blind stance in the classroom (Sleeter 2008; Ullucci and Battey 2011), teachers at Kids Play were very much conscious of color and culture. However, for some teachers, this consciousness coupled with learning to teach became too much of a complex cognitive and socially constructive process.

Take again the process of understanding CRP observed in the study and illustrated in Fig. 2. Teachers who were able to use pedagogical knowledge to make instruction more responsive followed a reciprocal (circular) pattern of teaching. For example, when implementing best practices as cultural dissonance occurred a heightened awareness of self and child developed which triggered for these teachers continued exploration and implementation of more culturally relevant best practices. However, teachers who were just beginning to reflect on their own cultural identity and had less developed pedagogical skills, seemed to struggle and get stuck at the heightened awareness stage. These teachers became de-sensitized by the diversity represented in their classrooms. Therefore, instead of implementing culturally relevant instructional practices that would lead to a culturally and

linguistically rich and integrated classroom culture, the teachers language and culture became the foundational lens and framework for classroom instructional practices.

## DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest teachers at Kids Play had the foundational structures in place to promote children's socio-cultural development and easily integrate culturally relevant practices. They had a teaching staff that recognized the value of children's language and culture in the classroom. Also the Reggio Emilia curriculum prompted teachers to begin all instructional activities and interactions with children's interest. We also found that teachers actively sought cultural agents in the community to teach children about a different culture and language and teachers used books, puzzles, family pictures, and children's art work to create a physical classroom environment rich in diversity (language, ethnicity, gender etc.). Teachers seemed to value encouraging and promoting the linguistic diversity within the classroom. As we consider the importance of exposing children to our global society, it is equally important to infuse the languages and cultures not represented in the classroom. Such practice has been shown to contribute to enhancing the cultural awareness and prejudice reduction of children in both ethnically heterogeneous and homogeneous classrooms (Banks 1993a, b; Derman-Sparks and Edwards 2010). Furthermore being intentional in introducing children to multiple perspectives, cultures and beliefs in early childhood is not just applicable in American classrooms but one that can be easily replicated in other countries as well. Culturally relevant pedagogy includes increasing children's cultural and global awareness. Therefore, CRP provides an opportunity for reciprocal cultural exchanges between early childhood programs around the world. We contend and our research supports the belief that culturally relevant pedagogy is a universal language that unites us all in early childhood.

Having a foundational framework and philosophy that explicitly identifies a child's culture and language is integral to all learning experiences. Equally important are teachers intentionally using environmental resources such as books and family photos to engage children in conversations and learning experiences about multiple elements of diversity. Accordingly, Epstein reminds us that intentional teaching means teachers act with specific outcomes or goals in mind for children's development and learning. Teachers must have a repertoire of instructional practices and know when to use a given strategy to accommodate the different ways that individual children learn and the specific content they are learning (Epstein 2007, p. 1). Therefore, our research suggest a need to further explore how we are supporting our future and current teachers in their understanding of and efficacy in becoming culturally relevant pedagogues who explores with children environmental resources and tools that address topics of diversity.

Furthermore, we were able to observe how students diversity helped facilitate teachers understanding and implementation of CRP. For some teachers they become cultural learners of the children and families in their classrooms and sought ways to adapt and modify their teaching to meet the diverse and unique needs of the children in their care. For others, culturally relevant teaching became a desensitization process in which English and the local cultural context became the classroom language and culture.

Therefore, congruent with current multicultural and teacher education research (Gunn et al. 2013; Sleeter 2008), we suggest a need for continued emphasis on and collective responsibility for supporting teachers across the developmental spectrum in critically reflecting on their own cultural beliefs and values when learning about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse children. Odom

et al. (2012) reported that the training and support available to early childhood providers is often inadequate or unavailable and called for improved professional development that helps providers understand developmentally and culturally appropriate practices. Similarly, Kids Play had the infrastructure necessary to successfully implement this strategy (regularly scheduled teacher reflection meetings and diverse student population) but needed additional and ongoing professional supports on how to successfully implement CRP and engage in critically reflective practice on the socio-political aspects of their work (Ladson-Billings 2014). Therefore, we ask, what is the role of multicultural researchers in providing professional development and instructional coaching to support the professional growth and development of teachers? How can researchers and teacher education programs effectively translate theory to practice for teachers who have a diverse range of skills and knowledge about CRP?

Based on our findings, there were several questions in which future research can explore. We used qualitative methods to examine the research questions. Therefore, future research can use a mixed methods approach to explore the predictive factors associated with the development of culturally relevant pedagogues. Such research can further explore how a particular curriculum adopted in the program or classroom promotes and encourages CRP. Research can also explore how teachers and cultural experts within the community can work together to effectively introduce and teach young children about diverse cultures within the local community and beyond. Research questions can also be examined across diverse educational settings (i.e. afterschool programs; family childcare; community educational programs; private schools; charter schools; etc.). Lastly, the children and families in this study represented cultures from around the world, therefore future research can explore how other countries implement culturally relevant pedagogy across diverse early childhood program settings (i.e. majority native and majority refugee/ immigrant) and explore best practices in preparing teachers to become culturally relevant pedagogues.

In closing we ask what is our role in ensuring that our future and current early childhood teacher workforce has the professional competencies and skills to provide quality experiences for culturally and linguistically diverse children? A quality early childhood program that encourages young children's socio-cultural development and awareness is critical in our emerging global society and essential to maximizing children's learning experiences and future success. It is our collective responsibility as educators, teachers, parents, researchers, early childhood advocates, program directors, and community leaders to support the successful implementation of pedagogies in early childhood education that is responsive to the social and cultural needs of young children and their families. Without a doubt, as our classrooms continue to represent the diversity of our global society, culture matters and therefore we must start with our youngest global citizens in implementing culturally relevant and sustainable early educational practices.

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## REFLECTING & CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

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### ***Gloria Ladson-Billings: Igniting Student Learning Through Teacher Engagement in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Igniting Student Learning Through Teacher Engagement in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy***

by Renuka Mahari de Silva, Rebecca Gleditsch, Christine Job, Shannon Jesme, Brittney Urness and Cheryl Hunter published in the Spring-Summer 2018 edition of *Multicultural Education*.

### INTRODUCTION

For many years, the United States has espoused to the world its economic and social progressiveness. It has boasted that its freedoms are unilaterally available for its citizens. Furthermore, the U.S. preaches the gospel of globalization and the importance of competitiveness in the marketplace (Stiglitz, 2010, p. 195), which requires it to have at its core a stable, equitable, and a regenerative educational system that is sustainable, accessible to all children, and beneficial for future economic growth. However, looking more closely at U.S. educational policy, educational equity has vacillated between policies that have deeply divided the nation.

In the mid 20th century the U.S. eradicated the southern-inspired governing clause “separate but equal,” established through *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 (Sunstein, 2004, p. 102). On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decided through *Brown v. Board of Education* that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (2004, p. 102).

It had been all too easy to navigate a wave of mass belief that segregation was beneficial to both Blacks and Whites, because “Negroes have not thoroughly assimilated” (Sunstein, 2004, p.102). Amidst this chaos, Brown “imposed a new normative polity” (Bell, 2004, p. 136) in America. This polity directed African Americans to buy into a new normative, that of working for pay with “implicit legal support” (Bell, 2004, p. 136). However, lacking prior education at the same level as Whites, African Americans were too often unable to compete, or to even take advantage of this new opportunity. This further pushed Whites to declare that Blacks were unmotivated and that they failed to take advantage of “their definitionally equal status” (Bell, 2004, p. 136).

Quite obviously, the social and political pendulum that may have begun to swing forward in addressing equality and prosperity for all, has also in many ways swung progressively backwards. This has inevitably left the nation in a global economic flux with an inability to deliver quality education for all its young (Stiglitz, 2010, p. 343). Many of the social arrangements that are in place seem to benefit and mirror the dominant powerbase, the White majority, yet others who are of Color, specifically African Americans, seem too often to have fallen back into the abyss of racial woe.

This article is the second in a series of narratives that explores the lives of leading multicultural educators and how their lived experiences have impacted the perspectives and theories of multicultural education. This article employs narrative inquiry as a methodological lens for understanding the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings.

## NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry offers a different form of research presentation when compared to more traditional research methodologies. In narrative inquiry, the personal story is used as the center of the study to create a more holistic and embodied story (Glesne, 2016). In other words, this form of qualitative research is characterized by the use of a person's biography that "...revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them" (Chase, 2011, p. 421).

Although all people tell stories of their lives in one form or another, the narrative researcher not only describes these lives, but she will also "... collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). As defined by Chase (2011), narrative as a research methodology has a distinct form of discourse. Narrative research makes meaning through the shaping or ordering of experience. It is "a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (p. 421). Thus, when a participant shares her story, the researcher uses analytical strategies to make meaning from the story (Riessman, 2005).

An important part of narrative inquiry is to examine and understand how the participant "...links experiences and circumstances together to make meaning, realizing also that circumstances do not determine how the story will be told or the meaning that is made of it" (Glesne, 2016, p. 185). Although the researcher hears the consciously-told stories of a person, the researcher also has to look for deeper stories and meanings that a participant might not be aware of (Bell, 2002; Creswell & Poth, 2018). At its simplest, the participant shares experiences from her own life and "... this information is then often retold or restoried by the researcher into a narrative chronology" (Creswell, 2014, p. 245).

This is also the starting point employed in the present study, and these conversations enabled Ladson-Billings to share her own stories and experiences with the researchers. This process involved analyzing "... the stories lived and told" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 68) and allowed the researchers to uncover meaning behind her experiences.

Thus, narrative inquiry is a balancing act between listening to a story and at the same time understanding that the way the story is told is part of the narrative itself. When a person shares her story with the researcher, the researcher is given a "... window into people's beliefs and experiences" (Bell, 2002, p. 209).

In this study, Ladson-Billings' research is examined in the context of her own biography. Thus, this narrative inquiry might be viewed as a more holistic approach to understanding the life and work of Ladson-Billings, since the concern is "... with the relationships among the different parts of the transcripts or field notes, rather than fragmenting these and sorting the data into categories" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 112).

The final product is a combination of her life stories (experiences) with the attempt to make meaning of the stories she told. The use of narrative inquiry allows for a deeper understanding of the issues that Ladson-Billings has researched, illustrating how her personal story is connected to her research and work as a multicultural educator.

## LADSON-BILLINGS' DREAMKEEPERS: CRITICAL RACE THEORY AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Rising from the depths of poverty in a lineage of share cropping just three generations ago, and four generations away from slavery, and two generations away from legalized segregation (Ladson-



Billings, 2009, p. 177), Gloria Ladson-Billings has experienced the effects of the cultural capital of African Americans being used by the dominant White society. Astutely aware of the epistemological curiosities situated in her own bicultural competence, Ladson-Billings has championed the production of scholarly work on building strategies in teaching African-American children and engagement in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

A fervent advocate for equity in education for all African-American children, she dismisses as “bankrupt” the use of “race” as a layered concept within White American society (Ladson-Billings, 2007, speech). Accordingly, Ladson-Billings identifies race as a social, rather than a scientific construct, that is transformative within racialized power structures which have perniciously “dogged” (2007) African-American children at many different levels.

Born in west Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, while growing up Ladson-Billings faced many social and educational setbacks in both elementary and middle school. Born to a father who had a third-grade education and a mother with a high school diploma, Ladson-Billings worked hard to have her intelligence acknowledged.

Often, she felt that educators did not see the potential in her or the value she could deliver to the greater society because she was a Black child and poor. As she articulated during an interview in March 2015, “In the middle school environment, it was clear to me that teachers didn’t think I was very smart. My classmates had a lot of resources that I didn’t have.”

Yet, Ladson-Billings persevered to attain great heights in education. She credits her tenacity and the focused direction in her life to her parents and grandparents who nurtured her social and educational capabilities:

My own parents grew up in what can only be described as legal segregation. My mother could not try on hats in department stores. My parents sat in the back of buses. There were certain towns in the country that they could not be in after the sun went down. It is amazing that they didn’t get frustrated. That they did not give up. Yet they believed that there could be a better future for their children. So, I don’t know that I need anybody outside of my house to inspire me because I lived with that. (Ladson-Billings interview, 2015)

Staying true to her passion in education, Ladson-Billings continued with her educational journey to Stanford, only to be segregated yet again due to her “race.” In fact, she recalled during her interview a very powerful incident that took place there:

I remember when I was in graduate school at Stanford. It was like being in junior high all over again. I was the young person who was different. I hadn’t gone to a private school before. I certainly hadn’t gone to an Ivy League school before. I’m not sure that my classmates thought I was anything special. I remember having an experience early in my graduate school career where I came to school and the halls of the building were so empty I was like, “Wow, it’s like one of those like weird California holidays that I don’t know anything about.” There weren’t many people around so I went into the office and I asked one of the secretaries. “Where is everybody?” She said, “Uh, well everybody’s gone to the AERA.” I said, “What is the AERA?” and she said, “You don’t know what an AERA is?” I said, “No” and she responded, “Well it’s your American Educational Research Association. It’s your primary professional organization.” I said, “Well, where is it? Where did they go?” She said, “Oh, it’s in San Francisco.” I said, “So you’re telling me they just went 35 miles up the road and nobody said anything to me about this? (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015)

This incident underscores Derrick Bell’s reconceptualization of what is meant by desegregation in American polity discussed in his book, *Silent Covenants* (2004). Bell states that, “little attention

is given to multiracial, multicultural, or multiclass issues” (Bell, 2004, p. 166), thus alienating the school experience of Black students. The closed-mindedness of these educational institutions make “inclusion as stigmatizing as exclusion” (2004, p. 166).

Bell further notes that to be immersed in an educational system that fails to recognize the history, culture, and needs of Black students is far worse than being totally excluded (2004, p. 166). In *Silent Covenants* Bell argues that America is a White country and Blacks particularly as a group are “not entitled to concerns, resources, or even empathy that would be extended to a similarly situated white” (2004, p. 195). He underpins this idea as the ideological basis of the foundation for the “two-sided coin of racial fortuity” (2004, p. 196).

Ironically, in 2005, Ladson-Billings was unanimously voted in as the President of the American Educational Research Association. However, had she abated resiliency while staying true to her path in life in the face of many obstacles, she might not have developed the critical acumen needed to excel in educational spheres because of structured racism in America.

## TEACHING THE DREAMKEEPERS

Ladson-Billings is one of the most noteworthy of American scholars in the area of teaching and learning and curriculum development for K-12 schools. Her contributions to education range from developing differentiated teaching methodologies to reflective practice that encourages student engagement through critical literacy. Critical literacy calls upon the learner to look beyond the literal meaning of text to determine what is present and what is missing, thus to analyze and evaluate the text’s complete meaning and the author’s intent.

Critical literacy, in fact, goes beyond critical thinking by focusing on issues related to fairness, equity, and social justice (Ontario language document, 2007). Ladson-Billings’ cornerstone of belief is that all children are capable of learning given the right support:

I’ve always been a fundamental believer that kids are capable of learning. That hasn’t changed one bit. Everything for me starts there, in that fundamental belief in the almost infinite ability that resides in our students; to not lower their ceilings, to not believe that there is anything in their DNA that says they can’t. That’s a core belief for me. (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015)

A critical learner herself, Ladson-Billings used her every interaction with people to inform and expand her knowledge base:

I think every single person that I have had a chance to interact with impacts me in some way and I may not know it at the moment but somewhere down the road I have this remembrance or another encounter and I think, “Oh that was that person I met in San Diego. Oh, that was that woman I met in Japan. Oh, I remember when I had this encounter with this person in Spain.” So, I think of interactions with other people as opportunities for inspiration. (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015)

However, inspiration alone does not seem to be enough for Black youth to succeed in education. Today’s social climate appears to be a complicated one to navigate for many of these youths. Educational policy in America has become socio-economically polarized. In fact, the American educational system is plagued with ever-expanding racial disparities that have negatively impacted minoritized groups, especially African-American children. Therefore, opportunities for inspiration and scholarship within Black communities are too often few and far between compared to the opportunities presented within White communities. Educational reforms that are enacted to “close the achievement gap,” in fact, have further contributed to systematically disadvantaging Black students, thus demonstrably widening educational inequalities (Royle & Brown, 2014, p. 87).

In such a vastly challenging educational climate, it is no wonder that Ladson-Billings has passionately engaged in working towards bridging the gap through rethinking pedagogy. In her book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (2009), she illustrates exemplary teaching ideologies and behaviors for teachers in all learning spaces. She eloquently examines “the art and craft of teaching.”

Ladson-Billings’ educational research has presented her with opportunities for observations of numerous teachers whom she describes as dreamkeepers. These are educators whose daily interactions and teaching styles have demonstrated culturally relevant pedagogy that encouraged and celebrated all children regardless of class, ethnicity, gender, or religion. Dreamkeepers are teachers who are capable of teaching African-American students to high levels of proficiency.

## VALUES AND QUALITIES OF DREAMKEEPERS

Ladson-Billings posits that a high level of proficiency is a part of capacity building in a child. Meeting the child where he is at is a significant part in laying the groundwork needed in building proficiency. Moreover, she believes in the value of making connections between in-school lives and out-of-school experiences and in challenging kids to think and not merely react (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. xi-xii). “This is the ability to create knowledge in conjunction with the ability (and the need) to be critical of content” (2009, p. 100). She believes that effective teaching is teaching that helps students choose academic success and that it is the way we teach that profoundly affects the way that students perceive the content of the curriculum (2009, p. 14). This places the value and importance on teaching practice, not the curriculum.

Furthermore, Ladson-Billings points out that effective teachers develop an understanding of their students, their families, and their cultures. They are willing and able to see situations from varying perspectives other than their own. In this approach, they are better able to avoid making untrue assumptions. “Good teaching starts with building good relationships” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 136).

Different children have different needs and addressing those different needs is the best way to deal with them equitably. The same is true in the classroom—if teachers pretend not to see students’ racial and ethnic differences, they really do not see the students at all and are limited in their ability to meet their educational needs. (2009, p. 136)

When Ladson-Billings was asked during the interview what teachers in successful classrooms look like, her response, unremarkably, was the following:

... they (teachers) focused on the kids’ abilities not their disabilities. They had a very strong belief in the capability of children. They were invested in the community. For them the classroom was just one place where learning took place. These were teachers who viewed the world as their classroom. The classroom itself was just a place. Their teaching went beyond the four walls of a room or the two covers of a book.

These teachers are, in fact, the dreamkeepers. In her book, *Dreamkeepers* (2009), they are those who embrace all children as capable learners. They empower children through collective responsibility and establish a community of learners within their classrooms. Moreover, dreamkeepers view their learners as producers of knowledge, not mere receivers or consumers of it.

In her book, Ladson-Billings points out the three central constructs in how dreamkeepers teach: a strong focus on student learning, developing cultural competence, and cultivating a sociopolitical awareness in students (Ladson-Billings, 2009, pp. x-xi).

## HURDLES IN ACHIEVING STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Unfortunately, these successful classrooms or these types of teachers are not the norm in many Black communities. In the current-day educational systems in the U.S., both segregated and integrated settings have endemically high proportions of low-achievement and high drop-out rates among Black students. This is due to lack of resources, poorly trained teachers (Bell, 2004, p. 166), and the American educational system's refusal to recognize African Americans as a distinct cultural group (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.10).

Moreover, today's legal governance (Center for Public Education, 2006) has imposed restrictions on the ways in which educators can interact with students. These restrictions include limited discussions on topics such as race, religion, prejudice, and inequality that affect many African-American youths daily (2006). As Ladson-Billings asserts, these topics do not figure naturally into the "White" psyche, and therefore there is discomfort associated with such discussions (Ladson-Billings, 2007).

In 2006, at the annual AERA conference in San Francisco, Ladson-Billings challenged educators to reconceptualise the "achievement gap" (which she sees as a direct result of educational inequality between the White and Black children) as a national debt and how it is important to pay-down this debt rather than to "catch-up" (Ladson-Billings, 2007). She vehemently believes that rules and restrictions can be reimagined, in order to impact student learning and engagement positively:

I think that any rule that we make can be unmade. The rules did not come off of two stone tablets. My daughter went to school here in Madison (a middle-class community) and her teachers took them to all kinds of places. She had teachers who would contact her over the summer and say, "I'm going to take all the kids to DQ. I'll be by to pick you up at two." (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015)

She continues by pointing out that as teachers we will make a commitment to the kids we want to make a commitment to. We do all kinds of things for kids we care about:

I have a former student who is a teacher in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He has created a global education course for kids who wouldn't usually have the opportunity to take such a course. He brings to them individuals such as Nobel Prize winners, incredible people. And he has them interacting with his kids. Not only that, but he takes his students to amazing places. His kids have sat down at the home of Warren Buffett's son. Here is Warren Buffett, one of the richest people in the world, and these kids who normally people would have just passed by, have had this opportunity. (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015)

Ladson-Billings further elaborates that teachers who believe in their kids and are committed to them are not dissuaded by people saying, "Well these kids can't or these kids and their parents don't work" or whatever the latest excuse is. To see teachers who work hard to prove that's not so, that, to Ladson-Billings, is exciting.

## RACIAL SEGREGATION SEEN THROUGH CRITICAL RACE THEORY

In addition to her work in teacher pedagogy, Ladson-Billings has also devoted much of her professional career to investigating how Critical Race Theory (CRT) applies to education. CRT begins with the notion that racism is normal in American society. It argues that Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. This was the case in the Brown decision where "Interest-Convergence" became a factor.

As Bell suggests in *Silent Covenant*, Blacks' interests in racial equality will be accommodated "only when that interest converges with the interests of Whites in policy-making positions" (2004, p. 69).

However, even if such convergence takes place, it would soon be abrogated should that interest threaten the superior status of Whites, especially those in the middle and upper classes (p. 69).

In her article written with William F. Tate entitled, "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education" (1995), Ladson-Billings discusses the disparities in education today and suggests that these "inequalities are a logical and predictable result of a racialized society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized" (p. 47). Ladson-Billings and Tate propose that race "continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States" (p. 48).

This is the reason Ladson-Billings believes strongly that all students are capable and that they can choose success. She also firmly believes that every interaction in the classroom is an opportunity for students to be inspired.

Ladson-Billings and Tate also state that class and gender-based explanations for the difference in school experience and performance are not powerful enough alone to mitigate the negative experiences of African-American children. Furthermore, they attest that these myopic explanations "do not account for the extraordinarily high rates of school dropout, suspension, expulsion, and failure among African-American and Latino males" (p. 51).

In fact, Ladson-Billings and Tate offer a comparison between urban Black schools and suburban White schools that shows obvious differences in many areas. For example, there were striking differences in courses, electives, and intellectual property (i.e., science labs, computers, certified and prepared teachers, etc.). They discuss mandated educational standards and how schools that serve poor students of color lack access to resources, and therefore, are unable to adequately meet these educational standards.

Without the resources and opportunities afforded to suburban White students; "how can we ever expect these urban students to fill in the achievement gap?" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55). They argue that, "the cause of their (African-American students') poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutionalized structural racism" (p. 55). "Instead of providing more and better educational opportunities, school desegregation has meant increased White flight along with a loss of African-American teaching and administrative positions" (p. 56).

Ladson-Billings and Tate state that, "a model desegregation program becomes defined as one that ensures that whites are happy (and do not leave the system altogether) regardless of whether African-American and other students of color achieve or remain" (1995, p. 56). They also point out that "without the authentic voice of people of color (which has been silenced) we cannot say or know anything useful about education in their communities" (p. 58).

In an ideal world, Ladson-Billings states that "all of our students would leave school multiculturally competent to be able to deal with the global world in which they will find themselves." But she worries, "how can we develop culturally competent students if our teachers are culturally incompetent?" (Ladson-Billings Interview, 2015).

According to Ladson-Billings, successful pedagogy begins with student-centered teaching where students are treated as competent individuals whose individual experiences and skills are valued. Successful teachers know that instruction drives best practice and, therefore, instructional scaffolding is seen as an important aspect of this practice, because it helps extend student thinking abilities. Moreover, to be an effective teacher, successful teachers need to have an in-depth understanding of their students and subject matter. Sadly, in an unequal educational system, it has become a Sisyphean task to teach these pedagogies to teachers of African-American children, because these concepts do not prefigure into the dominant culture of the White gatekeepers.

By examining education through the lens of CRT, Ladson-Billings also points out various flaws in the curriculum, instruction, assessment, funding, and desegregation of school systems. In her article “Just What is Critical Race Theory?” she uses CRT to explain “the sustained inequity that people of color experience” in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18). She points out that the school curriculum is “a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script” which “silences multiple voices and perspectives” (p. 18). She further iterates that these accounts and perspectives have been “muted or erased” because they “challenge dominant culture authority and power” (p. 18).

Ladson-Billings also points out that for the critical race theorist, assessment (specifically intelligence testing) “has been a movement to legitimize African-American student deficiency under the guise of “scientific rationalism” (1998, p. 19). She cites these principles based on Alienikoff’s book *A Case for Race-Consciousness* and Gould’s book *The Mismeasure of Man*. Ladson-Billings further ascertains that “perhaps no area of schooling underscores inequity and racism better than school funding” and that “CRT argues that inequality in school funding is a function of institutional and structural racism” (p. 20).

When examining White self-interest regarding school funding policies, she stresses that, “almost every state funds its schools based on property taxes. Therefore, those areas with greater property values typically have better funded schools” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 20). Hence she poses the question: “Who lives in these more prosperous areas? Whites.”

One of her more powerful statements regarding the issue of funding is a dichotomized question Ladson-Billings continues to pose:

Whether-or-not school spending is a determining factor in school achievement, no one can mount an ethical case for allowing poor children to languish in unheated, overcrowded schools with bathrooms that spew raw sewage while middle-income White students attend school in spacious, technology rich, inviting buildings. If money doesn’t matter, then why spend it on the rich? (1998, p. 21)

Over recent years, scholars have taken up CRT to analyze and critique educational research and practice. Ladson-Billings and her colleague William Tate helped to open the door to this analytical approach of education with their much-discussed article “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education” in 1995 and now many years later she feels that only limited progress has been made with regards to educational equity.

It is then no wonder that her concerns remain still deeply rooted in teaching pedagogies and CRT as it affects the educational system. When asked during the interview which current issues were driving her thoughts she stated,

... probably the continued disparity of educational experiences for kids. The fact that we can pretty accurately predict how kids will do in school just by knowing their zip codes. There is an increased rate of expulsion and suspension.

She also mentions the school to prison pipeline in the following way:

All of those things really worry me. There continues to be very unjust practices happening in our schools. I don’t think it’s sustainable. I don’t think we can afford to have 2.3 million people in prison. I don’t think we can remain a democracy with 2.3 million people in prison. Just to give you an idea of how huge that number is, just 40 years ago, we only had roughly 700 thousand people in prison.

## CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

In what ways can the educational system safeguard Black students from moving from schools to the prison pipeline? Ladson-Billings believes that “a culturally relevant approach to teaching helps students understand that there can be and should be learning connected to everyday problems of living in a society that is deeply divided along racial, ethnic, linguistic, economic, environmental, social, political, and cultural lines. And students should be learning that education can and should help alleviate those problems and divisions.”

When examining the issue of instruction, she suggests that “current instructional strategies presume that African-American students are deficient,” therefore, instructional approaches “typically involve some aspect of remediation” and ultimately, “the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 19). She calls this the “you poor dear syndrome” (Speech, 2007). She further elaborates by saying, “much of what happens in our classrooms has little to do with what students learn.”

In culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings believes that students are empowered, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically “by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20).

With a culturally relevant approach, the teacher creates a net, which is designed to catch all the students. The goal is learning for all students. Moreover, she believes that knowledge must be recreated, recycled, and shared by both students and teachers and viewed critically. In culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers help students develop necessary skills, and sees excellence as a complex standard, where student diversity is valued (2009, p. 89).

Towards the end of the interview, Ladson-Billings was asked for any final thoughts or for any closing remarks and her reply was the following:

I just want to harp on the fact that we really are teaching the most talented group of young people the world has ever seen. They are technologically savvy. They are smart. They are sharp. They are globally connected. And yet I think we keep thinking that they are not capable of doing things. I believe that they are a group of kids who are more capable than any group of kids we’ve ever witnessed.

Ladson-Billings also believes that a lot of people entering teaching are naive about what the job entails, and consequently, they get easily discouraged because it isn’t what they think it is going to be. As she candidly states,

... they don’t realize how much harder the job is. And it isn’t just about being in your room with kids. It’s about working in communities. It’s about working with families and it’s about having a real vision for what it means to impact a generation of young people.

## CONCLUSION

Gloria Ladson-Billings’ contributions to American education through a multicultural lens is unparalleled. Her adamant stance that African-American students are capable, smart, and that they must be given equal opportunities to excel in schools seems to be gaining some momentum in educational settings. However, if the pendulum of racial and educational equality is to swing forward for permanent gains that would equalize the racial divide between Blacks and Whites, there still need to be many fundamental shifts within social and political structures that impact educational policymaking.

As Bell argues in *Silent Covenants*, “Blacks must challenge the assumptions of White dominance, and the presumptions of Black incompetence and inferiority, by refusing to accept White dominance in our schools, places of work, communities ...” (Bell, 2004, p. 200).

Ladson-Billings’ culturally relevant pedagogy is informed through Afrocentric feminist epistemology (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 189) which rearticulates prevailing definitions and structures within Black communities (Collins, 1993, p. 554). Afrocentric models stress interpersonal connections, caring and personal accountability as the backbone of community building (1993, p. 554) which are also the necessary components to becoming successful dreamkeepers.

For African-American students to succeed, schools need to be truly integrated so that the curriculum and the teachers are reflective of African-American culture and values. A classroom where students come face to face with others who are different from themselves is the place for real integration (2009, p. 7).

These dynamic ideas converge when students choose academic success as their destiny. Each action taken by teachers who place students “on a path to their destiny belongs to those who would be dreamkeepers” (2009, p. 177). Coming from the depths of poverty and having experienced first hand racism and divided educational pathways, Ladson-Billings is committed to seeing equitable educational policies that benefit all children. She is indeed the greatest of all dreamkeepers.

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## VERSIONING HISTORY

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NSCC Version	Resource Used to Adapt
Section I	
Diversity	Unit 1.1 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Unit	Unit 1.2 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Inclusion	Unit 1.3 & 1.4 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Nova Scotia's Families, Communities, and Cultures.	Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework
Early Intervention	Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services
Section II Supporting diverse ability needs	
Families of Children with Special Needs or Special Health Care Needs	Unit 11.1 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
What Programs Can Do To Be Inclusive of All Children	Unit 11.2 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Summary	Unit 11.3 in Role of Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education
Section III Disabilities defined	
Introduction to Childhood Disorders	Introduction to Childhood Disorders in the open textbook General Psychology by OpenStax and Lumen Learning. CC BY
ADHD	ADHD in the open textbook General Psychology by OpenStax and Lumen Learning. CC BY
Autism Spectrum Disorder	Autism in the open textbook General Psychology by OpenStax and Lumen Learning. CC BY
Cerebral Palsy	<i>Adapted from Preschool Fact Pack: A Guide for Early Childhood Staff</i> by Cerebral Palsy Alliance
Down syndrome	<i>Adapted from About Down Syndrome :Quick Guide</i> by the Canadian Down Syndrome Society
ODD	<i>Adapted from Quick Guide to Oppositional Defiant Disorder</i> by the Child Mind Institute
Section IV	
Teaching and planning an equitable program	<b><i>Power, Space, and Place in Early Childhood Education.</i></b> <i>Canadian Journal of Sociology</i> , 44(3), DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs29596">https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs29596</a>
UDL for Early Childhood Education	Origins of UDL from Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) by Darla Benton Kearney is licensed under a Creative Commons 4.0 International License
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Reading	<b><i>Start with Us! Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Preschool Classroom</i></b> by Tonia R. Durden, Elsit Escalante, and Kimberly Blitch.
CRP Reflecting Educators	Gloria Ladson-Billings: Igniting Student Learning Through Teacher Engagement in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.