

ECE 210-501W)

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Ethnicity and Racial Identity in Schooling

The definition of an ethnic group is “a social group that shares a common and distinctive culture, religion, language, or the like.” (Random House Dictionary, 2021)

Ethnicity is defined as “the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.” “The interrelationship between gender, ethnicity, and class.” (Oxford Languages Dictionary, n.d.)

In fact, research clearly shows that children not only recognize race from a very young age, but also develop racial biases by ages three to five that do not necessarily resemble the racial attitudes of adults in their lives (Aboud, 2008; Hirschfeld, 2008; Katz, 2003; Katz & Kofkin, 1997; Patterson & Bigler, 2006; Van Ausdale & Feagin, 2001)

“Racial, ethnic and cultural diversity refers only to people who are “different from” whites. This misconception sometimes leads to white people feeling excluded from dialogues about diversity. A second misconception is that we can only teach white children about diversity if they are in a group with children of color.” (Derman-Sparks_Ramsey_2008)

“A major challenge faced by democratic pluralistic nations such as the United States is how to balance diversity and unity.” (Banks 2009)

According to the authors of *Bridging Cultures Between Home and School*, “At the most basic level, the difference is one of emphasis on individual success versus successful relations

with others in a group. It could be characterized as the difference between ‘standing out’ and ‘fitting in’” (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001, p.5).

“As long as school performs this sorting function in society, it must necessarily produce winners and losers... Therefore, culturally sensitive remedies to educational problems of oppressed minority students that ignore the political aspect of schooling are doomed to failure.” (Villegas 1988)

“A major goal of multicultural education is to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate effectively in their cultural communities, within the civic culture of the nation-state, and in the global community.” (Banks 2009)

The absence of such meaning making practices in schools can impede children’s learning. Researchers (Heath 1983; Rogers 2003) have documented the contrast between children’s literacy proficiency in their homes/communities and the way their literacy skills are perceived in school settings.

There is a myth in popular culture that young children are “colorblind” or don’t notice race. By this logic, children are “blank slates” who cannot develop racial prejudices until they are explicitly taught to do so. This leads many adults to argue that we should not discuss race with preschoolers because they are “too young,” and even mentioning race will “put ideas in their heads” or “poison their minds.” (Winkler, 2009)

Even at the early stages, did parents really have an authentic voice in making decisions? This was way before the heyday of school-based management. (Comer 1977)

Often, teachers and families have different cultural expectations about children's development and schooling. These differences may become obstacles to forging strong classroom and family ties. The answers to seemingly simple questions, such as whether teachers

view a family member or parents' visit to a classroom as a sign of support or criticism, may vary across cultures. (Souto-Manning & Swick 2006)

In today's fast-paced society, teachers and families face competing demands for their time, energy, and resources. (Anderson & Sabatelli 2007)

“We can no longer afford to neglect groups that will become even larger segments of our population.” (Richmond 1991)

“A major challenge faced by democratic pluralistic nations such as the United States is how to balance diversity and unity.” (Banks 2009)

“Immigrant progenies account for a quarter of the nation's 75 million children” and are expected to grow to one-third of all children by 2050. (Passel 2011)

For the most part, studies of cultural appropriateness, congruence, or compatibility have been conducted within small-scale communities-for example, Native Hawaiian, Native Americans. However, an earlier generation of work considered the mismatch between the language patterns of African Americans and the school in larger, urban settings. (Gay & Abrahamson, 1972; Labov, 1969; Piestrup, 1973)

The goal of these activities is to enable a child to separate without too much distress (Hanson, 1992)

A teacher can build on families' strengths by including their home literacy practices in the classroom. When these practices enter the classroom, children are more successful and family members feel honored. (Gregory, Long, & Volk 2004; Allen 2007)

What we've got to do is reestablish or create a tighter fabric of support for children's development. To even have a chance to counter the negative aspects of these new developments, you have to connect home and school. (Comer 1997)

“Students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.” (Lau v. Nichols 1974)

Children from low-socioeconomic status households and communities develop academic skills more slowly than children from higher socioeconomic status groups, as reported by the American Psychological Association. The school systems in low-socioeconomic status communities are often under-resourced, which negatively impacts the academic progress and outcomes of the students they serve. (the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024)

Accordingly, future analysis of extant constructs will require approaches that clearly identify particular aspects of ethnic-racial belief systems individually, or those that examine constellations of such belief systems in concert such as in latent profile analysis (Collins & Lanza, 2011)

Currently, there are debates in the educational research literature concerning both locating efforts at social reform in schools (Popkewitz, 1991) and the possibilities of “re-educating” typical teacher candidates for the variety of student populations in U. S. public schools (Grant, 1989; Haberman, 1991a, 1991b).

Educational practices must match with the children's culture in ways which ensure the generation of academically important behaviors. It does not mean that all school practices need be completely congruent with natal cultural practices, in the sense of exactly or even closely matching or agreeing with them. The point of cultural compatibility is that the natal culture is used as a guide in the selection of educational program elements so that academically desired behaviors are produced and undesired behaviors are avoided. (Jordan 1985)

My target audience are principals, center directors and school leaders, teacher educators, NYC DOE and Head Start administrators. It also includes City Council members, the

Mayor, the Governor, Senators, Chancellor and Congress members. I chose them because these people can help because they have the power to make changes in schools and education policies. School leaders and administrators can make sure schools include different cultures and support students from all backgrounds. Teacher educators can prepare future teachers to understand and respect students' ethnic and racial identities. NYC DOE and Head Start administration can improve school programs, so they are fair and more inclusive. Elected officials can create laws and provide funding to support equal education for all students no matter what their race or ethnicity is.

Research Source Summaries

In the first article, "Ethnic and Racial Identity Development During Adolescence" by the American Psychological Association (2019), the main topic discussed is how racial and ethnic identity affects adolescents emotionally, socially and academically. The article explains that students who understand and feel proud of their racial or ethnic identity often develop stronger self-esteem and confidence in school. It also discusses how discrimination and exclusion can negatively affect students' mental health and educational experiences. The author states that schools and communities should create supportive and inclusive environments for students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The purpose of this article is to inform readers about the importance of racial identity development during adolescence and how it impacts learning and social growth. The author's position supports diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities in education. I selected this source because it provides psychological research and reliable information about how racial identity affects students in school settings. From this article, I learned that positive school environments can improve students' emotional well-being, academic success and sense of belonging.

In the second article, “Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” by Gloria Ladson- Billings (1995), the author discusses the importance of culturally relevant teaching in schools. The article explains that students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds learn better when teachers respect and include their cultures and experiences in education. The author argues that traditional teaching methods often fail minority students because they do not recognize cultural diversity in the classroom.

The author’s purpose is to inform educators about effective teaching methods and persuade schools to support diversity and inclusion. Gloria Ladson-Billings believes that teachers should help students succeed academically while also supporting their racial and cultural identities. I selected this article because it directly connects to ethnicity, racial identity and schooling. From this source, I learned that students perform better in classrooms where they feel respected, represented and understood.

In the third article, “Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum and Teaching” by James A. Banks (2015), The author focuses on multicultural education and the importance of equality in schools. The article explains how race, ethnicity and culture shaped student’s educational experiences and opportunities. It also discusses discrimination, stereotypes and bias that students from minority backgrounds may experience in schools. The author believes that schools should help students appreciate diversity while creating equal opportunities for all students.

The purpose of this article is both to inform and persuade readers about the importance of multicultural education. The author’s position strongly supports inclusive classrooms and fair treatment for students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. I selected this source because it provides detailed information about the relationship between culture and education.

From this article, I learned that multicultural education could help reduce prejudice, improve student relationships and create a more inclusive school environment.

I will bring attention to this issue by using social media, school presentations, flyers and community discussions. I will explain how ethnicity and racial identity effects students in school and how inequality and discrimination can harm learning and well-being. I will also talk to the teachers, students, families and community members to make them aware of the problem. Also, I will write a letter to the mayor to request support for fair and inclusive education in schools.

We will work together by promoting respect, inclusion and equal education in schools. Students, families, teachers and community members will share ideas and work together to support the change we need to bring to the school. We will organize small meetings, school activities and cultural events to increase understanding and respect for all the students. It's all about creating awareness campaigns and encouraging schools to use more inclusive lessons and also supporting programs like bilingual education and anti-discrimination rules. Everyone will play a role in making schools fair and safe for all the students.

I chose this topic because ethnicity and racial identity deeply affect how students experience school every day. Many students face discrimination, language struggles and feeling left out, which can hurt their learning and confidence. I wanted to focus on this because every child deserves to feel safe, included and valued in school no matter what their background is. This subject is very meaningful to me because I'm an immigrant Asian student and I know what it feels like to be different in a new environment. I have experienced the struggle of adjusting to a new culture, language and school system. At times, I felt misunderstood and unseen and because of that I care deeply about making sure other students do not feel alone or excluded because of their identity.

This topic will shape me as an early childhood professional because it will help me become more understanding, patient and aware of each child's background. I will always try to create a classroom where children feel safe to be themselves and proud of who they are. My personal experience as an immigrant will help me connect with children who feel different and I will support them with kindness, so they feel seen, respected and valued inside or outside the classroom.

E.P.I.C. Message

Dear Chancellor Samuels,

E- My name is Syeda Antara Anila, and I am an early childhood education student. I'm writing to you because ethnicity and racial identity in schooling directly affect how children learn, feel included and see themselves in society.

P- Many students in diverse communities face unequal opportunities in schools. Research shows that children bring their ethnic and racial identities into the classrooms and when schools do not support this, it can affect their academic access, sense of belonging and mental health. Also, some schools still lack culturally responsive teaching, which can lead to misunderstanding, exclusion and achievement gaps.

I- I am asking for stronger support for multicultural and anti-bias education and schools. This includes training teachers on ethnic racial identity development, improving culturally responsive lesson plans and ensuring that school materials reflect the diversity of students. Schools should also create safe spaces where students can express their identities without getting judged by someone.

C- I respectfully ask you to support policies and programs that promote equality in education, require cultural competency training for educators and increased resources for diverse and underrepresented students. I hope you will take action to help schools become more inclusive and supportive for all children.

Sincerely,

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