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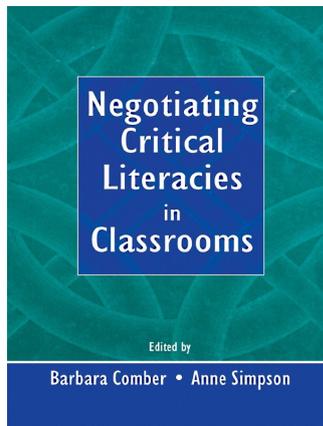
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Creating Safe and Supportive Schools and Fostering Students' Mental Health

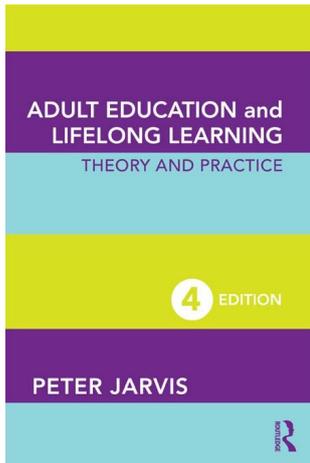
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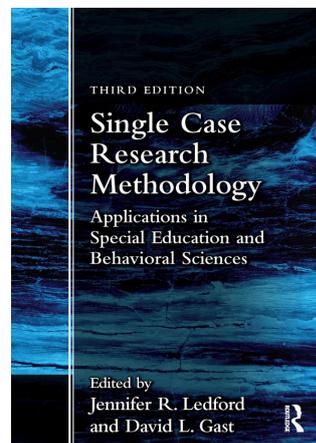
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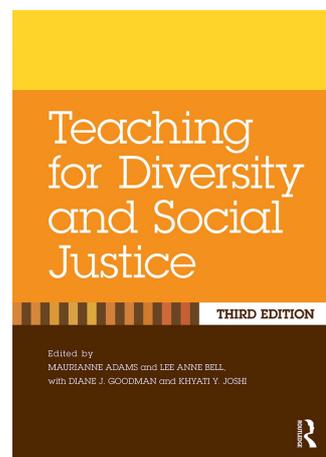


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# Theoretical Foundations for Social Justice Education

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*Lee Anne Bell*

## WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Social justice is both a goal and a process. The *goal* of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The *process* for attaining the goal of social justice should also be democratic and participatory, respectful of human diversity and group differences, and inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively with others to create change. Domination cannot be ended through coercive tactics that recreate domination in new forms. Thus, a “power with” vs. “power over” (Kreisberg, 1992) paradigm is necessary for enacting social justice goals. Forming coalitions and working collaboratively with diverse others is an essential part of social justice.

Our *vision* for social justice is a world in which the distribution of resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable, and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, recognized, and treated with respect. We envision a world in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of interacting democratically with others). Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, the environment, and the broader world in which we live. These are conditions we not only wish for ourselves but for all people in our interdependent global community.

## WHAT IS JUSTICE?

Philosophers and others have long debated the question, “What constitutes justice?” Our definition of social justice draws on theories that describe justice as a fair and equitable *distribution of resources* (Rawls, 1999, 2003) with the imperative to address those who are least advantaged (Rawls, 2001). We also draw on theories that affirm the importance of fair and equitable *social processes* (Young, 2011), including recognition and respect for marginalized or subjugated cultures and groups (Young, 1990). We see these two aspects as intertwining, acknowledging that social justice must address *both* resources and recognition. Resources include fair distribution of social, political, and symbolic, as well as economic, assets. Recognition and respect for all individuals and groups requires full inclusion and participation in decision-making and the power to shape the institutions, policies, and processes that affect their lives.

Diversity and social justice are distinct though interconnected terms. *Diversity* refers to differences among social groups such as ethnic heritage, class, age, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, and nationality. These differences are reflected in historical experiences, language, cultural practices, and traditions that ought to be affirmed and respected. Concrete and genuine knowledge of different groups, their histories, experiences, ways of making meaning, and values is important to the social justice goal of recognition and respect.

*Social justice* refers to reconstructing society in accordance with principles of equity, recognition, and inclusion. It involves eliminating the *injustice* created when differences are sorted and ranked in a hierarchy that unequally confers power, social, and economic advantages, and institutional and cultural validity to social groups based on their location in that hierarchy (Adams, 2014; Johnson, 2005). Social justice requires confronting the ideological frameworks, historical legacies, and institutional patterns and practices that structure social relations unequally so that some groups are advantaged at the expense of other groups that are marginalized. In our view, diversity and social justice are inextricably bound together. Without truly valuing diversity, we cannot effectively address issues of injustice. Without addressing issues of injustice, we cannot truly value diversity.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION?

The definition of social justice education presented in this book includes both an *interdisciplinary conceptual framework* for analyzing multiple forms of oppression and their intersections, as well as *a set of interactive, experiential pedagogical principles and methods/practices*. In this book, we use the term “oppression” rather than discrimination, bias, prejudice, or bigotry to emphasize the pervasive nature of social inequality that is woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. The conceptual framework and pedagogical approach of social justice education provide tools for examining how oppression operates both in the social system and in the personal lives of individuals from diverse communities.

The goal of social justice education is to enable individuals to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand the structural features of oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems. Social justice education aims to help participants develop awareness, knowledge, and processes to examine issues of justice/injustice in their personal lives, communities, institutions, and the broader society. It also aims to connect analysis to action; to help participants develop a sense of agency and commitment, as well as skills and tools, for working with others to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part.

Working for social justice in a society and world steeped in oppression is no simple feat. For this reason, we need clear ways to define and analyze forms of oppression in order to discern how they operate at individual, cultural, institutional, and structural levels, historically and in the present. We hope the theoretical framework presented here—the pedagogical processes presented in Chapter 2, the facilitation and design information in Chapter 3, and the core concepts and introductory design presented in Chapter 4—will help readers make sense of, and hopefully act, more effectively against oppressive circumstances as these arise in different contexts.

## WHY THEORY?

Articulating the theoretical sources of our approach to social justice education serves several important purposes. First, theory enables social justice educators to think clearly about our intentions and the means we use to actualize them in educational contexts/settings. It provides a framework for making choices about what we do and how, and for distinguishing among different approaches. Second, at its best, theory also provides a framework for questioning and challenging our practices so that we remain open to new approaches as we encounter inevitable problems of cooptation, resistance, insufficient knowledge, and changing social conditions. Ideally, we will keep coming back to and refining our theory as we read emerging scholarship on oppression, participate in and learn from social justice

movements, and continually reflect upon the myriad ways oppression can alternately seduce our minds and hearts, or inspire us to further learning and activism. Finally, theory has the potential to help us stay conscious of our position as historically and geographically situated subjects, able to learn from the past as we try to meet current conditions in the specific contexts in which we live, in more effective and imaginative ways.

## UNDERSTANDING OPPRESSION

*Oppression* is the term we use to embody the interlocking forces that create and sustain injustice. In this book, we focus on how oppression is manifested through racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, transgender oppression, religious oppression, ableism, and youth and elder oppression. In order to work toward a vision of justice, it is essential to understand how oppression operates institutionally and personally in everyday life. The features of oppression that social justice educational strategies are intended to expose, analyze, and challenge can be seen as interwoven strands in a social fabric that renders oppression durable, flexible, and resilient, as shown in Fig. 1.1. In order to work against oppression effectively, we need to understand the component strands and how they weave together to reinforce and strengthen each other in maintaining an oppressive system.

### 1A: Features of Oppression

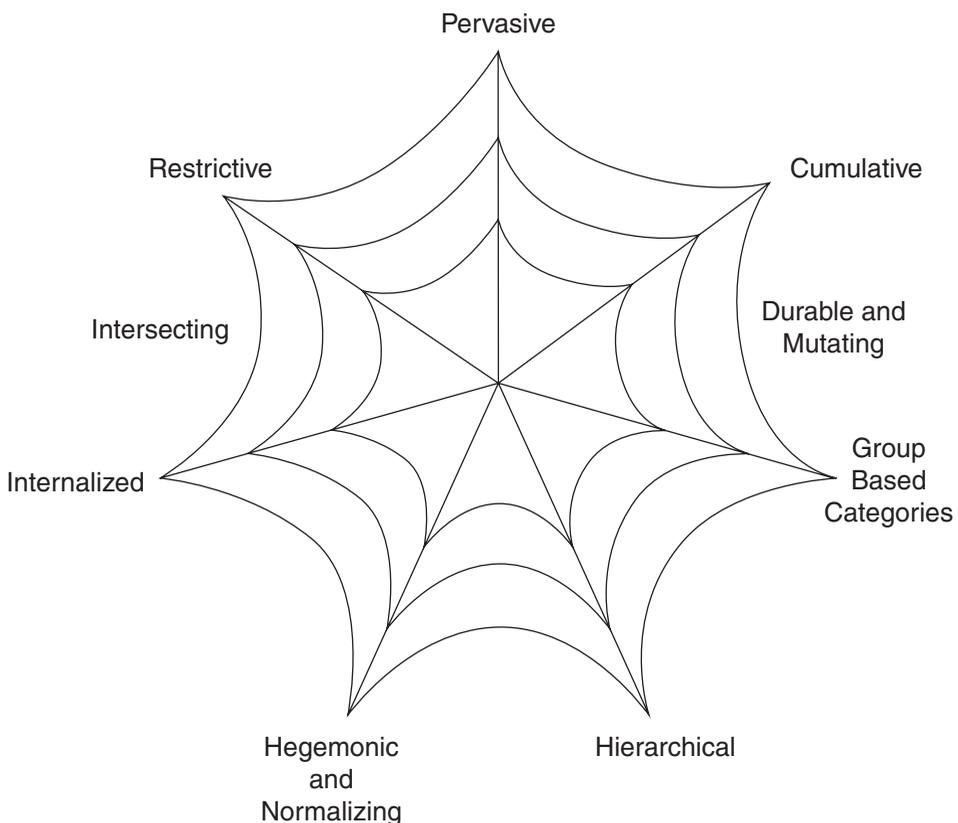


Figure 1.1 Features of Oppression

The dictionary definition of oppression includes such terms as domination, coercion, cruelty, tyranny, subjugation, persecution, harassment, and repression. These terms describe important overt features of oppression but do not capture the more subtle and covert aspects of how oppression is normalized in everyday life. Below we define and discuss both overt and subtle features that characterize oppression as restrictive, pervasive, and cumulative; socially constructed, categorizing, and group-based; hierarchical, normalized, and hegemonic; intersectional and internalized; and durable and mutable. These features are illustrated with examples that show how they interlock with one another to sustain the overall system. While presented as separate terms, these features in fact interweave and mutually reinforce each other in ways that are not as simple to tease apart as a list of discrete terms might suggest. Rather, they should be understood as interlocking constituent parts of a dynamic process.

### **RESTRICTIVE**

On the most general level, oppression denotes structural and material constraints that significantly shape life opportunities and sense of possibility. Oppression restricts both self-development and self-determination, delimiting the person one can imagine becoming as well as the power to act in support of one's rights and aspirations. It encapsulates the fusion of institutional/systemic discrimination with personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice through a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate everyday life. For example, the national mythology of the American Dream claims that anyone who works hard enough can get ahead, yet evidence shows that people who grow up poor today have the same odds of staying poor as their grandparents did, regardless of how hard they work or what their aspirations are. Further, intergenerational mobility in the U.S. is significantly lower than other countries (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, Saez, & Turner, 2014).

### **PERVASIVE**

Oppression is institutionalized through pervasive practices grounded in history, law, economic policy, social custom, and education that rationalize and maintain hierarchies among individuals and groups. Individuals are socialized into this system and internalize the dynamics that sustain it. Woven together through time and reinforced in the present, these individual, interpersonal, and institutional practices interact to create and mutually reinforce an all-encompassing, pervasive system. The more institutionalized, sophisticated, and embedded these practices become, the more difficult it is to see how they have been constructed in the first place and how they have come to be taken for granted as inevitable and unchangeable. For example, the pervasiveness of racism is spread across multiple institutions in our society that mutually reinforce one another. Racial profiling by police, employment discrimination, negative images in the media, the inability to get bank loans at the same rates as whites, under-resourced schools, and inadequate health care all interact to support a pervasive system of racism (see Chapter 5).

### **CUMULATIVE**

Oppression accumulates through institutional and social patterns, grounded in history, whose effects aggregate over time. Historical context and detail can reveal the relationships between particular actions, practices, and policies from the past and their structural and cumulative outcomes in the present. For example, the racial wealth gap that exists today is rooted in slavery and genocide that set white and non-Native people on the

road to wealth at the expense of enslaved Africans, dispossessed Native Americans, and exploited Asian and Latino workers. In order to address the racial wealth gap that exists today, it is important to understand the pervasive and cumulative factors that created and continue to sustain it.

For example, the current situation of extreme poverty and isolation of Native American peoples is a result of a long legacy of historical, legal, economic, and educational policies that stripped them of land, rights, cultures, religious practices, and languages through forced relocation, conversion, mass extermination, boarding schools aimed at “removing the Indian” from the child, and paternalistic government oversight. Stereotypes and misinformation perpetuated through movies, textbooks, and popular culture sanitize and rationalize this history.

The corresponding benefits for non-Native people, who profit from appropriated Indian land and wealth that has grown exponentially over centuries, are rendered invisible. Today, the relative success of the non-Native, white majority is attributed to their work ethic and character, while the lack of success of Native peoples is ascribed to problems in their communities rather than the historical, political processes that create and sustain differential outcomes. Mainstream television, media, children’s books, cartoons, and popular culture socialize non-Indians to view Native people as quaint artifacts of the past who have vanished or as mascots for sports teams and wealthy casino owners. Most non-Indian people in the U.S. know very little about the present circumstances of Native peoples, their living cultures, or how government policies constructed and perpetuate the dire circumstances they face. Likewise, most non-Native people are unaware of their share in the cumulative benefits reaped from this process of dispossession. All of these conditions combine to describe the pervasive impact of the oppression Native Americans face as a result of racism, colonialism, religious oppression, and economic imperialism.

The cumulative properties of oppression are also evident in the concept of microaggressions. These are the daily, constant, often subtle, and seemingly innocuous, covert and overt negative messages and actions directed toward people from marginalized groups (Sue, 2010). Because they are incessant and difficult to respond to, they take a cumulative toll on the psyche of individuals who are oppressed. Microaggressions “are in fact, a form of everyday suffering that have been socially and systemically normalized and in effect minimized” (Huber & Solorzano, 2015, p. 304). They show the tangible, cumulative ways oppression manifests in the daily lives of people who experience them.

## **SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED CATEGORIES**

Social construction is the process by which society categorizes groups of people. In the U.S., constructed social categories are based on race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and other social markers. The ways in which a society categorizes social identity groups are embedded in its history, geography, patterns of immigration, and social-political context. The group categories upon which oppression is based, such as gender roles or racial designations, are not “real,” but through implicit beliefs and social practices that operate as if real, they become so in practice. Social constructions are used to rationalize differential treatment or allocation of resources and to explain social reality in ways that make inequitable outcomes seem inevitable.

For example, the construction of distinct racial groups was produced to justify particular social, economic, and political practices that justified the enslavement, extermination, segregation, and exploitation of other “races.” The meaning-making system of race gained force and power through its reproduction in the material practices of the society across historical eras. Anti-miscegenation laws and segregation in housing, employment,

schooling, and other areas of social life reproduced and reinforced race as a social category. Thus, using, and continuing to use, race to allocate resources and opportunities made race real in practice. Today, the idea of race is so taken for granted that it is difficult to see the apparatus that created it in the first place (Leonardo, 2013).

The social construction of gender provides another example. Gender divides humans into categories of male and female with dichotomous masculine or feminine identities, traits, and social roles. A socialization process that treats presumed gender differences as innate reinforces these constructs and makes them appear “natural” (i.e., that there are only two genders—male and female; or that boys are naturally active and rambunctious, while girls are passive and sweet). Such assumptions are supported and reinforced through social norms, roles, and interpersonal and organizational practices that regard and treat males and females accordingly. The assumption that females are innately more emotional and empathic than males is reflected in an organization of labor that slots females in the majority of caretaking roles and positions, where they typically earn lower wages than men, face limits on advancement, and remain the primary caretakers of both children and elders. Despite the many advances women have made in the past few decades, this division continues to show up in social science research on employment, the division of labor at work and at home, and prevalent stereotypes about male and female roles (World Economic Forum, 2014).

Social constructions presented as natural and inevitable are difficult to question and challenge. Once their provenance comes into question, however, imagining alternative scenarios becomes possible. Part of the work of social justice education and social justice movements is to expose and take apart oppressive constructs, understand how they have been created and maintained, and then reconstruct more just ways to organize social life. The construct of gender has been valuably problematized by queer theory (Turner, 2000). “A central endeavor of feminist, queer, and trans activists has been to dismantle the cultural ideologies, social practices, and legal norms that say that certain body parts determine gender identity and gendered social characteristics and roles” (Spade, 2011, p. 61). Once this construction is challenged, the way is open to imagining a system of “gender self-determination for all people and to eliminating coercive systems that punish gender variance” (Spade, 2011, p. 59).

History, geography, patterns of immigration, and socio-political context are important to how identities are categorized and constructed. For example, the group labeled “Hispanic” in the United States is extremely diverse, comprised of people from many different countries of origin who speak various languages; they are from divergent racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups and arrive in the United States under widely different conditions of immigration, colonization, or slavery, and over different time periods (Anzaldúa, 1987; Oboler, 1995). The category may include a Spanish-speaking, upper-class white man from Cuba as well as a dark-skinned, Mayan speaking, Indian woman from Guatemala. The dominant society lumps them together in a group labeled “Hispanic” to which certain attributions, assumptions, and stereotypes are applied. Yet their experiences are so divergent as to have little in common at all but for the common group experience of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic oppression based on their categorization and location in a U.S. hierarchy. Indeed, this lumping is often the basis for political organizing among different groups labeled Latino/as who organize as a pan-Latino/a group. The same is true for pan-Asian organizing that cuts across national origins, language, conditions of immigration, and other factors.

Individuals, of course, push back against limiting labels, often through reclaiming and redefining these terms. Social group identities can be consciously embraced and affirmed as a fundamental aspect of self-definition in opposition to oppression. The emergence of

black consciousness, gay pride, feminist solidarity, disability rights, the gray panthers, red power, la raza, and other self-chosen labels demonstrates the significance of self-ascribed group status for resisting devaluation by the dominant society (Young, 1990). In fact, individuals may embrace multiple self-ascriptions and align with others in complex coalitions that defy easy categorization (“crips” of color, black lesbian feminists, QTPOC (queer &/ or trans people of color). Social justice is concerned with recognizing and respecting the differences and distinctions valued by diverse individuals and groups, not with forcing conformity to a unitary norm, while at the same time challenging hierarchies that divide and discriminate among groups.

In actual practice, neither individual identities nor social groups are homogeneous or stable. Identity categories interact with and co-constitute one another in different geographic and historical contexts to create unique social locations (Hankivsky, 2014). Essentialist notions of group identity as fixed ignore the fluid and changing ways that people experience themselves, both as individuals and as members of different social groups, over the course of a lifetime (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado, 2003; Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991). We need to “recognize the ways in which positions of dominance and subordination work in complex and intersecting ways to constitute a subject’s experiences of personhood” (Nash, 2008). Queer theory pushes further to challenge and deconstruct categories of identity that have been normalized and to question assumptions of uniformity within groups that mask important differences among individuals inside any particular category (Marcus, 2005; Warner, 1999). “Despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain, and mend, categories always leak” (Trinh, 1989, p. 94).

## POWER HIERARCHIES

Social groups are sorted into a hierarchy that confers advantages, status, resources, access, and privilege that are denied or rationed to those lower in the hierarchy. Social groups are not simply different, but ranked in a hierarchy. Thus, individuals are positioned as *dominant* or *advantaged* in relation to other groups that are *subordinated* or *disadvantaged*. Power hierarchies create and maintain a system of advantage and disadvantage based on social group membership.

Dominant groups hold the power and authority to control, in their own interests, the important institutions in society, determine how resources are allocated, and define what is natural, good, and true. They are seen as superior, more capable, and more credible—as normal—compared to those who are differently situated. People in dominant groups are socialized to accept their group’s socially advantaged status as normal and deserved, rather than recognizing how it has been conferred through systems of inequality. Thus, one of the privileges of dominant group status is the luxury to see oneself as simply an individual. Group status is typically invisible and unmarked, as is evident in how jarring it is when someone comments on maleness or whiteness or straightness in most settings. A white man, for example, is rarely defined by “whiteness” or “maleness.” If he does well at his job, he is acknowledged as a highly qualified individual. If he does poorly, the blame is attributed to him alone.

Subordinated or marginalized groups are represented as less than, inferior, and/or deviant. People who are oppressed are not seen as individuals but as representatives or members of social groups (Cudd, 2006; Young, 1990). For people in subordinated groups, social group membership trumps individuality. They can never fully escape being defined by their social group memberships and the ascriptions the dominant society applies to their group. A Puerto Rican woman, for example, may wish to be viewed as an individual and acknowledged for her personal talents and abilities. Yet she can never fully escape the

dominant society's assumptions about her racial/ethnic group, language, and gender. If she excels in her work, she may be seen as atypical or exceptional. If she does poorly, she may be seen as representative of the limitations of her group. In either case, she rises or falls not solely on the basis of individual qualities, but always partly as a member of the social group(s) with which she is identified.

Thus, those in subordinated groups are caught in a contradiction created by an oppressive system that claims they are free individuals but treats them according to group status. Whether or not individuals in the same social group define themselves in the same way, they must deal with the stereotypes and assumptions attributed to their group and used to rationalize hierarchical relationships. A person's self-defined group identity may be central, as religious identity is to a traditionally observant Jew or Muslim. Or it may be mainly background, only becoming salient in certain interactional contexts, as Jewish identity may become for an assimilated Jew when confronted with antisemitism, or as Muslim identity may become for an Arab or Indian targeted by anti-Muslim prejudice (Malik, 2010). Regardless, they must struggle for individual self-definition within the burden of oppressive attributions, assumptions, and practices toward their group(s).

Young (1990) developed the concept of five faces of oppression to distinguish families of concepts or conditions that constitute oppression differently in the lives of different groups. The five faces are: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. In our teaching, we often use these five terms as a heuristic device to illustrate the shared and different ways oppression plays out and is experienced among different groups of people. In some of the *ism* chapters in this book, the five faces are used as a tool to examine how oppression operates for that oppression (see Chapter 8, Religious Oppression, and Chapter 9, Ableism, for examples).

## HEGEMONIC AND NORMALIZED

The concept of hegemony was developed by Gramsci to explain how domination and control are maintained not only through coercion but also through the voluntary consent of both those who are dominated and those who gain advantage because of the oppression of others (Simon, 2002). Through hegemony, the reproduction of advantage and disadvantage come to be assumed as natural, normal, "business as usual," even by those who are disempowered.

Woven so effectively into the social fabric, the processes and effects of oppression become normalized, thus making it difficult to step outside of the system to discern how it operates—like fish trying to understand the water in which they swim. For example, the exclusion of people with disabilities from many jobs does not require overt discrimination against them. Business as usual is sufficient to prevent change. Physical barriers to access go unnoticed by those who can walk up the stairs, reach elevator buttons and telephones, use furniture and tools that fit their bodies and functional needs, and generally move in a world that is designed to facilitate their passage, and thus support and maintain policies that seem perfectly natural and fair from the privileged vantage point of those not affected.

In hegemonic systems, power is relational and dynamic, something that circulates within a web of relationships in which we all participate, rather than something imposed from top down (Foucault, 1980). Power operates not simply through persons or groups unilaterally imposing their will on others, but through ongoing systems that are mediated by well-intentioned people acting, usually unconsciously, as agents of oppression by merely going about their daily lives. Hegemony and structural injustice are thus produced and reproduced by "thousands or millions of persons usually acting within institutional rules and according to practices that most people regard as morally acceptable" (Young, 2011,

p. 4). In such a system, responsibility for oppression often cannot be isolated to individual or institutional agents but is rather more indirect, collective, and cumulative.

Hegemony is also maintained through “discourse,” which includes ideas, texts, theories, language, and ideology. These are embedded in networks of social and political control that Foucault (1980) called “regimes of truth.” Regimes of truth operate to legitimize what can be said, who has the authority to speak, and what is sanctioned as true (Kreisberg, 1992). For example, until women began speaking out about spousal abuse, a husband’s authority to physically control his wife often went unchallenged, rendered invisible through the language of family privacy and presumptions of sexual consent in marriage. Received wisdom that young people are irresponsible and immature, or that old people are no longer capable of contributing to society in meaningful ways, are other examples of hegemonic discourse.

Through hegemony, the roles and rules, institutional norms, historical accounts, and social practices of dominant groups come to be accepted as the natural order. The advantages of dominant groups and the disadvantages of marginalized groups are normalized through language, ideology, and cultural/material practices. For example, despite rhetoric that the United States is a secular nation, Christian symbols, holidays, and rituals are routinely integrated into public affairs and institutions. Other religious and spiritual traditions held by large numbers of Americans, including Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Native Americans, are invisible or marginalized, so much so that when members of these groups protest, they are often viewed as challenging the American (i.e., Christian) way of life (Kruse, 2015) (see Chapter 8).

In a similar vein, the material and other advantages of whites as a group are normalized and justified as fair and deserved. As a group, whites earn more money and accumulate more assets than African Americans, Native Americans, and Latina/os; hold the majority of positions of power and influence; and command the controlling institutions in society (Demos, 2015; Lipsitz, 2006; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). White-dominated institutions restrict the life expectancy, infant mortality, income, housing, employment, and educational opportunities of people in these groups, while enhancing opportunities for white people (Smelser, Wilson, & Mitchell, 2001). When we look beneath the normalizing assumptions that support the status quo, we can see that advantages are not the inevitable result of hard work in a fair system, but rather the created effects of a system rigged in favor of whites in countless and cumulative ways (see Chapter 5).

## INTERNALIZED

Through the process of socialization, members of a society appropriate and internalize social norms and beliefs to make meaning of their experiences (Vygotsky, 1978) and to fit in, conform, and survive. As part of this process, people learn and incorporate oppressive stereotypes and beliefs reflected in the broader society. Such stereotypes and beliefs circulate through everyday language and cultural scripts (L. A. Bell, 2003; Bonilla-Silva, Lewis, & Embrick, 2004) that frame their assumptions and interactions with others. In this way, oppression is internalized so that it operates not only through external social institutions and norms, but also through discourse and practice (Fanon, 1968; Freire, 1970; Memmi, 1965; Miller, 1976).

The processes of socialization and internalization illustrate how an unjust status quo comes to be accepted and replicated by those who benefit as well as by those who suffer from oppressive norms. Attribution and internalization are thus reciprocal and mutually reinforcing processes. People may adopt oppressive beliefs and stereotypes attributed to their group, regardless of their particular social locations. To varying degrees, poor people and affluent people alike internalize the attribution that people who are poor deserve and

are responsible for poverty, and that the success of wealthy people is merited and deserved. Attributions that youth are irresponsible and incapable of serious commitments, or that elders are slow and less vital than middle-aged people in their “prime,” are taken as true by people of all ages.

Conditions of oppression in everyday life are reinforced when we accept systems of domination without question or challenge. As eloquently put by Audre Lorde, “the true focus of revolutionary change is to see the piece of the oppressor inside us” (1984, p. 123). Both those who are advantaged and those who are penalized play a role in maintaining oppression. When members of penalized groups accept and incorporate negative attributions of their group fostered by the dominant society, they collude in supporting the system of oppression (Fanon, 1968; Freire, 1970; Memmi, 1965; Miller, 1976). They may go along because they internalize the false belief that the system is legitimate and/or as a means of survival. Women, for example, may actively accept the belief that men are more capable in politics and business and women more naturally suited to housework and childcare, and unquestioningly adopt assumptions about female limitations and negative stereotypes of women as weak, overemotional, and irrational. Or women may consciously reject such stereotypes, but go along with male dominance as a means of survival, because to challenge may mean risking jobs, relationships, and physical security. Internalized subordination exacts a psychic toll, generating feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, and even self-hatred. It may prompt hiding oneself from others, resignation, isolation, and hopelessness in those who go along with it (Pheterson, 1990).

Those in advantaged positions also adopt and internalize oppression and perpetuate norms, policies, and practices that support the status quo. Through internalized domination, individuals in the advantaged group learn to look at themselves, others, and the broader society through a distorted lens in which the structural privileges they enjoy and the cultural practices of their group are taken to be universal, superior, and deserved (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Piff, 2014). Internalized domination has psychic consequences, too, including false feelings of superiority, self-consciousness, guilt, fear, projection, and denial (Frankenberg, 1993; Pharr, 1988).

Internalized domination and internalized subordination can cause members of both dominant and subordinated groups to devalue or turn on members of their own group who challenge the status quo (Bivens, 2005). Such “horizontal hostility” (Freire, 1970; White & Langer, 1999) blocks solidarity and prevents organizing for change. For example, GLBTQ people who stay in the closet in order to survive may resent activists who insist on publicly working to challenge discrimination against their group. This division within the community helps to maintain the system of heterosexism and transgender oppression, and prevents solidarity and working together for change. People in dominant groups also engage in horizontal hostility toward members of their group who challenge the status quo. For example, white people label other white people who challenge racist practices as “troublemakers,” “extremists,” or “bleeding hearts.” Pressure against rocking the boat or “making trouble” can keep people in dominant positions from challenging inequality and discrimination. By simply doing nothing and going along with business as usual, people perpetuate an unequal status quo.

Internalization and collusion are further complicated by the fact that most people, through the intersecting identities they hold, may experience privilege and penalty simultaneously. Thus, a middle-aged white woman may focus on the penalties she experiences based on a subordinated gender status but ignore the privileges she obtains through her dominant race and age status. A middle- or upper-class man with a disability may focus on his subordinated status as a disabled person and remain unaware of the privileges he receives through dominant class and male status.

However, internalized subordination and domination can be unlearned through consciousness-raising, examining and challenging oppressive attitudes and assumptions that have been internalized, and imagining and enacting new ways of being. Harro (2008) traces the way individuals learn and internalize their roles through interaction with family and other institutions in society. She also uses the same model to illustrate how individuals can come to consciousness about their roles in the system and take action at various points to challenge and change oppressive relationships and actions (Harro, 2008). Love (2013) calls this developing a liberatory consciousness (described further in the final section of this chapter).

## INTERSECTIONAL

Each form of oppression has distinctive qualities and historical/social legacies that distinguish it from other forms of oppression, and we believe that learning about the specific legacies and historical trajectories of different groups is critical for understanding the specific ways different forms of oppression operate. At the same time, we recognize that different forms of oppression interact with and co-constitute one another as interlocking systems that overlap and reinforce each other, at both the systemic/institutional level and at the individual/interpersonal level (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 2003).

Telescoping in on a single form of oppression can provide valuable information for understanding the particular historical contexts and contemporary manifestations of that oppression. Panning out to focus on the broader pattern of interlocking systems yields important knowledge about general features of oppression that cut across specific forms and about how different forms mutually reinforce each other. Focusing on the intersections where different forms of oppression meet in the lives of particular individuals can reveal the differential impacts of varying locations within the overall system of oppression.

Racism and sexism, for example, can be examined as mutually reinforcing systems that operate according to similar principles of social construction, categorization and hierarchy, normalization, hegemony, etc. However, race and gender also operate in particular and distinctive ways depending on historical context and normative social practices. Understanding the distinctive ways in which racism and sexism function can be helpful for determining how best to challenge each one at a particular point in time (Luft, 2009). For example, Luft argues that given the essentialism with which gender is currently viewed by large numbers of people and renewed debates about “innate” gender differences at this particular moment in our history, a decision to focus on deconstructing gender roles and tracing the interests behind them may be most effective. Whereas, in an era where color blindness is constantly invoked to deny or minimize the existence of racism, a focus on deconstructing race may inadvertently support claims that the U.S. is “post-racial” and “beyond racism.” In this case, a decision to demonstrate the reality of “race” in terms of social outcomes (poverty, incarceration, disenfranchisement, etc.) may be more effective for challenging racism (Luft, 2009).

Valuable learning about how oppression operates can also be drawn from pinpointing what happens to individuals and groups who are differently situated at the intersections of multiple oppressions. For example, the experiences of transgender people who are also poor and of color sheds light on how class and race can interact with gender expression to render some individuals and groups more invisible and expendable than others who may also be oppressed. Focusing on poor women of color, or homeless lesbians and trans women, provides another example where attention to the unique impacts of violence toward particularly situated women can provide a more nuanced understanding of the problem of gender violence. Such an intersectional approach to gender violence can reveal

how strategies predicated on the experiences of white, middle class, heterosexual, and cisgender women may not address the particular problems and obstacles faced by poor women, women of color, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender women because of their different locations within intersecting forms of oppression (Cho, 2013).

For each form of oppression, we can be purposeful in looking at how it intersects with other forms:

We challenge individuals to see interconnections by “Asking the other question.” When I see something that looks racist, I ask, “Where is the patriarchy in this?” When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, “Where is the heterosexism in this?” When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, “Where are the class interests in this?”

(Matsuda, 1987, p. 1189)

Intersectionality operates at the level of identity, as well as the level of institutions and the overall system, in ways that are multiplicative (Wing, 2003), and simultaneous (Holvino, 2012). Individuals experience their lives based on their location along all dimensions of identity and thus may occupy positions of dominance and subordination at the same time (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 2003). For example, an upper-class professional man who is African American (still a very small percentage of African Americans overall) may enjoy economic success and professional status conferred through being male, and class privilege and perhaps dominant language and citizenship privilege as an English-speaking native-born citizen, yet face limitations not endured by co-workers who are white. Despite economic and professional status and success, he may be threatened by police, unable to hail a taxi, and endure hateful epithets as he walks down the street (Ogletree, 2012). The constellation of identities that shape his consciousness and experience as an African American man, and his varying access to privilege, may fluctuate if he is light or dark skinned; Ivy League educated or a high school dropout; heterosexual, gay, or transgender; incarcerated or unemployed; or a tourist in South Africa, Brazil, or Europe, where his racial status will be differently defined.

From our perspective, no single form of oppression is the base for all others; all are connected and mutually constituted in a system that makes them possible. We find it useful to identify where and how different isms coalesce or diverge in particular historical, geographical, and institutional periods (Weber, 2010) in order to understand the “technologies of categorization and control” (Wacquant, 1997, p. 343) that operate to discipline human beings to accept injustice. While Chapters 5–10 each zero in on one form of oppression, they also point to the interconnections with other forms throughout their discussion and design.

In our approach, we argue for the explanatory and political value of identifying the particular histories, geographies, and characteristics of specific forms of oppression as well as the intersections across isms that mutually reinforce them at both the systemic and individual levels. Focusing on one facet of a prism does not remove it from its broader context, but provides a way to highlight and focus in order to ground learning at a particular point in time.

## DURABLE AND MUTABLE

A final feature of oppression is its resilience and ability to shape-shift into new forms to prevail against challenges to it. The civil rights movement was successful in eliminating *de jure* segregation, but the system of racism evolved to create new ways to segregate and discriminate while calling itself “post racial.” Obviously, overt discrimination still exists, but racism has also become more subtle and insidious. For example, Haney-Lopez (2014)

examines how overt racist appeals from politicians that were more prevalent in the past have morphed into coded language and images (“dog whistle politics”). Veiled statements that link public goods such as health care and welfare, to race have been successful in getting white voters to support policies that favor the wealthiest few, even though it harms their own self-interest in gaining access to these services.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR ALL

Oppression has consequences for everyone. People in both marginalized and advantaged groups are dehumanized by oppression (Freire, 1970). Thus, a goal of social justice education is to engage all people in recognizing the terrible costs of maintaining systems of oppression. For example, when millions of Americans are homeless and hungry, those who are comfortable pay a social and moral price. The cost of enjoying plenty while others starve is the inability to view our society as just and see ourselves as decent people. Just as important, it also prevents a clear view of underlying structural problems in the economic system that ultimately make all people vulnerable in a changing international economy that disregards national boundaries or allegiances. The productive and creative contributions of people who are shut out of the system are lost to everyone. Rising violence and urban decay make it increasingly difficult for anyone to feel safe. Reduced social supports, limited affordable housing, and scarcities of food and potable water loom as a possible future for all who are not independently wealthy, particularly as people reach old age.

The impetus for change more often comes from those on the margins, since they tend to see more clearly the contradictions between myths and reality and usually have the most incentive to change (Collins, 1990; Freire, 1970; Hartsock, 1983; Harding, 1991). The “subjugated knowledge” of oppressed groups defines the world and possibilities for human existence differently and offers valuable alternative analyses and visions of what is possible (Collins, 1990; Wing, 2003). Cho argues that “looking to the bottom” is an inclusionary way to understand oppression because “restructuring the world according to those who are multiply disadvantaged will likely and logically mean that those who are singularly disadvantaged will also be unburdened” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 2012). Listening to and learning from the analyses and experiences of members of multiply marginalized groups can lead to a clearer understanding of how oppression operates, and can suggest more imaginative alternatives for socially just relationships and institutional policies.

For example, in a world controlled by and built to accommodate supposedly able-bodied people, those who want to challenge ableism must discern the institutional, legal, social, and educational patterns and practices, as well as individual biases and assumptions, that restrict full access and participation of all people. Those who have direct experience with ableism are likely to be more aware of the barriers and to have ideas about how to make institutions and physical environments more inclusive.

Those advantaged by the system also have an important role to play in joining with others to challenge oppression. They can expose the way advantage works from the inside and articulate the social, moral, and personal costs of maintaining privilege. Those in dominant groups can learn to see that they have an investment in changing the system by which they benefit, by recognizing they also pay a price (Goodman, 2011). Some argue this commitment comes through friendship (Spelman, 1988), others that it comes only through mutual struggle for common political ends (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991). Throughout human history, there have always been people from advantaged groups who used their power and position to actively fight against systems of oppression (Aptheker, 1993; Wigginton, 1992; Zinn, 2003). White abolitionists, middle- and upper-class anti-poverty crusaders, and men who supported women’s rights are examples. Those who are advantaged are able to unmask

the role dominants play in maintaining the system and articulate the high moral and societal cost of privileged status in an unequal society (Thompson, Schaefer, & Brod, 2003).

## WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Given that systems of domination saturate both the external world and our individual psyches, how do we challenge and change them? In a context where we are all implicated, where we cannot escape our social location, how do we find standpoints from which to act (Lewis, 1993)? A commitment to social justice requires a moral and ethical attitude toward equality and possibility, and a belief in the capacity of people to transform their world (Freire, 1970; Weiler, 1991). Oppression is never complete; it is always open to challenge, as is evident if we understand history and learn lessons from past movements for justice. The next section discusses concepts that have been developed and successfully used in the struggle for social justice in the past. These legacies, together with the creativity and ingenuity of current struggles, provide a set of practices that we can build on to guide social justice work in the present.

### DEVELOP A CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Freire created the notion of critical consciousness in his work to help Brazilian peasants become aware of the political and social patterns that enforced their oppression, rather than accept these conditions as fated or inevitable (1970). Critical consciousness meant working in solidarity with others to question, analyze, and challenge oppressive conditions in their lives rather than blame each other or fate. The goal of critical consciousness is to develop awareness or mindfulness of the social and political factors that create oppression, to analyze the patterns that sustain oppression and the interests it serves, and to take action to work democratically with others to reimagine and remake the world in the interest of all.

Critical consciousness connects the personal with the socio-political to understand both external systems of oppression and the ways they are internalized by individuals. Feminist consciousness-raising groups in the early 1970s sought to help women make these connections through examining patriarchal structures in the family and other institutions while exploring how women internalized patriarchal ideas and values as appropriate and/or inevitable. Through consciousness-raising groups, women collectively uncovered and deconstructed the ways that the system of patriarchy is reproduced inside women's consciousness as well as in external social institutions. In so doing, they challenged conventional assumptions about human nature, sexuality, family life, and gender roles and relations (Combahee River Collective, 1986; Evans, 1979; Firestone, 1970). Feminist practice also sought to create and enact new, more liberating ways of thinking and behaving as equals in society. Consciousness-raising processes are a powerful way to examine and critique normative assumptions and our own, often unconscious, investments in supporting them. Consciousness-raising processes have been fruitful for many oppressed groups seeking to raise awareness about their situation.

### DECONSTRUCT THE BINARIES

Gay and lesbian rights activists in the 1980s and 1990s exposed normative assumptions about family, love, relationships, and gender roles to analyze straight supremacy and

heteronormativity (Gilreath, 2011). Queer and transgender scholars and activists question binary categories and assumptions of uniformity within any constructed category. The inadequacy of defining the experience of individuals and groups in simplistic binary terms is reflected in the work of bisexual and transgender people within feminist and gay/lesbian movements who refuse the categories as well as their content (Butler, 2004) and experiment with multiple ways of expressing and enacting identities. Since oppression works through setting up dualistic frames that privilege some groups and exclude others, deconstructing the binaries and recognizing the individual and social complexities and variety they hide can be an important tool for change. Activists and educators in a range of social movements have analyzed how binary categories work to perpetuate oppression, while at the same time deconstructing and exploding categories that sort and rank people into either/or boxes (black/white, straight/gay, male/female, young/old, disabled/non-disabled). This experimentation with categories to push back against the binary categorizations through which oppression operates is evident in a range of social movements.

### DRAW ON COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Critical Race Theory (CRT) analyzes and challenges mainstream narratives in law, history, and popular culture that uphold the status quo (D. Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Matsuda, 1996). Through counter-storytelling, CRT seeks to destabilize “stock stories” that valorize the legitimacy of dominant groups. Critical historical methods draw on counter-narratives to “demarginalize” (Davis & Wing, 2000) and center the roles that Native American people, working class people, African Americans, immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds, Latina/os, Asian Americans, people with disabilities, and women of all groups have played in challenging oppression (Fleischer & Zames, 2001; Lerner, 1986; Zinn, 2003, 2004). Such counter-narratives unearth suppressed and hidden stories of marginalized groups, including stories of their resistance to the status quo, and provide evidence as well as hope that oppressive circumstances can change through the efforts of human actors (L. A. Bell, 2010). Historical counter-narratives show, for example, how diverse coalitions organized to abolish slavery, extend suffrage to women, create unions and improve working conditions for laborers, challenge anti-immigrant policies, fight for Native sovereignty, and advocate for gay/lesbian and transgender rights.

A critical historical approach requires an understanding of history as not linear but rather multiple and simultaneous:

The events and people we write about did not occur in isolation but in dialogue with a myriad of other people and events. In fact, at any given moment millions of people are all talking at once. As historians we try to isolate one conversation and to explore it, but the trick is then how to put that conversation in a context which makes evident its dialogue with so many others—how to make this one lyric stand alone and at the same time be in connection with all the other lyrics being sung.

(Barkley-Brown, 1991, p. 2)

The counter-stories to the status quo developed within different social movements and inspire emerging social movements today. The civil rights movement continues to excite the imagination of people here and around the world who apply its lessons to an understanding of their particular situations and adapt its analyses and tactics to their own struggles for equality. Just as Native American, Asian American, Chicano, and Puerto Rican youth in the 1960s and 1970s styled themselves after African-American youth in the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party (Marabel, 1984;

Oboler, 1995; Okiihiro,1994), young people today draw from and expand upon these images to inspire their own activism.

We can also learn from new counter-stories that emerge to build on, challenge, and reinvent older counter-stories. For example, building resistance through discovering and claiming a shared identity was a critical part of social movements following colonialism (Memmi, 1965). Emerging movements today draw from these stories, but they understand that identity politics has limitations that can prevent people from seeing dynamics across issues and communities and prevent effective cross-group understanding and coalition building (Guinier & Torres, 2002). As they work across multiple identities and projects, they fashion new counter-stories about how oppression works and how diverse coalitions can strategize to challenge the status quo.

As formerly marginalized or hidden historical stories are reclaimed, people in the present weave anew an understanding of the interconnections among struggles for justice. The more we know about the historical experiences and perspectives of diverse peoples, the more we are able to understand the interlocking systems that produce inequality. As importantly, we gain ideas and strategies for working with diverse others across coalitions in more effective, inclusive, and egalitarian ways (Bly & Wooten, 2012; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013).

## ANALYZE POWER

Another lesson from earlier social movements is the need to examine the dynamics of power and the interests it serves. Such analyses remind us to continually ask the questions, “In whose interest do systems operate?” and “Who benefits and who pays?” regarding prevailing practices. These questions help to expose hierarchical relationships and hidden advantages and penalties embedded in purportedly fair and neutral systems. They reveal how power operates through normalizing relations of domination by presenting certain ideas and practices as rational and self-evident, as part of the natural order. Once people begin to question what has previously been taken for granted, the way is open to imagine new possibilities and practices.

New Left movements of the 1960s drew on Marxist theory to shift the focus to the structural rather than individual factors that maintain oppressive economic and social relations. They critique as anti-democratic normative assumptions that conflated democracy with capitalism and stigmatize alternative ways to arrange economic and social life. Grounded initially in anti-racist civil rights movements, the New Left critiqued the hypocrisy of espousing ideals of democracy and personal liberty while repressing democratic ideas. Their goal was to organize to hold accountable those in power by exposing hypocrisy and evasion in policies presented as fair and democratic but that obscured cynical self-interests (Bowles & Gintis, 1987).

These lessons were brought to life again in the Occupy Wall Street movement that galvanized thousands of people across the country and the world to challenge the dominance of Wall Street in government decision-making and government bailouts following the market crash of 2008. The Occupy movement illustrated the importance of connecting the dots across institutions to understand how power operates to maintain dominance under the guise of neutrality. It also provoked creative ideas about alternative possibilities to this system in both process and structure (Gitlin, 2012; van Gelder, 2011). More recently, a group called the “Hedge Clippers” is using public venues to expose and teach about how hedge funds use the money they gain from favored tax policies to buy political influence and shape public policy on education and other areas, in unaccountable and undemocratic ways that disguise as altruistic their self-serving interests.

## LOOK FOR INTEREST CONVERGENCE

The notion of “interest convergence” (D. Bell, 1992) is another useful tool for analyzing how systems of oppression modulate, sometimes appearing to respond to charges of injustice when it serves their interest, but ultimately continuing to maintain dominance. For example, critical race theorists argue that racial integration of the armed forces during World War II was an instance of interest convergence (D. A. Bell, 1980). When anti-lynching and anti-Jim Crow agitation in the U.S. coincided with establishment fears that the Germans would use American racism to attack U.S. claims about democracy, these disparate interests converged to support desegregating the armed forces. The U.S. government could neutralize communist critiques while meeting the interests of anti-racism advocates for change. At the same time, racism restabilized through policies that reinforced segregation in housing and prevented black soldiers from using the G.I. Bill to purchase housing in newly built suburbs, where property values would grow and lay the basis for the future prosperity that whites were able to enjoy.

The concept of interest convergence can be useful for strategizing ways to take advantage of potential alignments of interest with groups we might otherwise oppose in order to move a particular change forward (Milner, 2008). At the same time, understanding interest convergence can help groups be realistic about the limits of such coalitions and prepare to change tactics when different strategies are needed.

## MAKE GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Transnational activists and scholars help us understand the ways that oppression is shaped by geographic and historical contexts and interactions across national borders. They offer an analysis of transnational capital and its impact on labor, migration, gender, and ethnic relations, and national development in different parts of the world (Dirlik, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Sandoval, 2000). Global feminism (Mohanty, 2003), global critical race feminism (Davis & Wing, 2000), and transnational feminisms (Fernandes, 2013) highlight the leadership of women at the margins and focus on how to understand the shared and distinctive problems women face under post-colonial systems and U.S. imperialism as they identify local strategies and solutions to address their particular contexts (Dirlik, 1997).

A comparison of two immigrants to the U.S. from Uganda illustrates the insights that a transnational perspective can offer for understanding local conditions in different parts of the world. Purkayastha (2012) describes the situation as follows. The ancestors of both a black and an Indian immigrant may have lived in Uganda for generations and been expelled by the Amin dictatorship. Both immigrants may have suffered under gendered/racialized migration policies in the U.S. that impacted their arrival. However, the black Ugandan’s experience of racism is likely to be similar to that faced by African Americans, while the Indian Ugandan is more likely to experience the racism faced by Muslims and “Muslim-looking” people. If they return to Uganda, they will encounter a different set of privileges and penalties in a black-majority country that privileges the black migrant. If they move to India, the reverse may occur, with the Indian Ugandan experiencing the privileges of the Indian majority, privileges that would not be extended to the black Ugandan. When the Indian Ugandan is Muslim or lower-caste Hindu, a different set of hierarchies would apply. Taking a global perspective enables us to be more thoughtful about how we design policies and organize coalitions to meet the diverse needs of individuals in different locations and contexts.

## BUILD COALITIONS AND SOLIDARITY

Because of the complexities and interconnections among different forms of inequality, we believe that eradicating oppression ultimately requires struggle against all its forms, and that coalitions among diverse people who can offer perspectives from their particular social locations provide the most promising potential for creating change. Working in collaboration with diverse groups is essential for building collective strength and developing strategies that draw on the energies, insights, and access to power of people who are differently positioned. Working at the intersections across groups and identities is an important coalitional strategy, because it links processes of subordination/domination and prevents compartmentalizing issues (Cho, 2012). When one group fails to acknowledge the ideas and needs of other groups in a coalition, it only serves to strengthen the power relations that each is attempting to challenge. Thus, thinking and working across intersections can prevent working at cross-purposes:

For example, when feminists fail to acknowledge the role that race played in the public response to the rape of the Central Park jogger, feminism contributes to the forces that produce disproportionate punishment for black men who rape white women, and when antiracists represent the case solely in terms of racial domination, they belittle the fact that women particularly, and all people generally, should be outraged by the gender violence the case represented.

(Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1282)

The Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality and the destruction of black lives illustrates the potential of a coalition of people from diverse groups working together as allies. African Americans, and other people of color, including queer people of color who have taken the lead in this movement, have forced U.S. society as a whole to confront the ugly truth of racism. White allies, such as the group Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ, [www.showingupforracialjustice.org](http://www.showingupforracialjustice.org)), work to mobilize support and commitment in white communities to pressure for change and participate in actions where laying white lives on the line is more likely to garner police protection and media attention.

As individuals and groups, our visions can only be partial. Coalitions bring together multiple ways of understanding the world and analyzing the oppressive structures within it. Specific skills of perspective taking, empathic listening, and self-reflection are critical. Furthermore, since all forms of oppression are interactional and co-constitutive with each other, alliances among people from diverse social locations and perspectives may perhaps be the only way to develop interventions muscular enough to challenge systemic oppression (Crenshaw, 2003; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013).

We take the position that everyone has a role to play in dismantling oppression and generating a vision for a more socially just future. Those who are marginalized take the lead in articulating an analysis of power from the vantage point of their particular geographic and social locations and contexts, but all of us need to develop the capacity for reflecting on our locations and recognizing the perspectives of others who are differently positioned.

Reflexivity acknowledges the importance of power at the micro level of the self and our relationships with others, as well as the macro levels of society . . . to recognize multiple truths and a diversity of perspectives, while giving extra space to voices typically excluded.

(Hankivsky, 2014, p. 10)

Holvino (2012) argues for “simultaneity”: making an effort to hold onto our multiple identities so that we can flexibly speak from our complex experiences and resist pressures to oversimplify identity. She urges us to build coalitions and alliances that go beyond goals of individual empowerment to focus on building a social justice movement.

Accountability and solidarity, while aspirational and philosophical ideals, also ask us to be concrete in our goals for working in coalition with others so we can be clear about where our commitments overlap and where they do not. Most coalition work is organized around concrete goals that members of different groups in a coalition agree upon, even as other issues and goals may conflict (McGrath, 2007). Being clear helps coalitions make pragmatic alliances and work together for a common end, even when members do not agree on other goals.

## **FOLLOW THE LEADERSHIP OF OPPRESSED PEOPLE**

Listening to the voices of those at the margins and following their lead is another important practice for social justice. The disability rights movement slogan, “Nothing about us without us” (Charleton, 1998), affirms the principle that no decisions should be made without the full participation of those affected by the decision. Unless people from the subordinated group are central to defining, framing, developing, and leading responses to inequities and social problems, the same power dynamics that we are trying to change will be reproduced, and the solutions are likely to fail. For example, youth need to be involved with issues that affect their lives in schools and the community. Likewise, poor people need to name the issues and help set the agenda for addressing poverty-related concerns. The right to self-determination and autonomy has been a goal of all social justice movements from the start.

The benefits of following the lead of those who have been marginalized can be seen in the movement for gay rights. Until GLBTQ people organized to challenge heterosexism, assumptions of heterosexual privilege went mostly unchallenged and invisible in our society. Gay rights advocates began to expose social norms, rituals, language, and institutional rules and rewards that presume the existence of exclusively heterosexual feelings and relationships. They critiqued language and symbols of love, attraction, family, and sexual and emotional self-development that largely ignored the existence of gay, bisexual, transgender, and other possibilities of human potential. Now trans and queer-identified people question the questioners, raising new critiques of sexuality and gender that were not as visible in earlier movements. Their work showed how the regime of heterosexism operates not only to oppress gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people, but also to constrain and limit heterosexuals to narrowly gender-defined rules of behavior and options for self-expression as well.

## **BE AN ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIBLE ALLY**

Frequently, those from dominant groups, outside the communities they intend to help, come in with, and try to impose, pre-conceived ideas about what a community “needs.” Such a stance reflects and reinforces unequal power relationships and a “savior” mentality. People in dominant groups must respectfully listen to how oppressed people define their own needs, work with them to support getting those needs met, and operate in solidarity with their organizations, efforts, and social movements (Kivel, 2006). It means ongoing action that demonstrates a sustained passion for and willingness to engage in social justice work over the long haul (Edwards, 2006). The decision about who to name as an ally is most credibly done by members of the oppressed group(s) within which one is in coalition

(Edwards, 2006). Thus, allyship also requires humility, a willingness to listen and learn, and a commitment to do the work without expectation of reward or recognition (Goodman, 2011).

Social justice organizing is stronger when both those who benefit and those who are disadvantaged by a particular ism, or cluster of isms, are able to work together in a sustained way to create change. The term “ally” is often used to convey the position of those in the dominant group who work in coalition with oppressed others, as in white people being allies to people of color (Broido & Reason, 2005), but we believe people from all social groups and positions can be allies to each other. A person’s motivation to act in support of social justice can range along a continuum from individual self-interest focused on “me,” to relational self-interest that is mutual or shared “you and me,” to interdependent self-interest focused on a broader “us” (Goodman, 2011). Allyship can be problematic when it stays at the level of individual self-interest and fails to move to a broader self-interest. As blogger Mia McKenzie of Black Girl Dangerous puts it:

Allyship is not supposed to look like this, folks. It’s not supposed to be about you. It’s not supposed to be about your feelings. It’s not supposed to be a way of glorifying yourself at the expense of the folks you claim to be an ally to. It’s not supposed to be a *performance*. It’s supposed to be a way of living your life that *doesn’t* reinforce the same oppressive behaviors you’re claiming to be against.

(No More “Allies,” Sept. 30, 2013, [www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/09/30/no-more-allies/#.Uk3IbYbDYqI.email](http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/2013/09/30/no-more-allies/#.Uk3IbYbDYqI.email))

We can recognize that individuals may be at different stages in awareness and thus be better or lesser prepared to be effective and reliable allies (Edwards, 2006).

This critique leads us to emphasize the importance for all people, particularly those in dominant groups, of being accountable and responsible to the others with whom they work in coalition. Accountability and responsibility connote mutuality in defining goals and actions, and answerability to those with whom we are collaborating. Another word for this is solidarity.

## CONCLUSION

As historical circumstances change and emerging social movements take up issues of oppression in the United States and throughout the world, new definitions and understandings will continue to evolve. Through highlighting the historical and contextual nature of this process, we hope to avoid the danger of reifying systems of oppression as static, or treating individuals as one-dimensional and unchanging. History illustrates both how tenacious and variable systems of oppression are, and how dynamic and creative we must continue to be to rise to the challenges they pose. The concepts and processes we present in this text are continuously evolving. We hope the work presented in this third edition will contribute to an ongoing dialogue about social justice education theory and practice in ways that can have positive impacts on our world.

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# THE PERSON AS LEARNER

When the first edition of this book was published, it was important to argue a strong case for the education of adults since it was still something that we did not take for granted, but that time was also the start of one of the most rapid periods of social change that we have witnessed, one that has, among other things, transformed our understanding of both education and learning. Now we assume that the person is a learner and that education is, if not a right, then an expectation. Indeed, the speed of change has been so rapid that it could be argued that this edition is an entirely different book as compared with the first edition, although there are still some parts that have changed little. There are three parts to this opening chapter: the person in an evolutionary and social context, being and learning, and social being – learning in relationship.

## **The evolutionary and social context of the person**

At the heart of social living, it has been assumed in the West that people are born as individuals and that as they grow and develop, they learn to be social human beings – but this is one of the flaws in Enlightenment thinking (see Hall, 1976; Gray, 1995; Jarvis, 2008). In fact, the person is always part of society/group/family, and so, following Buber (1958), we start with the proposition that in the beginning is relationship and that we have to learn to become individuals and then social individuals after our birth. We also start with the assumption that, as a result of our birth, we are members of humankind – and once we make that assumption, we cannot escape from our evolutionary history. Humanity has evolved, and as part of that evolution we have changed and developed to become the human beings that we now are, and our recognition of this must affect our understanding of our learning. And so we could depict the place of the person (ego) in the wider society as shown in Figure 1.1.

The upward arrows in Figure 1.1 depict the process of time through which we have evolved, and in this sense we can now begin to locate one of the major contemporary debates: to what extent has humankind

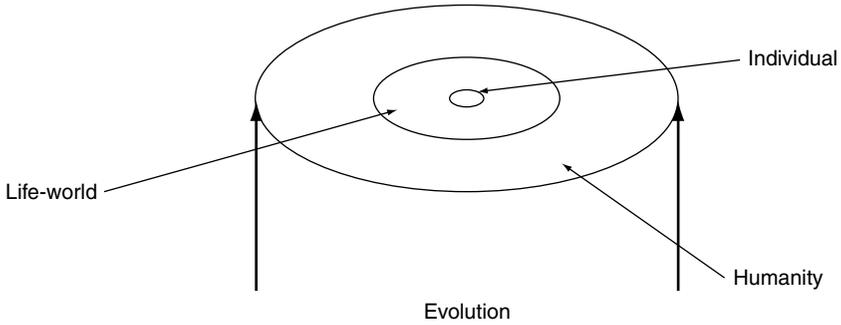


Figure 1.1 The social individual within humankind.

evolved and how does this question affect our understanding of the nature of culture? Do individuals have built into their brains (hard-wired) all the results of evolution so that the part that culture and learning play has a little less significance than we originally thought? Clearly, this is the beginning of a long and drawn-out debate which I do not want to explore here, although not to mention it would do a disservice to our quest in this study (but see Jarvis, 2009a). Throughout this book we will take it as read that we have evolved and that there are aspects of our evolution which affect our learning. Occasionally I shall refer to our having been hard-wired, but I do find Dawkins's (1976) idea of memes unconvincing – although there is a place for a biology of learning (see Jarvis and Parker, 2005). However, I shall also mention the idea of plasticity – that the wiring in our brains is not necessarily permanent. Consequently, this book assumes nurture still has a significant role to play, and this is where education and learning find their major role – and that they do so within a social context.

From before our birth we are in relationship, with our mothers in the wombs and, usually, in the earliest months of our lives. Additionally, from our birth we are almost certainly also in relationship with other people – significant others – and so, as infants, we begin our learning process in earnest. It is in the first three years of life that a major part of our learning for life occurs (see Tomasello, 1999; Nelson, 2007; Jarvis, 2009a). Early childhood learning is really beyond the remit of this book, although it is important to understand that we can really only begin to understand adult learning if we have a more complete understanding of the lifelong learning process.

One scholar whose work has recognized this and dominated our thinking on this matter in days gone by is Maslow (1968), who argued that we are born with needs. His well-known 'hierarchy' of needs is usually represented as in Figure 1.2.

This basic diagram has not gone uncontested since its publication. Dennis Child (1977:40ff.), for instance, suggested that the need to know

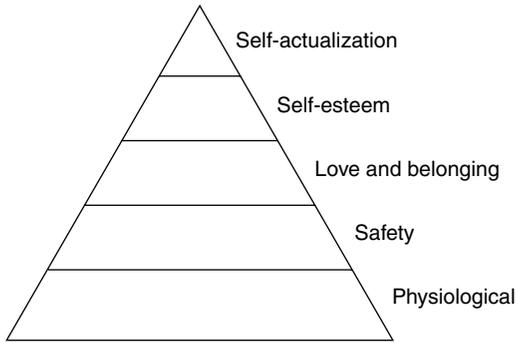


Figure 1.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Source: Maslow (1968).

should come at the top of the hierarchy, but in the third edition of his text he (1981:43) changed his mind and omitted his highest stratum. At the same time, he continued to highlight the significance of knowledge and understanding, and we will return to this shortly. Maslow (1968:60ff.) certainly considered the need to know but claimed that knowledge has a certain ambiguity about it, specifying that in most individuals there is both a need to know and a fear of knowing. However, the fear of knowing may be the result of social experiences rather than being basic to the person, but the need to learn is fundamental even if the consequences of that knowledge may be dangerous, as we will discuss in the next section. Is there a progression through the hierarchy so that movement upwards only occurs when the more preponderant needs are satisfied? Is it even a hierarchy? Argyle (1974:961) suggested that the main supporting evidence for the hierarchy comes from the lower end but that there 'is not such clear evidence about the upper part of the hierarchy'. However, even this is open to question since the upper end can almost overrule the lower end in such activities as extreme sports. Indeed, it could be argued that the desire to achieve overrules our more basic needs, but then it could be argued that as a result of advertising and creating desire in children from a very young age, we actually relegate our needs to a status below that of desire. Houston *et al.* (1979:297) claimed that the order of needs is itself arbitrary and that the exact order is not particularly important – only the fact that we, as human beings, have needs. Since we were born in relationship, one of our fundamental needs is to live in harmony with our society and environment (Maslow's third level), and this raises questions about disharmony and society's attempts to mould us into the social and cultural environment into which we are born.

The needs that Maslow depicts are a mixture of physiological and self-orientated, or needs of the body and needs of the mind, and so it is

important that we look at the nature of the person since underlying theories of learning are theories of the nature of the person.

### **The nature of the person**

The person can be regarded as an embodied self or as a dualism of body and self: that is the difference between I *am* my body and I *have* a body, so that this section contains three parts: the body, the self and the nature of the debate about body and mind.

#### *The body*

There has been considerable recent research about the nature of the body (e.g. Shilling, 1993), much of which lies beyond the focus of this study. Nevertheless, the body is a fundamental element in the person and cannot be omitted in any discussion about learning. At birth, the body is already the subject of evolutionary processes, carrying with it our genetic structures, and so on. Indeed, every experience from which we learn comes through the senses – seeing, hearing, feeling, and so on. However, we know that the fetus actually learns in the womb, which indicates that we can learn pre-consciously before birth. And then, we all know how the body can be programmed by constant repetition of an action – by a pianist, for instance, so that the sequence of music learned can be played almost automatically. The same is true when we drive a car. Consequently, any understanding of learners should begin with our understanding the nature of the person, and so we are going to touch upon a number of debates here, although I recognize that this is not the place to pursue them.

But all of our experiences of the world occur through our senses: we taste, touch, feel, smell, hear and see the external world. It is through our senses that we experience the world and learn about it. As O’Loughlin (2006:5) reminds us, ‘The senses do not merely “make sense” of life, they are our means of furnishing intelligibility and ultimately our capacity to reason, judge and feel as we live our lives.’ She goes on to point out that from the earliest of times, knowing has been associated with seeing – but that our experience of the world is wider than being simply vision-centred. The body, then, is at the heart of our experiences; it is the part of us that is seen and through which we learn and communicate.

However, the body also contains a brain – not a mind; but the brain, as Gardner (1983) points out, processes different bits of information in different parts of it. Greenfield (1999) shows that the brain responds to experiences in a physical manner and she (ibid.:112) defines consciousness, for instance, as ‘an emergent property of non-specialised groups of neurons ... that are continuously variable with respect to an epicentre’. In

addition, our construction and perception of our body influence our self-identity, which itself is a learned phenomenon. Gardner (1999) also illustrates how brain damage affects specific parts of the brain, which in turn relates to different human abilities, and so on. In addition, we are aware that the ageing processes do affect our bodies, and consequently our learning abilities, in different ways. It is clear, therefore, that new developments in learning theory might well come from neuroscience and biology – even from chemistry and pharmacology, if we think about the way that drugs affect our brain functioning.

Adult educators have been the only educationalists, until very recently, who have considered the ageing body within the educational processes. The physical capabilities of the adult do decline after they have reached a peak in late adolescence or in early adulthood. Verner (1964:18) summarized these as including ‘sensory decline; loss in strength; lengthening of reaction time; decline in sexual capacity; changes in skin texture, muscle tone and hair colour; and a gradual decline in overall energy’. He suggested that there are some physiological losses that are very significant in the process of adult learning: loss in visual acuity, loss in audio acuity, loss of energy and the problems of homeostatic adjustment. Since these all affect adult learning, and therefore adult teaching, they need to be taken into consideration. However, these physiological changes may induce adults to underestimate their powers to learn and so reinforce the perception that education is something that occurs early in life. At the same time, learning can be used as a therapy, and I (Jarvis, 2001a) have argued elsewhere for the creation of an occupation of learning therapists who can assist the confused elderly redevelop some of their faculties and continue to learn despite some physical deterioration.

But what if the physical body and even the brain itself begin to deteriorate during adulthood? Until fairly recently it was thought that when human beings achieve biological maturity, they reach a plateau, on which they remain for a few years before beginning to deteriorate. Thorndike (1928), for instance, concluded that the ability to learn ‘rises until about twenty, and then, perhaps after a stationary period of some years, slowly declines’ (quoted in Yeaxlee, 1929:41). However, this argument has now come under considerable criticism, and Allman (1982) summarized some of these critical research findings nearly three decades ago. She recorded how Horn suggested that there are two forms of intelligence: fluid, which stems from the biological base, and crystallized, which is capable of growth through the major part of life since it is influenced by the social processes that the individual experiences. She pointed (*ibid.*:47) to Birran’s ‘discontinuity hypothesis’, which states that ‘the biological base ceases to be the primary influence on behaviour after physical maturation is complete and as long as the biological base does not enter into a hypothesized critical range of pathology, it will not regain supremacy of influence’. The value

of the discontinuity hypothesis lies in the fact that when individuals disengage, they tend to be less engaged in physical activity, and it is the physical activity that stimulates the brain (Blakemore and Frith, 2005:134–137). Moreover, Blakemore and Frith (*ibid.*:8–9) make the point that ‘research is beginning to show that this view of the brain [deterioration with age] is too pessimistic: the adult brain is flexible; it can grow new cells and make new connections, at least in some regions such as the hippocampus’. Other researchers, such as Cusack and Thompson (1998), have shown that the level of intelligence in older people can be altered by the amount of physical activity, since that activity is stimulating the brain. Yet the reverse is also true, as Hammond (Schuller *et al.*, 2004:78) argues when she suggests that ‘positive experiences of learning develop psychosocial qualities that lead to both improved health outcomes and the motivation and opportunity to continue learning’. But the body does not continue to develop for ever! However, the person is more than a body.

### *The self*

The self-concept is central to learning theory. Jarvis (1987, 1992), following George Herbert Mead, argued that the mind and the self are learned phenomena. The brain stores memories of experiences, almost certainly from the time when the baby is still in the womb and certainly from the time of birth, from which emerge the mind and then the self. However, the brain does not just grow from nothing in the womb; it contains within itself the results of our evolutionary process, which, suggests Donald (2001), goes through three stages: mimetic, oral and theoretic. These are very similar to what Nelson (2007:48) discovered in early childhood development – as if we re-enact our own evolutionary processes during the early months of life in interaction with others. Nelson (*ibid.*:105) writes:

The development of inter-subjectivity towards the end of the first year entwines the self and other in a new relationship where the two are recognized by the infant as distinctively separable and interactive. By the middle of the second year a firmer representation of an objective self begins to emerge.

Through the processes of memory, meaning is created, but Nelson (*ibid.*:111) argues, ‘[E]verything that enters the memory is somehow meaningful to the individual. Thus memory *is* meaning.’ Every memory is meaningful or significant to the child who is remembering it. So, that meaning develops as memory develops through the lived experiences of the child, and the body of individual memories (meanings) results in some way in an individuation of consciousness and, as Luckmann (1967:48–49) argues, the individual self becomes detached from its imme-

diate experience in the interaction with other persons. We can see this in children as they first use their own names to refer to themselves, then they use 'me' and finally they employ 'I'; they have become a conscious self.

This, in turn, results in the person integrating the meanings that have evolved in response to the learning questions that have arisen from previous experience. Hence, ultimately, a self is formed that integrates the 'past, present and future in a socially defined, morally relevant biography' (Luckmann, 1967:48–49). There is, therefore, a sense in which the self transcends its biological body, reaching out to the socio-cultural environment and responding to pressures from it in a dialectical relationship in order to create a sense of meaning.

Thus, it may be seen that every new experience is interpreted by the mind and has a personal meaning given to it, which is then integrated into the meanings of past experiences already stored in the brain, which gives us a greater understanding of how we, as individuals, can behave and learn. This is ultimately the system of meaning or a body of knowledge that helps us interpret 'reality'. The system of meaning is significant to the individual and so the question needs to be raised as to whether that individual self is just an aspect of the physical brain or whether there is a separate mind that has emerged out of this complex early learning process.

### *The mind–body relationship*<sup>1</sup>

From the earliest philosophical studies, the relationship between the body and the mind has constituted a problem which, although rarely discussed in the literature on human learning, has influenced the way that some scholars have understood learning. Even so, an existentialist position does not necessarily accept the crude mind–body dualism, whereas other scholars have maintained its validity. There is, indeed, no agreement between scholars about the nature of this relationship, and Maslin (2001) suggests five main theories:

- 1 dualism;
- 2 mind–brain identity;
- 3 logical or analytical behaviourism;
- 4 functionalism;
- 5 non-reductive monism.

### *Dualism*

The dualist position is that the human being is a combination of two distinct entities: a physical body and a mind/soul. Clearly, when Descartes claimed that *I think, therefore I am*, he was reflecting the dualism of his age – but it may actually be better to claim that 'I am, therefore I think'. But

rejecting Descartes' well-known dictum does not automatically rule out the possibility of some form of existence beyond life itself. This discussion, however, is beyond the remit of this study. Suffice it to say that there are a number of major problems with dualism:

- There is the fact of the existence of the brain itself – if there is a mind that has all the experiences, and so on, why do human beings have such complex neurological mechanisms that we call brains?
- When we act, our body and our mind perform in unison rather than each act being two distinct elements – the thought and the action. Ryle (1963 [1949]), for instance, forcefully criticized the idea that there are two distinct phenomena in every action.
- The idea that there is a 'little person' in the human being driving our actions now seems far-fetched; it is known as the homunculus fallacy.

We know that learning is more than just a mental act; it involves the whole person.

*Mind–brain identity*

Mind–brain identity is a monist theory which claims that only physical substances exist and that human beings are just part of the material world; therefore, mental states are identical with physical ones. The strengths of this position are clear:

- We are not faced with a dualistic position.
- We can understand why changes in the physical have mental effects.

Nevertheless, there are a number of problems with this approach:

- Being able to locate in the brain where a thought is occurring does not explain the meaning we give to that thought, or any intentions or plans that we might have as a result of it, or even rationality itself. Indeed, thoughts are different in type from neurological activity, and Bruner (1990:34) rightly, in my view, suggests that it is culture rather than biology that shapes human life, although I would not claim that biology has no influence at all.
- Mental states need not be identical with brain states. For example, an emotion or a pain (qualia) cannot be understood precisely from a brain scan.
- Intention cannot be understood from a brain scan.

There are also other objections to identity theory but I do not feel it necessary to pursue these further here. Nevertheless, while we can begin to

understand how the brain functions, we can see that it does not overcome all the problems of how the mind operates, nor of the relationship between the two, and so it does not answer all the problems we have about understanding human learning.

### *Behaviourism*

Behaviourism is a monistic theory within which a great deal of theory and policy about learning has been couched ever since the time of Pavlov. Maslin (2001:106) summarizes the behaviourist position thus: '[B]ehaviourism maintains that statements about the mind and mental states turn out, after analysis, to be statements that describe a person's actual and potential public behaviour.' Indeed, we frequently face the valid claim that 'I am, therefore, I act' – and this can, in some circumstances, be regarded as a behaviourist statement. Behaviourism does explain some of the outcomes of the learning process which can be measured, so that in an age where quantification is important, it is not surprising that behaviourism retains its attractions. Nevertheless, there are major problems with it theoretically:

- Behaviour is not the sole driving force of human being; there are others, such as meaning, or even thought itself.
- None of the objections to the mind–brain identity theory is overcome by postulating that everything can be reduced to behaviour.
- Behaviourism denies the common-sense assumption that I can actually think my own private thoughts and do not have to reveal them to anybody. To put it crudely, a good poker player could hardly be a convincing behaviourist.

While behaviourism can point to the outcomes of the learning processes, it is incapable of explaining the processes themselves.

### *Functionalism*

Functionalism is another monistic approach which regards the mind as a function of the brain. It postulates that if we can understand all the inputs and outputs and also the state of the operating mechanism, we account for our understanding of mental states. In other words, the brain is seen as a complex computer – a picture that has become rather common in recent years. This theory has gained a great deal of currency recently because the analogy with the computer appears credible, especially now that we can also talk of artificial intelligence. But we might ask, is the human being really no more than a sophisticated computer – especially one that has been programmed to 'think'? If we were to accept this, then

learning could be reduced to a computer program. Indeed, Searle (1992) makes the point that thoughts have meaning and intentionality – something that a computer program performing its functions cannot have. Not only this, but computers are thoroughly rational machines that cannot deviate from their programmed logic, whereas human beings are not totally rational and they can and often do deviate from their original intentions! It was a computer specialist who invented the term ‘fuzzy logic’ to describe the way that we behave in contrast to the way computers function. In my own research into superstition many years ago, I discovered that all my respondents were in some way or another superstitious, or less than rational in their behaviour (Jarvis, 1980). Freudian psychology also points us beyond the bounds of rationality. Lowe (1992:99) argues that one of the problems with ‘the computational approach is that it seeks to throw light on human visual cognition *without* invoking general intelligence’ (*italics* in original). Maslin also raises a number of other objections, and despite the popularity of the analogy, this theory is not at all convincing. Nevertheless, it is one that has assumed a certain prominence as we have learned more about neuroscience. But if we reject it, then information processing theories of learning must automatically be seen as weak. Hence there are a number of weaknesses in this position – the major ones being that:

- Human beings are not computers – they are more than computers.
- Human beings are less rational than computers and have emotions.

#### *Non-reductive monism*

Non-reductive monism is also dualistic in terms of properties but not substances. Maslin (2001:163) describes it thus:

It is non-reductive because it does not insist that mental properties are nothing over and above physical properties. On the contrary, it is willing to allow that mental properties are different in kind from physical properties, and not ontologically reducible to them. It is clusters and series of these mental properties which constitute our psychological lives ... property dualism dispenses with the dualism of substances and physical events, hence it is a form of monism. But these physical substances and events possess two very different kinds of property, namely physical properties and, in addition, non-physical, mental properties.

The relationship between the physical and mental properties might be described in terms of supervenience, which is ‘the idea that one set of facts can fully determine another set’ (Chalmers, 1996:32). There are, accord-

ing to Maslin, three elements in discussions about the relationship of mind and brain:

- 1 Physical phenomena cannot always be reduced to mental and vice versa – there is an irreducibility.
- 2 The physical and the mental can vary simultaneously – co-variation.
- 3 The physical and the mental are not always dependent on each other.

Chalmers also makes the crucial distinction between logical and natural supervenience. A problem, then, with mental properties is that they cannot be located like physical substances – in this sense they are not a physical site and neither are they the processes that can be seen in brain scans. Consequently, Chalmers argues that consciousness per se cannot be logically reduced to a physical condition – that is, it is not logically supervenient upon the material. He has therefore ruled out the most common approach, as have others before him (see Bergson, 2004 [1912]), but he does not deny some form of dualism.

Having examined five different ways of looking at the mind–body relationship, we can find no simple theory that allows us to explain it. Exclusive claims should not logically be made for any single theory, although they are made quite widely in contemporary society. The monist and integrated theories all appear weak and this is unfortunate, since these are the ones most widely cited in contemporary society as the basis for learning. However, once we accept that learning is a matter both of the senses and of cognition, we have to accept some form of dualism, although the basic form discussed first seems to be as weak as the monist and integrationist theories in explaining the mind–body phenomenon and it may best be explained as a form of non-reductive monism. None of the theories can claim universal allegiance and in each there are problems that appear insurmountable. Nevertheless, I feel that non-reductionist monism is a relatively strong position. The human being is both physical and mental, but the mind–body relationship remains an unanswered problem.

### **Being and learning**

Think of the beat of music, the beat of a drum – it is a universally appreciated sound, but why is it universal? Perhaps because while we were in the womb, we were exposed to the sound of the beat of our mother's heart; we learned it pre-consciously. How often do we hear of people who like a taste that their mothers liked during pregnancy? Perhaps it is because we learned to appreciate a taste while we were in the womb. We know, for instance, that the fetus's senses function as they develop in the womb, so that pre-conscious and pre-cognitive learning occur weeks before birth. Tremlin (2006:51) writes:

As early as the first trimester of a pregnancy, the fetus already possesses centers of balance and motion that respond to the mother's own movements. At the halfway point of gestation a fetus can hear. Sight remains severely muted; unlike the sense of hearing, there are few external stimuli in the uterus. But by the seventh month the eyelids are open and the fetus can see by diffused light coming through the abdominal wall. Taste, too, is working as the fetus takes in the amniotic fluid. In addition to these basic functions of sense and motor control, there is also clear evidence that the brain is busy *learning* in the womb. One example utilizes the fetus' well-developed sense of hearing. Clever experiments that chart the rhythm sucks on a rubber nipple reveal preferences for a mother's voice and other patterns of sound heard in the womb. [*italics in original*]

We can see that from the outset, there is a sense in which learning is a biological phenomenon – but in the first instance it is pre-conscious. From before our birth we learn – not in the way that we tend to think about learning, but we still learn, and that learning continues after birth throughout our lives. This is not the place to discuss early childhood learning, but there is considerable research to show the extent of this (see Tomasello, 1995; Nelson, 2007). Moreover, we learn many of our emotions in these early months (Gerhardt, 2004) and we also learn to do things, as Tomasello and Nelson show. Knowledge, emotions and doing are all learned very early in our lives and they affect our growth and development throughout the whole of our lives. In a sense, we become aware of ourselves from very early on even though we may be incapable of conceptualizing it. This is part of what is now being called the theory of mind, because we also become aware of others as agents affecting our lives. We learn from our experiences with our mothers and with our other immediate families – for, as Buber (1958:22) claimed, ‘in the beginning is relationship’.

The need to learn is more basic than the need to know; it is fundamental to our humanity, as Dewey pointed out:

[L]ife means growth, a living creature lives as truly and positively at one stage as another, with the same intrinsic fullness and the same absolute claims. Hence education means the enterprise of supplying the conditions which insure growth, or adequacy of life, irrespective of age.

(1916:51)

From the time of our birth we have to learn to function within our society or life-world. Our ability to learn develops with our development as human

beings: it is through our living that we learn and through our learning that we live. We are not always conscious of our learning even though we are conscious beings; learning occurs pre-consciously, as we have already seen, and it also occurs incidentally. I once asked a group of nurse tutors to write down a definition of learning, and when they had done that, I told them to put aside their definition and I then asked them whether, when they are on a ward, they could recognize an illness by the odour that comes from an ill patient. They all said that they could, and when I asked them how they had acquired that knowledge, they said that they had learned it. But when I asked how many of them had included smell in their definitions of learning, it turned out that none had. Learning had occurred incidentally and they were unaware of the learning but they were aware of the outcome of their learning – their tacit knowledge. But this is no doubt true of all of us with sounds and smells and tastes, and so on. Learning almost becomes synonymous with consciousness, but we are not always consciously aware of the learning that takes place in our lives.

We might then ask whether there are times in our lives when we do not learn, and the answer might be that the only time when this might be the case is when people are in a vegetative state. There is some evidence that we do learn when we are asleep although these are still quite early days in research into sleep and learning. We learn because we are living human beings and much of our learning occurs through our conscious experiences, but we are forced to acknowledge that learning and consciousness are not synonymous.

We can see from this brief discussion that learning is more than a psychological phenomenon – it is a human, multidisciplinary phenomenon about which we can research and reflect, and so it also becomes a matter of philosophical debate. Later we will discuss the directions that learning theory and research are taking at this present time.

### **Learning social being: socialization**

From our earliest days we learn to imitate; Tomasello (1999:52) regards children as ‘imitation machines’. We need to be in relationship in order to learn how to do things that are fundamental to our social living. Indeed, copying is at the heart of our social learning and it is no bad thing! Think about the first time we visit a club or an organization, or even the first time we sit down at a smart meal or reception. We nearly always watch how others behave and try to copy their behaviour so that we can fit in. By imitation we begin to learn the subculture of the group, organization, etc. in which we find ourselves. Imitation is quite fundamental to our social living and basic to our learning processes, and there is a sense in which we are agents in our own socialization processes from the earliest days of our lives. In a classroom setting, one of the first jobs of teachers is to make

explicit some of the patterns of behaviour that they want learners to adopt. Once the learners know what these are, they can relax a little and not have to look over their shoulders all the time to see what their fellow learners are doing.

Traditionally, every society has produced its own culture, which is carried by human beings and transmitted both through social interaction and through the educational system. Culture, in this context, refers to the sum totality of knowledge, values, beliefs, etc. of a social group. It is in the process of socialization that individuals learn their local culture. There is a sense in which some facets of education may be regarded as part of the process of socialization, although the former is usually viewed as a more formal process than the latter. Consequently, it is possible to understand precisely how Lawton (1973:21) could regard the curriculum as 'a selection from culture'. Obviously, the process of acquiring the local culture is very significant during childhood, both through socialization and education. However, sociologists regard socialization as a lifetime process having at least two aspects: primary socialization is 'the first socialization an individual undergoes ... through which he [*sic*] becomes a member of society; secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:150).

It is not difficult, however, to recognize that in a society where the rate of social change is very slow, such as pre-industrial Europe or a primitive tribe, it would be feasible for individuals to learn most of the cultural knowledge, norms and values necessary for them to assume their place in that society during childhood. In such societies it was only the elite, for example Plato's philosopher-kings, the priesthood, the upper classes, who continued to study esoteric knowledge during adulthood, while the remainder of the populace were regarded as having completed their education, except for the education necessary for them to assume more mature roles in society as they grew up and aged. Consequently, it is not hard to understand why a front-end model of education emerged, although it is equally obvious that such a model has little relevance to a society whose culture is changing rapidly.

From the onset of the Industrial Revolution, with the introduction of more sophisticated technology, the rate of social change increased. Indeed, change is endemic to technological societies. This means that primary socialization is insufficient. Secondary socialization becomes more significant and it is certainly more relevant for us as educators of adults. As we grow and develop, so we join other groups having their own subcultures, such as schools, leisure clubs and work, and in each of these we go through a process of secondary socialization. We learn to be a student, a club member and a worker; in other words, we learn specific behaviour associated with our position; new knowledge, new ideas, new values and

new practices all have to be confronted. However, as Turner (1962) showed, the process of secondary socialization is not merely a process of imitating the behaviour of other role players (behaviourist learning); we are also agents in this learning process. He (ibid.:38) showed that 'role behavior in formal organizations becomes a working compromise between the formalized role prescriptions and the more flexible operation of the role-taking process'. It is interactive rather than merely imitative and therefore we learn in more complex ways. This becomes a lifetime process and is part of the informal learning of lifelong learning. In this sense, secondary socialization continues throughout life since we frequently change jobs, change organizations to which we belong, change our status and lifestyle, and so on; it is part of our lifelong learning.

In Figure 1.3 the arc represents the all-encompassing culture into which we are born, socialized or live. The arrows represent interaction, with the direction denoting something of the process of dominance in the interaction. The inward arrows demonstrate that we internalize some of our external culture, and this comes as we learn in a number of ways ranging from personal interaction to more formal schooling to informal relationships – and we are exposed to many processes simultaneously. The outward arrows show that from very early on, we also externalize some of the things that we have learned, and so we are also change agents from the outset. This also happens in social interaction.

In primitive society it was possible to describe this arc as a single culture, but now this all-encompassing culture is what might also be described as multicultural. However, the issues are even bigger than this, as the generation gap signifies – as we age, we do not all keep up with all the cultural changes experienced by the young. Indeed, some of their primary socialization processes are learning experiences that their grandparents have never had! Now the young can teach the old about the new as well as the old teach the young about other aspects of culture; inter-generational learning is both a way of family life and a necessity in contemporary

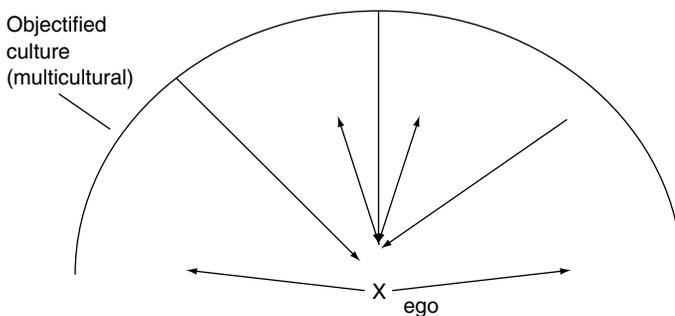


Figure 1.3 The socialization process.

society. Culture is really a problematic concept and merely describing it as all-encompassing does not obviate the problem, since it is not even the same phenomenon for all people in the same area. For instance, young people in the United Kingdom still grow up with their ethnic cultures even though they also acquire a sense of 'Britishness'; they may also have a sense of being a Muslim, say. The same is true for the United States and for every other country. We all have our own cultures and our own life-worlds, and it is perhaps better now to recognize that we all have our own life-worlds and they all reflect our individuality. Consequently, in this global society, individuals are exposed to many more local cultures; it is as if each was a subculture of a more global culture, and so it is easier to talk about our life-worlds. O'Neill (2003) has studied the way in which young males acquire their identities in a residential school and he has shown quite clearly that their self-identity is often not acquired through the culture of the school, but rather their social identity is formed by their wider social and family environment, although both combine to form their life-worlds. Consequently, we can see the process whereby people acquire multiple identities.

The fact that we are born into different cultural groups is indicative of the way in which there are pressures on all of us to conform to the groups of which we are members. Membership really implies conformity to the rules and regulations of the group, and we can see that education and social learning both exercise conformist pressures upon the group's membership – and especially during primary and secondary socialization processes. Those who exercise power in the group do have the ability to influence or control the content of what is transmitted; this is in the nature of power. It is not surprising, therefore, that throughout this book we will meet some more critical and radical perspectives.

Education has many purposes and functions (see Schuller *et al.*, 2004 on the hidden benefits of learning), but clearly it is an important agency in assisting individuals to respond to the rapid social change. Because it is so rapid, it is necessary for individuals to keep learning, so that they should not become alienated from the culture that engulfs them, but we can also understand that this is a way in which individualization emerges. The more technologically based the society, the easier it is for individuals to become alienated unless they keep on learning, but as they learn they become more differentiated individuals, and we note, for example, that more people are choosing to live alone as they develop their own individuality. All are affected by the changes in technology, as evidenced by the computer, the mobile phone, the iPod, and so on. Hence, individuals need to learn new knowledge to prevent the onset of alienation or anomie; lifelong learning – even lifelong education – helps them adjust to the cultural changes prevalent in their society, but, paradoxically, the more they learn, the greater the likelihood that they become individualized and per-

haps alienated. (Given the fact that all people are born with a unique genetic inheritance, individualization is exacerbated by lifelong learning.) It is thus clear that many individuals have lost the security of a single dominant local subculture, which helped provide them both with a sense of membership of a community and with an identity. For some people this new situation is at the heart of identity crises, which Giddens (1991) refers to as 'existential anxiety'. He also notes how personal counselling has mushroomed as a result of these changes.

There is also resistance to the process of cultures merging and standardizing, and some local cultures are seeking to retain something of their difference in the face of modern communications systems. Being exposed to other local cultures is now a lifetime process – a process of lifelong learning. Similarly, education may be regarded as a lifelong process, and further reference will be made to the concepts of learning and education and lifelong learning and life-wide learning later in this book.

Individuals do not just receive passively all of these changes; rather, they process and change them as part of the process of cultural change. Hence, human beings not only are born into a changing culture, but are part of the process. Their adaptation to this ever-changing society is a learning process, and all forms of education assist people in processing and adapting to these changes throughout the whole of their lives. In this sense human beings are lifelong learners. The provision of education for people of all ages is essential because it helps to facilitate this quest to understand our world, which is at the heart of humanity itself.

### Conclusion

Learning, therefore, is an existential process – it is almost coterminous with life itself: it begins in the womb and probably finishes as we approach death. Learning begins with sense experience and is both individual and social, and we begin our social learning through imitation. At the same time, we acknowledge that the nature–nurture debate is an important one and that we have both an evolutionary and a social history. Conformity is, therefore, one of the natural outcomes of learning, although we recognize from the outset the need to resist it sometimes, and so it is necessary to see the significance of critical learning to resist the power inherent in group structures to force us to conform. But we also recognize that the society in which we live is changing rapidly, and so the next chapter examines that rapidly changing context within which we learn.

### Note

- 1 This section summarizes the discussion in Jarvis (2006).

# Research Approaches in Applied Settings

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## Important Terms

*applied research, independent variables, dependent variables, internal validity, experimental control, functional relation, evidence-based practice, reliability, threats to internal validity, nomothetic, baseline logic, ideographic, validity, history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, procedural infidelity, attrition, attrition bias, sampling bias, data instability, cyclical variability, multitreatment interference, regression to the mean, adaptation, Hawthorne effect*

### ***Applied Research***

***Integrating Science into Educational and Clinical Practice***

***Evidence-Based Practice***

***Dissemination of Evidence-Based Practice in Education***

***Characterizing Designs Based on Attributions of Causality***

*Experimental*

*Quasi-Experimental*

*Correlational Designs*

***Characterizing Designs Based on Research Approach***

*Group Research Approach*

*Qualitative Research Approaches*

*Single Case Research Approach*

***Applied Research, Practice, and Single Case Design***

*Similarities Between Research and Practice*

*Some Differences Between Research and Practice*

***Threats to Internal Validity***

*History*

*Maturation*

*Testing*

*Instrumentation*

*Procedural Infidelity*  
*Selection Bias*  
*Data Instability*  
*Cyclical Variability*  
*Regression to the Mean*  
*Multitreatment Interference*  
*Adaptation*  
*Hawthorne Effect*  
**Summary**

The goal of science is to advance knowledge. The process by which we advance knowledge is generally via research—the systematic investigation and manipulation of variables to identify associations and understand processes that occur in typical (non-research) contexts. Of course, research processes are limited; for example, outcomes of research studies have been reported to be non-replicable (Open Science Collaboration, 2015); to be dependent on counterfactual conditions (Lemons, Fuchs, Gilbert, & Fuchs, 2014); to fail to generalize to outside of research contexts, in applied or authentic settings (Spriggs, Gast, & Knight, 2016); and to be largely inapplicable to “real” problems faced by practitioners (Snow, 2014). How then does research contribute to the advancement of knowledge, and does it do so in a useful manner? In this chapter, we introduce the concepts of applied research and evidence-based practice, describe different levels of evidence based on research type, and explain three primary research approaches and their corresponding rationales and assumptions. We conclude the chapter by describing similarities and differences between research and practice.

## Applied Research

If research is a set of processes by which we produce information about associations and processes of interest, what then is applied research? Basic research is concerned with the advancement of knowledge that may or may not have immediate and specific application to practical concerns. **Applied research** involves systematic investigation related to the pursuit of knowledge in practical realms or to solve real-world problems. For example, basic research might inform science related to the association of running and behavioral abnormalities in a mouse model of Down syndrome (Kida, Rabe, Walus, Albertini, & Golabek, 2013). *Applied* research might seek to identify interventions that result in improved physical activity for young children with Down syndrome (Adamo et al., 2015). Researchers and practitioners often seek to engage in applied research to not only add to the knowledge base for a specific topic, but also to improve outcomes of specific participants (researchers) or clients (practitioners). We refer to practitioners who engage in research as scientist-practitioners (a label coined by Barlow, Hayes & Nelson in 1984 to describe interventionists who make data-based decisions an integral part of their practice). In applied research, we are most interested in determining the relation between **independent variables**—the variables manipulated by researchers (i.e., interventions) and **dependent variables**—the variables we expect to change given the manipulation (i.e., target behaviors), to solve problems of clinical and educational practice.

## **Integrating Science Into Educational and Clinical Practice**

Is it possible to incorporate scientific methodology into the daily routine of practitioners in schools, clinics, and the community? It is, but it's not an easy task. Conducting applied research in authentic settings has the potential to advance science, to document changes in behavior, and to establish responsibility for the change. Before moving on to the research task itself, we would like to elaborate on the importance of these goals.

### **Advancement of Science**

Through the work of Skinner and Bijou, a system of behavior analysis has been developed that includes a philosophy of behavior development, a general theory, methods for translating theory into practice, and a specific research methodology. This system was new in the scope of human evolution and the advancement of science. It has gained acceptance and verification through the successful application of concepts and principles. One general “test” of the system has been the demonstration of effectiveness in a variety of settings, in basic and applied applications. Applied behavioral analysis has been adopted and made an integral part of special and general education, speech language therapy, clinical and school psychology, neuropsychology, recreation therapy, adaptive physical education, and many other disciplines. Applied research, focused on specific problems of learning and reinforcement in schools, clinics, and communities, supports the advancement of science and knowledge in a given field while also making a direct impact on clients and consumers.

Not all practitioners may choose to be applied researchers, especially given the complexities of conducting applied research in authentic settings; however, most practitioners can contribute to the advancement of science and their discipline, by collaborating with those who do. Likewise, researchers and scientists can contribute to practice and enhance the applicability of their research by collaborating with practitioners. Eiserman and Behl (1992) addressed researcher-practitioner collaboration in their article describing how special educators could influence current best practice by opening their classrooms to researchers for the purpose of systematic research efforts. They pointed out the potential benefits of such collaborations, not the least of which was teachers becoming interested in conducting their own research and bridging the gap between research and practice (p. 12). More recently, Snow (2014) suggested educational research should include more collaboration with practitioners, to address applied problems. This position is not new, and that single case designs (SCDs) are particularly well suited to answer these applied problems has been acknowledged for decades (Barlow et al., 1984; Borg, 1981; Odom, 1988; Tawney & Gast, 1984). Encouragement of practitioner involvement in applied research efforts, as defined by Baer, Wolf, and Risley (1968, 1987), acknowledges their potential contribution by addressing “real” problems, which need to be addressed under “real” conditions, with available resources. It cannot be overstated that practitioners are often confronted with issues or problems overlooked by researchers. Thus, if practitioners collaborate with researchers, or acquire the skills to conduct their own research, they can generate answers to questions that will advance science for issues that are relevant to practice.

### **Advancement of Practice**

Applied researchers in education, psychology, speech pathology, occupational therapy, and related fields have conducted experiments in controlled environments (lab schools, research institutes, private clinics, medical centers) by highly educated research professionals who have access to resources beyond those typically available. Research generated in such centers is

important to advancing our understanding of human behavior and how to positively effect change, however, the extent to which effective interventions generalize to settings outside these “resource rich” and controlled environments needs to be shown. Thus, there are many research possibilities that the teacher/therapist-researcher can conduct in their classroom or community-based clinic that will add to our understanding on how to better serve those under their care.

Baer et al. (1987) addressed the need for applied researchers to determine the context with which interventions succeed and fail. When research is conducted under highly controlled conditions, as is often the case in studies using SCDs, the ability of those working in “typical” or “authentic” community settings to replicate conditions may be difficult, if not impossible. That is, interventions found to be effective in resource rich controlled settings may not be able to be carried out at the same level of fidelity, thus affecting the outcome of the intervention. It is important for applied researchers to identify the versatility and latitude of a particular intervention prior to advocating its use. In fact, through “failures to replicate” we seek out answers to “why?,” and with perseverance, identify modifications to the original intervention that result in the desired behavior change. Such discoveries are important to the advancement of practice in that our goal is for changes in behavior to generalize and maintain in natural environments. Through collaboration with applied researchers, the contribution made by teachers and therapists will increase the probability that instructional strategies and interventions under study will improve practice as delivered by other teachers and therapists working in community schools and clinics. Moreover, the cross-discipline emphasis on implementation science (Cook & Odom, 2013; Forman et al., 2013) has clearly established that the likely implementation of an intervention, given typical contexts and supports, is a critical component of studying evidence-based practices. The applied researcher who demonstrates positive changes in participants’ academic, adaptive, or social behavior, produces evidence of a benefit of the instructional process.

### Empirical Verification of Behavior Change

Successful teachers and therapists must demonstrate that they can bring about positive behavior change in their students or clients. Practitioners should expect that increasingly informed parents and clients will ask for data on behavior change for meaningful outcomes, and then will ask for some verification that your efforts were responsible for that change. Advances in technology have made collecting, organizing, presenting, and sharing data increasingly accessible. Practitioners who use practices and collect data on client or student behavior can show behavior change that occurs over time; however, sometimes behavior change may be the result of other factors (e.g., additional services of which the practitioner was unaware). The utilization of experimental research designs, such as SCDs, allows the practitioner to go one step further—to show a causal link between his or her practices and the child’s behavior change. A study with adequate mechanisms for ensuring that outcomes are related to your intervention procedures rather than extraneous factors is said to have adequate **internal validity**. Studies with high levels of internal validity allow researchers to demonstrate **experimental control**—to show that the experimental procedures (intervention) and *only* the experimental procedures are responsible for behavior change. A researcher does this by carefully eliminating other potential explanations for behavior change; this concept will be discussed at length in later chapters. When experimental control is demonstrated, we have verified that there is a **functional relation** between the independent and dependent variables—that is, that the change in the dependent variable (behavior) is causally (functionally) related to the implementation of the independent variable.

## Evidence-Based Practice

At no time in history has accountability in education, psychology, behavior sciences, and related fields been more important. Recent guidelines in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandate the use of *evidence-based practice* (alternately, “scientific, research-based intervention”; IDEIA; or “empirically supported practice”; Ayres, Lowrey, Douglas, & Sievers, 2011). Similarly, the American Psychological Association and the Behavior Analysis Certification Board have standards requiring the use of evidence-based interventions. **Evidence-based practice** refers to intervention procedures that have been scientifically verified as being effective for changing a specific behavior of interest, under given conditions, and for particular participants. Though the term is relatively new, the idea that research should guide practice is not, particularly in the field of applied behavior analysis. Baer et al. (1968) defined applied behavior analysis and emphasized the importance of quantitative research-based decisions for guiding practice. Their emphasis on a low-inference decision model, based on repeated measurement of behavior within the context of an SCD, set a standard for practitioners determining intervention effectiveness 50 years ago. At the time of their article, published in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, there was no shortage of critics who questioned the viability and desirability of an empirical scientific approach for studying and understanding human behavior, a response in part due to the controversial position articulated by B.F. Skinner in his classic book, *Science and Human Behavior* (1953). Having passed the test of time, as evidenced by the numerous SCD studies that have influenced practice across many disciplines, it has been shown that a behavioral approach can and does provide a scientific framework for understanding and modifying behavior in positive ways. Few would question that Baer et al. (1968) established evidence-based practice as a core value for applied behavior analysts, a value that has yielded best and promising practices across numerous disciplines within the behavioral sciences. Current zeitgeist and standards continue this long-standing tradition for researchers and practitioners in a variety of fields.

What constitutes a “practice”? Horner et al. (2005) defined *practice* as it relates to education as “a curriculum, behavioral intervention, systems change, or educational approach designed to be used by families, educators, or students with the express expectation that implementation will result in measurable educational, social, behavioral, or physical benefit” (p. 175). This definition applies to specific interventions and broader approaches used by professionals who provide educational and clinical services. It should not go unnoticed that the definition includes mention of a “measurable” benefit to those who are the focus of the practice.

What constitutes *evidence* that supports implementation of a particular practice? Must evidence be quantitative? Is clinical or professional judgment a consideration? Answers to these questions are important since different research methods and designs yield different types of data. *The research question should determine the research method (group, single case, or qualitative) and design chosen.* In behavioral sciences, “trustworthiness” or credibility of research findings is based on the rigor of the scientific method employed and the extent to which the research design controls for alternative explanations. The scientific method requires investigator objectivity, reliability of measurement, and independent replication of findings (see Chapters 4–6). As a scientist you will be expected to see things as they are, not as you wish them to be; this will necessitate ensuring **reliability** (i.e., consistency) by defining the target behavior (or event) clearly and concisely so that two independent observers consistently agree on scoring what they observe. Finally, you will need to be patient to see if your research findings stand up to the scrutiny of other researchers when they attempt to replicate your results. This latter criterion

is critical, as *replication is at the heart of the scientific method*, without which you cannot have confidence in study findings.

Behavioral scientists have numerous scientific research designs from which to choose in their quest for answers to research hypotheses and questions. There is general agreement among researchers that different research questions or objectives require different research approaches—no one research method or design is appropriate for answering all research questions. However, for behavioral scientists, certain research methods and designs are deemed superior to others when generalizing findings to individuals or groups. This judgment is based on the degree to which data collection procedures, data analyses, and data reporting are viewed as objective, reliable and valid, and the extent to which the study can be replicated while yielding similar findings. Studies that are based on investigator perceptions and descriptions, that fail to objectively define and evaluate the reliability of investigator observations, and that lack detailed descriptions of conditions under which data are collected (thus making replication difficult if not impossible), are judged as lacking scientific rigor and “trustworthiness” of findings. Judging the rigor of the scientific method of a study that supports a particular practice is at the heart of determining whether a practice is evidence-based.

To that end—determining the rigor of the science supporting a particular policy, procedure, or practice—most professional organizations have recommendations and guidelines on their websites for evaluating research study adequacy (e.g., American Psychological Association, [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org); American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org); Association for Behavior Analysis International, [www.abainternational.org](http://www.abainternational.org); Council for Exceptional Children, [www.cec.org](http://www.cec.org); etc.). Odom et al. (2005) point out that interest in and guidelines for the evaluation of research supporting clinical and educational practices has been addressed by medical, social science, and educational professional organizations for many years. As a result of ESSA and its predecessor, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, families are increasingly holding professionals accountable for their choice of practices. Parents and other stakeholders expect to see positive changes in behavior, an expectation that is both reasonable and consistent with ethical standards of educational and clinical professional organizations. Take for example an excerpt from a Policy Statement on “The Right to an Effective Behavioral Treatment” passed by the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) membership in 1989, which reads:

An individual is entitled to effective and scientifically validated treatment; in turn, the behavior analyst has an obligation to *use only those procedures demonstrated by research to be effective*. Decisions on the use of potentially restrictive treatment are based on consideration of its absolute and relative level of restrictiveness, the amount of time required to produce a clinically significant outcome, and the consequences that would result from delayed intervention [italics added]

(Van Houton et al., 1989, para. 8).

Applied behavior analysts have historically held themselves accountable for designing and employing curricula, interventions, systems for change, and educational/therapeutic approaches that bring about positive behavior change. As will be discussed throughout this book, SCDs will permit researchers and scientist-practitioners to repeatedly evaluate practices, suggesting continued use when data support their effectiveness; informing modifications when progress is slow or plateaus; and suggesting replacement when behavior change does not occur. These research decisions can be made while retaining the experimental integrity of a study if you are familiar with measurement and design guidelines presented in later chapters. To determine whether a given intervention is an evidence-based practice, multiple agencies have suggested guidelines, including the Institute of Education Sciences and Council for Exceptional Children; we will discuss those further in Chapter 13.

## Dissemination of Evidence-Based Practices in Education

It is important that practices supported by research be disseminated to practitioners. To that end, the Education Science Reform Act of 2002 was established within the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES; [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies)); its mission, to “provide rigorous evidence on which to ground education practice and policy” (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d., para. 1) by government funded research projects. IES's oversight responsibilities were a direct response to concerns regarding the quality of educational research and the requirement put forth in NCLB that teachers use scientifically proven practices (Odom et al., 2005). To disseminate its findings, IES established the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC; <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>) to inform stakeholders (teachers, researchers, community members, policymakers) by providing a source of information regarding scientific evidence of effectiveness for education practices that could be used to encourage making informed and data-based decisions and in turn improve child outcomes.

Prior to 2006 the WWC only “certified” and disseminated practices that were shown to be effective by a randomized experimental group design or random clinical trial. However, in September 2006, in one of its technical working papers, it revised its guidelines to include three additional research designs (provided they met certain basic standards regarding rigor): quasi-experimental, regression discontinuity, and SCDs. This policy revision showed an understanding by IES and WWC that applied research studies, particularly studies conducted with low-incidence populations and conducted in clinical and classroom settings, may require research designs other than those that require random assignment of participants to experimental conditions. Standards for evaluating SCDs were published in 2010, and include systematic manipulation of an independent variable (intervention) with evidence of adequate implementation, and reliable and repeated measurement of a dependent variable (e.g., participant behavior) in multiple conditions. These recommendations, and additional recommendations related to the analysis of data from single and multiple studies, are discussed in detail in Chapters 13 and 14. WWC has designated one evidence-based practice based solely on evidence from studies using SCD research (functional behavior assessment; WWC, 2016).

## Characterizing Designs Based on Attributions of Causality

Experimental design studies are defined by an investigator's manipulation of an independent variable to verify what effect it has on a dependent variable. The act of intentionally manipulating some variable to see if there is a measurable change in a behavior *while controlling for probable other reasons for behavior change* differentiates experimental research from other research approaches. Appropriately utilized SCDs can be categorized as experimental (Horner et al., 2005). Experimental studies include (a) descriptions of the target behavior(s), (b) predictions regarding what impact the independent variable will have on the dependent variable(s), and (c) appropriate tests to see if the prediction is correct. In doing this, the research design must control for alternative explanations for the observed behavior change(s).

What differentiates an experimental design study from a *quasi-experimental design* study is the extent to which the design controls for **threats to internal validity**—variables other than the planned independent variable that could result in changes in the dependent variable. Within the context of the group research design approach, this differentiation is based on how research participants are assigned to study conditions. In experimental group design studies participants are randomly assigned to a study condition (e.g., experimental group or control group; intervention A or intervention B), while quasi-experimental group design studies do not use random assignment of participants but other strategies to control for differences in

study group composition (e.g., counterbalancing techniques, participant matching; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In SCD, studies are considered experimental, rather than quasi-experimental, if there are adequate potential demonstrations of effect—this concept will be elaborated on in the remaining chapters.

In experimental designs, if the prediction “proves” true, it is said there is a functional relation (i.e., cause-effect relation) between independent and dependent variables. The demonstration of a functional relation adds evidence in support of the independent variable being a promising and possibly “best practice” if findings are independently replicated. Greater support is attributed to results of an experimental group design study, compared to a quasi-experimental group design study, because of the random assignment of participants. Within SCD, which can also be experimental, randomization of participants is generally neither feasible nor helpful; randomization only functions to control for differences between groups when the number of participants is very large (e.g.,  $N=50$  or greater; see Chapter 13 for more information regarding randomization in SCD studies).

Correlational design studies, like experimental and quasi-experimental design studies, predict and describe the relation between independent and dependent variables; however, *in correlational studies there is no manipulation of the independent variable by the investigator*. Such studies represent a quantitative-descriptive research approach in which the relation between variables is established by using a correlation coefficient (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). When independent and dependent variables co-vary there is said to be a correlational relation between variables. Practices supported by correlational evidence are deemed less trustworthy or convincing than those supported by experimental and quasi-experimental evidence since correlational design studies do not rule out alternative explanations because there is no manipulation of the independent variable. In a correlational study, for example, you might find that the number of hours a child spends with other children is correlated with his antisocial behaviors (e.g., more hours with children is related to higher levels of anti-social behavior). But, other causes of antisocial behavior are not ruled out in this example (for instance, children who spend many hours with other children might be in low-quality child care—the lack of access to appropriate services may be the reason for anti-social behavior). Some SCD studies (e.g., A-B designs, see Chapter 9) can be considered correlational (rather than causal or experimental) in nature.

### Characterizing Designs Based on Research Approach

As the book title connotes, the focus of this text is on SCD research methodology and its use by applied researchers in behavioral sciences. In spite of this focus on a single type of research design, it is important for you to be able to compare and contrast research approaches on the basis of their research logic, strategies for controlling for threats to internal validity, and generalization of findings to individual cases. Through your analysis and understanding of research approaches you will be better able to choose the appropriate research design for answering your research question(s). As previously noted, no single research approach or design is appropriate for answering all research questions. Thus it is your responsibility, both as a consumer of and contributor to research, to be familiar with the various research approaches. In the sections that follow, common research approaches and designs are briefly overviewed. More detailed design descriptions and analyses are found elsewhere in such general research methodology texts as deMarrais and Lapan (2004), Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), Portney and Watkins (2000), and Schlosser (2003).

Before describing the individual approaches, it might be helpful to introduce concepts of nomothetic and idiographic research. **Nomothetic** research approaches are generally based in the natural sciences and are characterized by attempting to explain associations that can be generalized to a group given certain characteristics. **Idiographic** approaches to research, common in the humanities, attempt to specify associations that vary based on certain characteristics or contingencies present for the participant or case of interest. Both nomothetic and idiographic approaches are valid, depending on the research question of interest (Ottenbacher, 1984) although some have argued that an idiographic approach is most appropriate for practice, at least in the field of special education (Deno, 1990).

## Group Research Approach

Gersten, Fuchs, Coyne, Greenwood, and Innocenti (2005) provide an excellent discussion of indicators for evaluating scientific rigor of group experimental and quasi-experimental research reports and proposals. Much of what is presented in this section is a summary of key points they present in determining the level of support assigned to group studies investigating the efficacy of a practice. They point out that there was not complete agreement among authors on all issues discussed. Nevertheless their presentation provides a framework from which to judge the level of support for an evidence-based practice with group designs. Table 1.1 summarizes the “Essential and Desirable Quality Indicators for Group Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Research Articles”.

**Table 1.1** Essential and Desirable Quality Indicators for Group Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Research Articles and Reports.

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### Essential Quality Indicators

#### **Quality Indicators for Describing Participants**

1. Was sufficient information provided to determine/confirm whether the participants demonstrated the disability(ies) or difficulties presented?
2. Were appropriate procedures used to increase the likelihood that relevant characteristics of participants in the sample were comparable across conditions?
3. Was sufficient information given characterizing the interventionists or teachers provided? Did it indicate whether they were comparable across conditions?

#### **Quality Indicators for Implementation of the Intervention and Description of Comparison Conditions**

1. Was the intervention clearly described and specified?
2. Was the fidelity of implementation described and assessed?
3. Was the nature of services provided in comparison conditions described?

#### **Quality Indicators for Outcome Measures**

1. Were multiple measures used to provide an appropriate balance between measures closely aligned with the intervention and measures of generalized performance?
2. Were outcomes for capturing the interventions effect measured at the appropriate times?

#### **Quality Indicators for Data Analysis**

1. Were the data analysis techniques appropriately linked to key research questions and hypotheses? Were they appropriately linked to the limit of analysis in the study?
2. Did the research report include not only inferential statistics but also effect size calculations?

### Desirable Quality Indicators

1. Was data available on attrition rates among intervention samples? Was severe overall attrition documented? If so, is attrition comparable across samples? Is overall attrition less than 30%?
  2. Did the study provide not only internal consistency reliability but also test-retest reliability and interrater reliability (when appropriate) for outcome measures? Were data collectors and/or scorers blind to study conditions and equally (un)familiar to examinees across study conditions?
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(Continued)

Table 1.1 Continued

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3. Were outcomes for capturing the intervention's effect measured beyond an immediate posttest?
  4. Was evidence of the criterion-related validity and construct validity of the measures provided?
  5. Did the research team assess not only surface features of fidelity implementation (e.g., number of minutes allocated to the intervention or teacher/interventionist following procedures specified), but also examine quality of implementation?
  6. Was any documentation of the nature of instruction or series provided in comparison conditions?
  7. Did the research report include actual audio or videotape excerpts that capture the nature of the intervention?
  8. Were results presented in a clear, coherent fashion?
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\*A study would be acceptable if it included only measures of generalized performance. It would not be acceptable if it only included measures that are tightly aligned.

Source: Gersten, R., Fuchs, L. S., Compton, D., Coyne, M., Greenwood, C., & Innocenti, M. (2005). Quality indicators for group experimental and quasi-experimental research in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 149–164.

### *Characteristics of Group Design*

The basic logic underlying all group research studies is that a large number of individuals are divided and assigned to one of two or more study conditions. In the simplest version, the study includes a control condition, in which participants *are not* exposed to the independent variable, and treatment condition, in which participants *are* exposed to the independent variable. Participants could also be equally divided between two treatment groups (e.g., Treatment A and Treatment B). In some group studies more than two conditions may be compared, in which case an equal number of participants would be assigned to each of the conditions (e.g., 30 assigned to control, 30 assigned to Treatment A, 30 assigned to Treatment B). A critical variable to consider when evaluating a group design study is how participants are assigned to study conditions. The optimal method is random assignment of participants (experimental study), but this is not always possible and may depend on the research objective or population being studied. When random assignment of participants is not feasible, it is recommended that interventionists be randomly assigned to conditions. Gersten et al., 2005 point out that random assignment of participants does not guarantee study group equivalence, an important consideration when analyzing group research findings. It is the fundamental logic of group design, experimental and quasi-experimental, that groups of participants assigned to each study condition are equivalent on “key” characteristics or status variables (e.g., chronological age, gender, ethnicity, test scores etc.) at the start of a group study (Rosenberg et al., 1992). By starting with equivalent groups across conditions, it is possible to attribute later differences between groups to the independent variable rather than group composition. Because group equivalence is critical, some investigators have chosen to match participants on key characteristics prior to the start of their study and then randomly assign one matched member to each study condition. Implied in this process is the importance of the researcher providing a detailed description of group members, thereby convincing study evaluators that groups were equivalent at the start of the study.

Other participant and interventionist variables should also be addressed when evaluating or reporting results from group studies, including participant attrition and interventionist characteristics. Specifically, it is important to note the number of participants who have withdrawn from a study and the condition to which they were assigned. If attrition is comparable across conditions there isn't a problem, however, if one condition has a substantially higher attrition rate than another condition, problems arise when analyzing the data, since groups will no longer be comparable. In such cases it is always important to document and report the reasons for participant withdrawal, noting whether it was in some way due to the condition to which they were assigned. For studies in which one or more interventionists are participating, it is important to describe each interventionist in detail so that there are no critical differences between them (e.g., education, certification, experience etc.), as some differences could influence the consistency and fidelity with which the independent variable is implemented. To avoid

this potential problem researchers randomly assign or counterbalance interventionists across conditions. When neither option is possible for logistical reasons (e.g., clinical group or teacher classroom assignment), the degree to which condition procedures were followed as specified in the research proposal (procedural fidelity, see Chapter 6) is critical.

The group research approach is the most common research methodology used in some areas of behavioral science. Group research designs are well suited for large-scale efficacy studies or clinical trials in which a researcher's interest is in describing whether a practice or policy with a specific population, on average, will be effective. With such research questions a group design methodology is recommended. Numerous group designs and statistical analysis procedures are available for your consideration if you choose to study group behavior. Despite its usefulness for detecting average group effects, group comparison designs cannot be generalized to the *individual*. To paraphrase Barlow et al. (1984), generalization of group research findings to individuals requires a "leap of faith," the extent to which depends on the similarity of the individual to study participants for whom the intervention was effective. You must never lose sight when attempting to generalize a practice supported by group research to an individual, that some participants performed better, while others performed worse than the average participant. Don't be surprised if results are not replicated if your participant or client differs substantially from the average group study participant.

### Qualitative Research Approaches

The term *qualitative research* is an "umbrella" term that refers to a number of descriptive research approaches "that investigate the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 430). Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) define qualitative research as "a systematic approach to understanding qualities, or the essential nature, of a phenomenon within a particular context" (p. 195). A quantitative analysis of outcome measures is typically not of interest to qualitative researchers. The qualitative paradigm is discussed here in spite of its descriptive rather than experimental analysis of behavior due to what appears to be an increase in interest among some researchers who believe it is "ideal for phenomena that are patently complex and about which little is known with certainty" (Lancy, 1993, p. 9). Table 1.2 identifies and briefly describes 16 different qualitative research approaches that Brantlinger et al. place under the qualitative research paradigm. Of the 16 approaches, 3 have particular prominence among educational and clinical researchers who conduct qualitative research studies: case study, ethnography, and phenomenology. The *case study* approach entails an in-depth and detailed description of one or more cases (individuals, events, activities, or processes), while *ethnography* refers to the study of culture, defined as "the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008), in which the investigator unobtrusively observes people in their natural setting without an attempt to influence their behavior or the event. Sometimes confused with ethnography, *phenomenology* is the study of people's reactions and perceptions of a particular event or situation. For a more in-depth discussion of these and other qualitative research approaches see Glasser and Strauss (1967), Lincoln and Guba (1985), or Lancy (1993).

#### *Characteristics of Qualitative Research*

Qualitative research approaches share a number of common characteristics not the least of which is a desire to provide a detailed, in depth description of the case or phenomena under study. Data are collected using several methods, including direct observation in which the investigator's role is that of a "participant-observer" in the natural environment, with neither an interest nor attempt to influence the person or event being observed. As a participant-observer

**Table 1.2** Types and Descriptions of Qualitative Research.

<i>Case study</i> —exploration of a bounded system (group, individual, setting, event, phenomenon, process); can include autobiography and biography.	<i>Life (oral) history</i> —extensive interviews with individuals to collect first person narratives about their lives or events in which they participated.
<i>Collective case study</i> —a study that takes place in multiple sites or includes personalized stories of several similar (or distinctive) individuals.	<i>Quasi-life-history research</i> —encouraging participants to recall and reflect on earlier as well as current meaningful occurrences in their lives.
<i>Ethnography</i> —description/interpretation of a cultural or social group or system; typically includes observations, interviews, and document analysis.	<i>Interpretive research</i> —used synonymously with “qualitative work” and/or to refer to research framed within certain (critical, feminist, disability study, critical race) theories.
<i>Action research</i> —researcher brings ideas for practice to fieldwork to have an impact on the setting/participants while collecting data.	<i>Content analysis</i> —close inspection of text(s) to understand themes or perspectives (also refers to the analysis stage of qualitative studies).
<i>Collaborative action research</i> —researcher and practitioner share ideas about how to change practice and work together to modify a situation as well as collect information for a study.	<i>Conversational analysis</i> —studying interactional situations, structure of talk, and communicative exchanges; includes recording facial expressions, gestures, speed or hesitancy of speech, and tone of voice.
<i>Grounded theory</i> —research done to generate or discover a general theory or abstract analytical hunch based on study of phenomena in a particular situation(s).	<i>Discourse analysis</i> —deconstructs common sense textual meanings; identifies meanings that undergird normative ways of conceptualizing and discussing phenomena.
<i>Phenomenology</i> —studies the meanings people make of their lived experiences.	<i>Ideological critique</i> —discourse analysis that assumes political meanings (power disparities) or ideologies are embedded in, and infused through, all discourses, institutions, and social practices.
<i>Symbolic interactionism</i> —studies interpretive processes used by persons dealing with material and social situations.	
<i>Narrative research</i> —collection of personal narratives; based on recognition that people are storytellers who lead storied lives.	

Source: Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., & Richardson, V. (2005). Qualitative studies in special education. *Exceptional Children, 71*, 195–207.

the researcher takes field notes, sometimes referred to as “reflective notes”, that are intended to capture the “essence” or “themes” of the observations. Other data collection techniques include audio and video recordings that are summarized and presented in written narratives. Interviews and questionnaires are important data collection instruments used in qualitative research. In terms of these two data collection tools and their use in phenomenology, Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) describe the role of the researcher as one who “extracts what he or she considers to be relevant statements from each participant’s description of the phenomenon and then clusters these statements into themes. He or she then integrates these themes into a narrative description of the phenomenon” (p. 437). Unlike the group study approach in which hypotheses are formulated prior to conducting a study to test a theory, known as a *deductive analysis* approach (i.e., general to specific), researchers who use a qualitative study approach collect data and describe themes or trends in the data without offering a theory, an approach known as *inductive analysis* (i.e., specific to general). In this regard, studies using qualitative and SCDs are similar. A critical difference between qualitative and quantitative research approaches is, as Brantlinger et al. (2005) states, “Qualitative research is not done for the purposes of generalization but rather to produce *evidence* based on the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals” (p. 203). If this is in fact how qualitative researchers view their approach, we as consumers of research must ask the question, “How can qualitative research findings support evidence-based practice if they can not be generalized beyond the case studied?”

### *Data analysis, Reliability, and Validity Issues*

The issue of credibility and trustworthiness of research findings is central to practitioners using promising, if not best practices in their service to students and clients and their families.

Guidelines for evaluating the credibility of qualitative research studies have been developed by Brantlinger et al. (2005) and are presented in Table 1.3. These measures are how qualitative researchers address the **validity** (i.e., accuracy) and reliability (i.e., consistency) of information in their research reports, but the authors caution against “using credibility measures as a checklist in a rigid and unreflective way”, and although they “encourage” researchers to use credibility measures “they believe that authors who succinctly clarify the methods used and the rationale for them can convey that their reports are reliable and worthy of attention without alluding to credibility measures” (p. 200–201). As you may have deduced from the quotes cited (e.g., “extracts what he or she considers relevant”), the primary criticism of qualitative research approaches are their lack of objectivity.

A common characteristic of qualitative studies is the position of the researcher as an “insider” who has close personal contact with participants and who is both the data collector and data analyst. Brantlinger et al. acknowledge that they (qualitative researchers) are “the instrument” in their research and that, “To do qualitative work well (be *valid* instruments), we must have experience related to our research focus, be well read, knowledgeable, analytical, reflective, and introspective” (p. 197). If true, the position of the qualitative researcher raises concerns because

**Table 1.3** Credibility Measures for Qualitative Research.

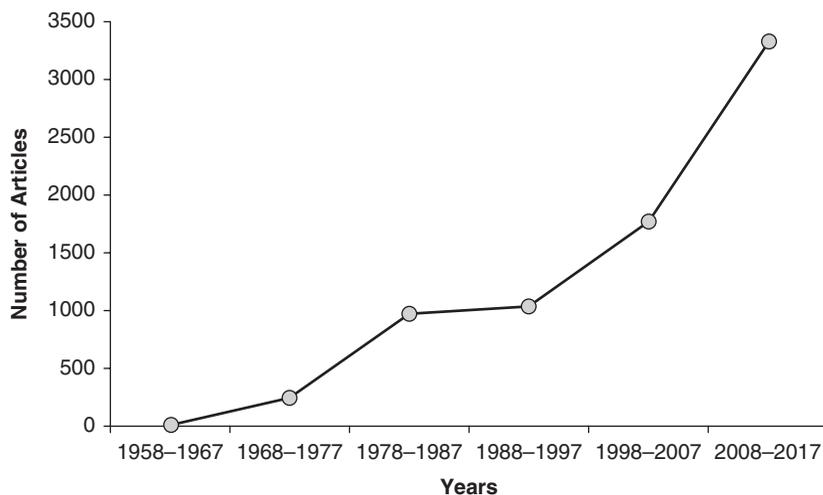
- 
1. *Triangulation*—search for convergence of, or consistency among, evidence from multiple and varied daily sources (observations/interviews; one participant and another; interviews/documents).
    - a. *Data triangulation*—use of varied data sources in a study.
    - b. *Investigator triangulation*—use of several researchers, evaluators, peer debriefers.
    - c. *Theory triangulation*—use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data.
    - d. *Methodological triangulation*—use of multiple methods to study a single problem.
  2. *Disconfirming evidence*—after establishing preliminary themes/categories, the researcher looks for evidence inconsistent with these themes (outliers); also known as negative or discrepant case analysis.
  3. *Researcher reflexivity*—researchers attempt to understand and self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, values, and biases (i.e., being forthright about position/perspective).
  4. *Member checks*—having participants review and confirm the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of interview transcriptions or observational field notes.
    - a. *First level*—taking transcriptions to participants prior to analyses and interpretations of results.
    - b. *Second level*—taking analyses and interpretations of data to participants (prior to publication) for validation of (or support for) researchers’ conclusions.
  5. *Collaborative work*—involving multiple researchers in designing a study or concurring about conclusions to ensure that analyses and interpretations are not idiosyncratic and/or biased; could involve interrater reliability checks on the observations made or the coding of data. (The notion that persons working together will get reliable results is dependent on the “truth claim” assumption that one can get accurate descriptions of situational realities.)
  6. *External auditors*—using outsiders (to the research) to examine if, and confirm that, a researcher’s inferences are logical and grounded in findings.
  7. *Peer debriefing*—having a colleague or someone familiar with phenomena being studied review and provide critical feedback on descriptions, analyses, and interpretations or a study’s results.
  8. *Audit trail*—keeping track of interviews conducted and/or specific times and dates spent observing as well as who was observed on each occasion; used to document and substantiate that sufficient time was spent in the field to claim dependable and confirmable results.
  9. *Prolonged field engagement*—repeated, substantive observations; multiple, in-depth interviews; inspection of a range of relevant documents; thick description validates the study’s soundness.
  10. *Thick, detailed description*—reporting sufficient quotes and field note descriptions to provide evidence for researchers’ interpretations and conclusions.
  11. *Particularizability*—documenting cases with thick description so that readers can determine the degree of transferability to their own situations.
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Source: Brantlinger, E., Jimenez, R., Klingner, J., Pugach, M., & Richardson, V. (2005). Qualitative studies in special education. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 195–207.

of the subjectivity of the data collected and reported, which in turn influences the validity and reliability of findings since observational safeguards (e.g., independent observations) are rare. This lack of reliability of measurement alone is a major threat to the internal validity of findings, a confounding known as instrumentation. The use of field notes, narrative descriptions, and the freedom of investigators to “consider what is relevant” all signal a method that is prone to subjectivity and findings that would be difficult, if not impossible to replicate. Replication, as previously noted, is at the heart of the scientific method. If replication of a study’s findings has not been attempted or not been achieved those findings cannot be considered trustworthy or valid. So, what does qualitative research offer to the science of human behavior? In spite of concerns over subjectivity and lack of replication, qualitative studies can and do provide detailed descriptions of behavior under natural conditions that could subsequently lead to asking research questions, or testing research hypotheses, that employ more objective, quantitative research approaches.

### Single Case Research Approach

SCD methodology has a long tradition in the behavioral sciences, and has become increasingly common in special education and other fields over time (see Figure 1.1). Historically, studies using SCDs were referred to as “single subject research”, but over time, the term *participant* replaced *subject* when humans involved in a study provided informed consent (Pyrzczak, 2016); throughout the book we will use the contemporary term *participant*, although some historical references may include the term *subject*. Sidman (1960) first described the SCD research approach in his seminal book, *Tactics of Scientific Research: Evaluating Experimental Data in Psychology*, which exemplified its application within the context of basic experimental psychology research. In 1968, Baer et al. elaborated on SCD research methodology and how it could be used in applied research to evaluate intervention effectiveness with individuals. Since that time numerous articles, chapters, and books have been written describing SCD methodology and its use in a number of disciplines, including psychology (Bailey & Burch, 2002; Barlow & Hersen, 1984; Johnson & Pennypacker, 1993, 2009; Kazdin, 1998; Kratochwill & Levin, 1992,



**Figure 1.1** The number of citations retrieved by PsycINFO over time, using a string of search terms related to single case design studies (“single subject design” OR “single case design” OR “multiple baseline” OR “multitreatment” OR “withdrawal design” OR “reversal design” OR “multiple probe” OR “alternating treatments design”).

Skinner, 2004), special education (Gast, 2005; Kennedy, 2005; Richards, Taylor, Ramasamy, & Richards, 1999; Tawney & Gast, 1984), “helping professions” (Bloom & Fischer, 1982; Lane, Ledford, & Gast, 2017), literacy education (Neuman & McCormick, 1995), communication sciences (McReynolds & Kearns, 1983; Schlosser, 2003), and therapeutic recreation (Dattilo, Gast, Loy, & Malley, 2000).

As Horner et al. (2005) pointed out, over 45 professional journals publish SCD studies. A common misnomer about SCD research methodology is that it is appropriate only if you ascribe to a behavioral psychology model, which is incorrect. Although it is based in operant conditioning, applied behavior analysis, and social learning theory, interventions based in other theoretical models may be evaluated within the context of an SCD. In this section the basic parameters of SCD research methodology are overviewed as a means of comparison with previously described research approaches. Quality indicators for evaluating studies using SCDs have been developed by Horner et al. and are presented in Table 1.4. The topics introduced in this section, including criteria for evaluating supportive evidence of a practice, are discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

**Table 1.4** Quality Indicators for Single-Case Research.

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*Description of Participants and Setting*

1. Participants are described with sufficient detail to allow others to select individuals with similar characteristics (e.g., age, gender, disability, diagnosis).
2. The process for selecting participants is described with replicable precision.
3. Critical features of the physical setting are described with sufficient precision to allow replication.

*Dependent Variable*

1. Dependent variables are described with operational precision.
2. Each dependent variable is measured with a procedure that generates a quantifiable index.
3. Measurement of the dependent variable is valid and described with replicable precision.
4. Dependent variables are measured repeatedly over time.
5. Data are collected on the reliability or interobserver agreement associated with each dependent variable, and IOA levels meet minimal standards (e.g., IOA = 80%; Kappa = 60%).

*Independent Variable*

1. Independent variable is described with replicable precision.
2. Independent variable is systematically manipulated and under the control of the experimenter.
3. Overt measurement of the fidelity of implementation for the independent variable is highly desirable.

*Baseline*

1. The majority of single-case research studies will include a baseline phase that provides repeated measurement of a dependent variable and establishes a pattern of responding that can be used to predict the pattern of future performance, if introduction or manipulation of the independent variable did not occur.
2. Baseline conditions are described with replicable precision.

*Experimental Control/Internal Validity*

1. The design provides at least three demonstrations of experimental effect at three different points in time.
2. The design controls for common threats to internal validity (e.g., permits elimination of rival hypotheses).
3. The results document a pattern that demonstrates experimental control.

*External Validity*

1. Experimental effects are replicated across participants, settings, or materials to establish external validity.

*Social Validity*

1. The dependent variable is socially important.
  2. The magnitude of change in the dependent variable resulting from the intervention is socially important.
  3. Implementation of the independent variable is practical and cost effective.
  4. Social validity is enhanced by implementation of the independent variable over extended time periods, by typical intervention agents, in typical physical and social contexts.
- 

Source: Horner, R. H., Carr, E. G., Halle, J., McGee, G., Odom, S., & Wolery, M. (2005). The use of single-subject research to identify evidence-based practice in special education. *Exceptional Children, 71*, 165–179.

### *Characteristics of Single Case Research Design*

In spite of its name, it is important to understand that this research approach is *not* a case study approach in which there is only one participant whose behavior is described, in detail, in written narrative, based on primary data collected using qualitative research techniques (e.g., field notes, interviews etc.). SCD is a quantitative experimental research approach in which study participants serve as their own control, a principle known as **baseline logic** (Sidman, 1960). In the simplest SCD study, each participant is exposed to both a “control” condition, known as baseline, and an intervention condition. As with group design studies, it is possible to compare two treatments; in this case, each participant is exposed to both intervention conditions. The target behavior is repeatedly measured within the context of one of several research designs that evaluate and control for threats to internal validity. Depending on the research design used, baseline (A) and intervention (B) conditions are slowly alternated across time (e.g., A-B-A-B or withdrawal design; Chapter 9), rapidly alternated (e.g., ATD and AATD; Chapter 11), or the intervention condition is introduced in a time-lagged fashion across several behaviors, conditions, or participants (Chapter 10). Return to a previously introduced condition or introduction of a new condition to a new behavior, condition, or participant occurs only after data stability is evident. Data for individual participants are presented on a line graph for each participant and decisions to maintain or change the current condition are made in accordance with visual analysis guidelines (see Chapter 8 for information on visual analysis). Baseline logic is very different from group design logic in which similar or matched participants are assigned to one of two or more study conditions (control or intervention). In studies using SCDs, each participant participates in both conditions of interest (e.g., baseline or control *and* intervention). In group design, posttest data are collected at an a priori specified time point (e.g., after 3 weeks of intervention), and are analyzed using statistical methods comparing the average performance of participants assigned to one condition to the average performance of participants assigned to other conditions. In SCD, intervention conditions are generally continued until a performance criterion is met or until progress is apparent via visual analysis of graphed data. The use of visual analysis of graphic data for individual participants make SCD studies ideal for applied researchers and practitioners who are interested in answering research questions and/or evaluating interventions designed to change the behavior of individuals.

### *Controlling Threats to Internal Validity*

As with experimental group design approaches, experimental SCD research must adequately control for or detect threats to internal validity. In SCD, as in group design, there are multiple procedures for controlling for these threats, including ensuring reliability of measurement and fidelity of procedures. In addition, rather than randomizing participants to reduce the likelihood of threats, SCD researchers use systematic ordering of conditions to do so. Controlling for threats to internal validity for specific SCDs will be discussed in detail in Chapters 9–12.

## **Applied Research, Practice, and Single Case Design**

Evidence-based practices, supported by rigorous and internally valid research, may be preferred by scientists, but another term, *practice-based evidence* (PBE), is also important. PBE can be identified through research that occurs in applied settings, with typical resources; SCD may be particularly well-suited to conducting this type of research (Smith, Schmidt, Edelen-Smith, & Cook, 2013). Although some might argue that the basic purposes of research and practice are not aligned, we would like to draw some parallels between the behaviors we consider to be

fundamental to both science and educational/clinical practice, while acknowledging that some differences exist.

### Similarities Between Research and Practice

Practitioners must:

1. Analyze an individual's performance to identify the initial performance level (a form of hypothesis testing).
2. Specify instructional/therapy objectives including criterion performance levels.
3. Operationally define instructional/therapy procedures so that another informed adult is able to implement procedures with fidelity.
4. Conduct concept and/or task analyses as a means of sequencing intervention programs for individual learners.
5. Implement procedures consistently.
6. Collect repeated measures on each individual's performance.
7. Analyze data and make program decisions based on the data.
8. Maintain data records.
9. Share an individual's performance regularly with significant others.
10. Follow professional/ethical guidelines.

Applied researchers must:

1. Identify a behavior challenge.
2. Generate a research question ("If I do this, will the behavior improve?")
3. State specific research program objectives.
4. Define the elements of the research procedure: stimuli, arrangement, materials and equipment, target response topography, consequent events.
5. Write specific, replicable research procedures and implement with fidelity.
6. Collect direct, repeated, and reliable measures of performance.
7. Analyze graphically displayed data and make research decisions based on data.
8. Maintain data records.
9. Share research progress with research team members and significant others.
10. Conduct research in an ethical manner.

The similarities in these sets of behaviors are apparent. They can be synthesized by noting that both the teacher/therapist and applied researcher must (a) be able to identify and analyze problems, (b) generate creative solutions, (c) implement an intervention in a systematic manner, (d) document the effect of the intervention, and (e) act on the data in an ethical and responsible way. Barlow et al. (1984) referred to those teachers and therapists who engage in applied research as "scientist-practitioners," a reference we believe aptly describes those who conduct applied research as part of their daily service delivery activities.

### Some Differences Between Research and Practice

Schools and community-based programs and clinics seldom have the same level of resources as those used in typical research studies. The fact that teacher/therapist-researchers who work in community settings often must utilize existing resources can add to the generality of their research findings. In recent years there has been concern that some "applied" research being disseminated may not be so "applied" after all, in that it requires special resources that are out of reach of most teachers and therapists working in typical community service and educational

settings. Many organizations have attempted to respond to this problem by disseminating practitioner-friendly journals in addition to typical journals including peer-reviewed research studies (e.g., ABAI, *Behavior Analysis in Practice*; Council for Exceptional Children [CEC], *Teaching Exceptional Children*; Division for Early Childhood of the CEC, *Young Exceptional Children*).

The point we want to make here is that the typical classroom is obviously not a Skinner box; instead it is a complex social environment that includes an almost immeasurable number of potential extraneous variables. In special education, speech/language therapy, and child psychology, however, the trend is for most instruction to occur within the context of natural activities and routines implemented across the day. If this is the context in which you plan to conduct your research, it is important for you to know that you may need to create detailed plans for data collection and environmental control. This may not be an easy task, but the more familiar you are with measurement and design alternatives the easier it will be. What follows are suggestions on how to proceed and questions you should ask if you are: (a) planning to conduct your own research project in your own classroom or clinic setting as both the primary researcher and service provider; (b) a collaborating teacher or therapist opening your work environment to someone else who will serve as the primary researcher; or (c) a visiting researcher who needs to be sensitive to the demands placed on the collaborating teacher or therapist. These questions are framed from the teacher/therapist perspective (i.e., the person who has primary responsibility for ensuring that teaching or therapy is not disrupted by the research process; Eiserman & Behl, 1992).

1. Does the research question address an educational or therapy objective? Will participants benefit from their participation?
2. Is there a research base that leads you to believe that your participation is likely to improve practice?
3. Are the research objectives and procedures consistent with current agency policies?
4. Do you have an interest in the answer to the research question?
5. How will participation affect your daily schedule and the schedule of participants? Will the current daily schedule have to be altered?
6. How does the intervention under study affect continuation of interventions currently in use? Are you willing to modify or abandon current interventions and replace with the new intervention for a period of time?
7. Will participation disrupt other activities or events typically attended by participants?
8. How much of your time, and that of each student, will be required each day? How many days, weeks, or months are you willing to commit to this project? Is this commitment reasonable and justifiable?
9. How will participants, in your judgment and experience, respond to their participation?
10. Will significant others (parents, guardians, agency administrators etc.) support the research objective and participation?
11. Are the necessary resources available (e.g., data collectors, reliability observers, computers, software programs, cameras, assistive or adaptive equipment) for conducting the research? If a piece of equipment breaks down is there back-up equipment available?
12. Do you have any ethical concerns?

Answers to these questions, which only sample the range of questions you must ask, are important prior to committing yourself and others to a research project. In that SCD studies typically occur over several weeks, if not months, you must understand the practical implications of your commitment from the outset. We encourage you to enter any research project with a thorough understanding of its research base, potential contributions, logistical challenges,

procedural requirements, and ethical implications. All studies are not equal in their research requirements (data collection procedures, intervention procedures, research designs etc.), and the more you understand measurement and design alternatives, the more likely you are to design a study that will be practical for your setting while advancing both science and practice.

### Threats to Internal Validity

The internal validity of a study depends on attempts by the researcher to ensure that plausible reasons for behavior change, other than planned experimental changes, are controlled for. Two concepts are important for understanding the pragmatics of experimental control and internal validity. First, it is impossible to control for every possible threat to internal validity. Second, a possible threat may not be an actual threat. Each possible threat should be considered in the design of your study and the analysis of other researchers' studies. The extent to which threats to validity are evaluated and controlled for, along with the presence of a sufficient number of direct replications, will determine the level of confidence you should have in the findings. You should not be disheartened to learn that just as there is no free lunch, there is no perfect experiment. Instead, there are carefully designed experiments, experiments that are executed as carefully as they were planned and that provide "adequate and proper data" (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, p. 2) for analysis. Your task is to describe what happened during the course of the experiment and to be able to account for planned and unplanned outcomes. Below is a non-exhaustive list of threats to internal validity that may be likely in studies using SCD; many are also applicable for other experimental studies (e.g., group comparison studies).

### History

**History** refers to events that occur *during* an experiment, but that are not related to planned procedural changes, that may influence the outcome. Generally speaking, the longer the study the greater the threat due to history. Potential sources of history threats, when a study is conducted in community settings, are the actions of others (parents, siblings, peers, childcare providers) or by study participant themselves (independent online research, observational learning, serendipitous exposure through the media). For behaviors that demand immediate attention in the eyes of a significant other, there may be an attempt to intervene prior to the scheduled intervention time. For example, while a researcher is implementing a token economy in an attempt to reduce problem behaviors, a parent might introduce a separate (and unplanned) punishment procedure while the study is ongoing. While the parent may intend for the additional procedures to enhance your planned intervention (and while they may do this!), this unplanned "history" effect will render your results less believable. Also, participants may learn target content through television or learn target social behaviors through observing the consequences delivered to others; the change in behavior resulting from this learning is a history effect. Other individual-specific unplanned events (e.g., seizure the night before, fight on the school bus, medication change) or community-wide events (e.g., school-wide policy change, widespread social unrest) may temporarily alter the occurrence of the target behavior; careful research notes may assist in explaining this variability due to transient history effects.

### Maturation

**Maturation** refers to changes in behavior due to the passage of time. In a "short" duration study (4–6 weeks) maturation is not likely to influence the analysis of the effectiveness of a powerful

independent variable that focuses on improving language or motor skills of a child who has a history of slow development. If, however, the study is carried out over several months (4–6 months) with the same young child or if a weak intervention is used, there is a greater likelihood that maturation may play a role in observed behavioral changes. Some researchers have referred to “session fatigue” as a maturation threat to validity. Session fatigue refers to a participant’s performance decreasing over the course of a session (e.g., 80% accuracy over the first 20 trials and 20% accuracy over the last 20 trials of a 40-trial session). We may debate whether session fatigue is a maturation threat but we would certainly agree it is a threat to the validity of the findings. To avoid session fatigue it is important to be sensitive to a participant’s age and attention span, scheduling shorter sessions with fewer trials for younger children and individuals who have a history of inattentive behavior. It may also be helpful in restoring attention to task and responding to take a short break (3–5 minutes) midway during a lengthy session.

### Testing

**Testing** is a threat in any study that requires participants to respond to the same test repeatedly, especially during a baseline or probe condition; it is the likelihood that the repeated assessment task will result in participant behavior change. Repeated testing may have a *facilitative effect* (improvement in performance over successive baseline or probe testing or observation sessions) or an *inhibitive effect* (deterioration in performance over successive baseline or probe testing or observation sessions) depending on how the “test” condition is designed. A test condition that repeatedly presents the same academic task, prompts correct responses through a correction procedure, or delivers reinforcement contingent upon a correct response, may result in a facilitative effect. Test sessions of long duration, requiring substantial participant effort, with minimal or no reinforcement for attention and active participation may result in an inhibitive effect. It is important to design your baseline and probe conditions so that they yield participants’ best effort so that you neither overestimate nor underestimate the impact of the independent variable on the behavior.

Facilitative effects of testing can be avoided by randomizing stimulus presentation order across sessions; not reinforcing correct responses, particularly on receptive tasks; not correcting incorrect responses; and not prompting (intentionally or unintentionally) correct responses. Procedural reliability checks will help with detecting these procedural errors that could influence participant performance. Inhibitive effects of testing can be avoided by conducting sessions of an appropriate length and difficulty level (i.e., avoid session fatigue; intersperse known stimuli with unknown stimuli and reinforce correct responses to known stimuli; and reinforce correct responses on expressive, comprehension, and response chain tasks).

### Instrumentation

**Instrumentation** threats refer to concerns with the measurement system; they are of particular concern in SCD studies because of repeated measurement by human observers who may make errors. In studies using SCD, the percentage agreement between two independent observers is the most common strategy for determining whether there is a threat to internal validity due to instrumentation. You can avoid common problems by carefully defining behaviors of interest, using appropriate recording procedures, and frequently checking for reliability by using a secondary observer. Historically, percentage agreement at or above 90% is preferred in applied research, while percentage agreement below 80% is considered unacceptable. Unfortunately, determining what percentage IOA is acceptable, or unacceptable, is not as easy as it may seem since some behaviors are easier to record (permanent products, behaviors of long duration,

gross motor responses) than others (high rate behaviors, behaviors of short duration, vocal responses). In addition, the conditions under which data are collected will influence what percentage agreement you find acceptable. Assuming behavioral definitions are clearly written and observers are properly trained, you would expect measurement errors to be lower when data are collected from permanent products (audio or video recordings, written assignments, assemblies, computer printouts), compared to live observations in “real time”. Issues related to reliability of measurement are discussed in Chapter 5. Suffice it to say here you must attend to the details of your measurement system to avoid instrumentation threats to internal validity.

### Procedural Infidelity

**Procedural infidelity** refers to the lack of adherence to condition protocols by study implementers. If the procedures of an experimental condition (baseline, probe, intervention, maintenance, generalization) are *not* consistently implemented across behavior episodes, time, interventionists etc., as described in the Methods section of the research proposal or report, confidence that outcomes are related to the intervention is considerably reduced. Control for procedural infidelity threats to internal validity is discussed in Chapter 6.

### Selection Bias

Selection bias involves choosing participants in a way that differentially impacts the inclusion or retention of participants in a study, when compared to the “population” of interest. Several resources are available which discuss selection bias in group comparison designs (Pyrzczak, 2016; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In SCD, the “population” would be individuals who meet the inclusion criteria for the study and have similar functional characteristics to the participants (Lane, Wolery, Reichow, & Rogers, 2007; Wolery, Dunlap, & Ledford, 2011). **Attrition** refers to the loss of participants during the course of a study, which can limit the generality of the findings, particularly if participants with certain characteristics are likely to drop out (e.g., participants who are not benefitting from the intervention). A *minimum* of three participants is typically recommended for inclusion in any one SCD investigation. However, since it is unlikely that you will have much control over participants who choose to withdraw from your study, or who are required to withdraw due to the family moving, incarceration, hospital admission, or school expulsion, it is recommended that you start with four or more participants when available and if practical. With four participants the loss of one participant will have less of an impact on your analysis of independent variable generality. **Attrition bias** refers to the likelihood that participant loss (attrition) impacts the outcome of the study. When attrition occurs, you should always (a) explicitly report it, along with relevant information about why it occurred, and (b) include any data collected for that participant in your research report. This ensures that data from “nonresponders” are not systematically excluded from published research, resulting in bias regarding evidence of intervention effectiveness.

Another type of selection bias, sampling bias, occurs in group designs when non-random samples of the population are recruited (i.e., some members of a population are more likely to be included than others). **Sampling bias** occurs in SCD studies when researchers use additional, non-explicated, reasons for including or excluding potential participants. For example, Ledford, Chazin, Harbin, and Ward (2017) included 12 children in a study to assess preference for massed versus embedded instruction, and named the following inclusion criteria: (a) ability to play age- or developmentally-appropriate games with turn-taking, (b) ability to make choices given line drawings, and (c) verbal imitation. Assume that Ledford and colleagues had 14 potential participants, but decided to request consent from 12 due to resource constraints. Thus, she excluded

two boys who had a history of being noncompliant during teacher-led activities (e.g., massed instruction) to reduce the risk of attrition. This decision leads to the potential for overestimating differences between conditions because of the purposeful exclusion of participants unlikely to perform well in one of the two conditions. This risk could be mitigated by randomly choosing participants when the pool of participants who meet inclusion criteria is larger than the total number who can participate. As a side note, this particular hypothetical situation did not occur, but participants were chosen from a larger set of eligible students based on convenience, so sampling bias is still possible (e.g., we may have chosen students who had relatively high cognition or language skills because students with more impaired skills received more therapy and were thus available less frequently).

### Multiple-Treatment Interference

**Multiple-treatment interference** can occur when a study participant's behavior is influenced by more than one planned "treatments" or interventions during the course of a study. An interactive effect may be identified due to *sequential confounding* (the order in which experimental conditions are introduced to participants may influence their behavior) or a *carryover effect* (the effect when a procedure used in one experimental condition influences behavior in an adjacent condition). To avoid sequential confounding, the order in which experimental conditions are introduced to participants is counterbalanced (e.g., participant 1, A-B-C-B-C; participant 2, A-C-B-C-B). Carryover effects are detected via visual analysis; they can be minimized by continuing the condition until data are stable (see Chapters 9–11).

### Data Instability

**Instability** refers to the amount of variability in the data (dependent variable) over time. As Kratochwill (1978, p. 15) noted, "Experiments involving repeated measurement of a single participant or group over time typically evidence some degree of variability. If this 'instability' is large, investigators could attribute an effect to the intervention when, in fact, the effectiveness was no larger than the natural variation in the data series." Your attention to the amount of variability in a data series is important in deciding if and when it is appropriate to move to the next experimental condition. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, during a visual analysis of graphic data, both level and trend stability must be considered before changing conditions if there is to be a clear demonstration of experimental control. The premature introduction of the independent variable into a data series may preclude such a demonstration. As a consumer of research, you should determine if there is high percentage overlap between data points of two adjacent conditions, and, if there is, you should be skeptical of any statements a researcher might make regarding the effectiveness of the independent variable. In your own research, when data variability is observed, it is best to a) maintain the condition until the data stabilize, or b) attempt to isolate the source of the variability. Threats to internal validity due to data instability are preventable if you are patient and analytical in your research decisions, rather than following some predetermined schedule that dictates when to move to the next experimental condition (e.g., every 7 days the experimental conditions will change).

### Cyclical Variability

**Cyclical variability** is a specific type of data instability that refers to a repeated and predictable pattern in the data series over time. When experimental conditions are of equal length (e.g., 5 days in each condition of an  $A_1$ - $B_1$ - $A_2$ - $B_2$  withdrawal design) it is possible that your observations

coincide with some unidentified natural source that may account for the variability. For example, if your experimental condition schedule coincides with a parent's work schedule (away from home for 5 days, at home for 5 days) you may incorrectly conclude that the independent variable is responsible for changes in behavior when in fact it may be due to the presence or absence of the parent at home. To avoid confounding due to cyclical variability it is recommended that you vary condition lengths across time.

### Regression to the Mean

Data instability (also referred to as variability) can result in a specific threat, referred to as regression to the mean. **Regression to the mean** refers to the likelihood that following an outlying data point, data are likely to revert back to levels closer to the average value. For example, suppose you are hoping to intervene to increase behavior occurrence, and data are somewhat low (e.g., 30%) for the first three data points. For the fourth data point, values drop all the way to 0%. Some would say that this is a clear indication that intervention is needed; however, even without intervention, data are likely to improve after this outlying value. Changing conditions at this point can decrease confidence that your intervention, rather than typical variability, is the cause. Instead, continue collecting data until stability is established.

### Adaptation

**Adaptation** refers to a period of time at the start of an investigation in which participants' recorded behavior may differ from their natural behavior due to the novel conditions under which data are collected. It is recommended that study participants be exposed to unfamiliar adults, settings, formats, data collection procedures (e.g., video recording) etc. prior to the start of a study, through what is sometimes referred to as *history training*, to increase the likelihood that data collected on the first day of a baseline condition is representative of participants' "true" behavior. A "*reactive effect*" to being observed has been reported and discussed in the applied research literature for quite some time (Kazdin, 1979), leading to recommendations to be as unobtrusive as possible during data collection (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007; Kazdin, 2001).

### Hawthorne Effect

The **Hawthorne Effect**, which refers to participants' observed behavior not being representative of their natural behavior as a result of their knowledge that they are participants in an experiment (Kratochwill, 1978; Portney & Watkins, 2000), is a specific type of adaptation threat to validity. Self-management studies, in which participants record their own behavior, are particularly susceptible to a Hawthorne Effect. As Cooper et al. (2007) state, "When the person observing and recording the target behavior is the participant of the behavior change program, maximum obtrusiveness exists, and reactivity is very likely" (p. 591). Like adaptation, familiarizing participants with experimental conditions, specifically data recording conditions, prior to the start of a study may decrease the likelihood of a Hawthorne Effect.

### Summary

There are a number of research approaches available to the scientist-practitioner who chooses to add evidence in support of a particular practice he or she is currently using or is considering for use. As a contributor to research evidence, it is important to choose the appropriate research methodology that best answers the research question. Group research methodology

is appropriate and best suited for testing hypotheses when your interest is in the average performance of a group of individuals, but it will have limited generality to individuals who differ from those for whom the intervention was effective. Unfortunately for practitioners who are consumers and evaluators of group design research, sufficient details are seldom provided on individual participants that would allow them to make an informed decision as to the likelihood of their student or client responding positively to the intervention studied. Qualitative research approaches (e.g., case study, ethnography, phenomenology etc.) may be appropriate if your interest is in an in depth descriptive report of an individual, activity or event. Studies using this research approach make no attempt to intervene, control for common threats to internal validity, or generalize findings beyond the case studied. The SCD research approach focuses on individual performance and permits practitioners and researchers to independently evaluate the merits of a study or a series of studies since all primary data are presented on all participants in graphic displays and tables. In accordance with scientific method principles, sufficient detail is typically presented in SCD research reports to permit replication by independent researchers. It is through such replication efforts that the generality of findings of a single study is established and evidence generated in support of an intervention. In the chapters that follow we have attempted to provide sufficient detail on the parameters of SCD research methodology to allow you to objectively evaluate and conduct studies using SCDs. Through your efforts and the efforts of other applied researchers it is possible to advance our understanding of human behavior and add evidence in support of effective practices. To this end, scientist-practitioners must disseminate their research findings in professional journals, at professional conferences, and during clinic or school in-services.

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## 2

# Children Appropriating Literacy: Empowerment Pedagogy From Young Children's Perspective

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This chapter is based on a micro-ethnographic study conducted in a second grade classroom of a rural primary school in North India. It describes and analyzes the means through which children appropriate literacy; the purpose that drove their development as writers; and the ways in which, as they enacted their purposes in this context, they grew as persons or were empowered. The term *appropriation* is used in this context to mean “making one’s own.” To appropriate literacy is to add to one’s symbolic repertoire aiding one in interpretive, constructive, creative interaction with the world and others in it. Appropriation is also used in the Marxian sense of appropriating a power-commodity or a set of practices controlled by dominant classes or cultures.

Empowerment has been conceived largely in political terms by critical educators like Freire, Giroux, Lankshear, and others. In this chapter, I suggest that this conception of empowerment and critical pedagogy is more appropriate for adults than for children. The main thrust of this chapter is a presentation of a reconstructed definition of empowerment and power in children’s terms. This case study centers on classroom life in general and four focal children in particular. In this chapter, I refer to only two of the children.

The school in which the study was conducted is a typical government-run primary school in Jannaki bagh, a small village in Lucknow district. Jannaki bagh Primary School (JPS) was established in 1956. The total enrollment in its five grades numbers 236 boys and girls, taught by five teachers, all of them women; the principal is a man. All of children come from a very low socioeconomic background. The majority of their parents work as farm laborers, some of them renting

land to work. According to information provided by the village headman, 60% to 85% of the population falls below the poverty line. Literacy figures are low, with only 22% of the entire population having had any education. JPS is situated on the road side, just off the highway. There are two rooms in which classes four and five are housed, while the other three classes are conducted in the open, unpaved ground in front of these rooms, under two large trees. The seating arrangement is flexible, depending on the season, the position of the sun, and the shady spots available during the day. The classes, which are conducted outdoors, simply move to a more comfortable spot when it becomes too hot or too sunny. All the classes move into the two rooms or are dismissed when it rains heavily. Light drizzle is simply ignored if the trees fail to provide adequate shelter.

The school is bounded on two sides by the village homes and by a string of shops on the road side. Another side opens out to the fields. A hand pump forms the central focus of the school and is a site of constant activity. Men, women, and children from the village come there continuously to fetch water, bathe, and clean themselves. The second grade classroom is conducted under a tree in the yard.

I spent a total of 30 weeks with a group of 51 children who were in the second grade for the first 20 weeks of the study and in the third grade for the latter 10 weeks of the study. The data collection ranged over three academic semesters of the school. Ethnographic methods of inquiry and observation, including handwritten fieldnotes during participant observation, audiotaping of classroom interactions, and formal and informal interviews, were used. The study had two phases, an observation phase and a participation phase. During the participation phase, I adopted the role of teacher-researcher and participated actively with the children in the construction and initiation of literacy activities in the classroom, in the attempt to construct a literacy curriculum that was responsive to the culturally embedded needs and purposes of the child-members of the community.

## **THE OBSERVATION PHASE: FAILING THE CHILDREN**

My observations and interactions with all the participants revealed that the setting was an alienating, nonresponsive, uncaring one. It was an unfortunate story like the ones enacted in many schools all over the world as described by Giroux (1989) and Fine (1989). The pervasive theme was “no one cares,” “no one listens.” Parents, teachers, principal,

and children all felt disrespected, unsupported, unresponded to. No one felt a sense of ownership over the school or the curriculum. Literacy was conceived mechanistically, practiced minimally and passively. The official power structure was nonparticipatory, unidirectional, and hierarchical. The teacher controlled all the activity in the classroom, and the children worked passively and obediently. She determined the sociospatial arrangements of all official interactions, the structuring of classroom events, and the sequence of instructional phases unilaterally, without the participation of the children.

No composing sessions occurred in this classroom. Each day, the children were assigned one writing task, which consisted of copying lines from their textbook, as many as they could fit on their slates. The children copied carefully, though quickly and mechanically. (Hindi was the language of instruction.) They did not talk about their writing, nor did they read it to themselves or to their friends, although they often stopped writing to chat with their friends about topics unrelated to the subject matter of their written texts (e.g., incidents about home, siblings, festivals, and each other).

Reading took the form of decoding the letters and words from the text book. The teacher read the text once or twice a week. She read one word at a time, with the children reciting after her, following the text word by word with their fingers. Often I observed them simply reciting along, without even looking at the text. The teacher conducted a brief spelling and word recognition drill every day. The official literacy curriculum thus consisted of reading the lessons from the basal reader and copying parts of them. There was no official story reading (other than that from the basal reader) or storytelling by either the teacher or the children, nor was there any singing, craftwork, or drawing. I saw very little variation on the sparsely furnished official curricular stage. Literacy was officially defined in terms of decontextualized technical skills of reading and writing, reduced to the bare elements of the alphabet. Reading was defined as decoding of print, and writing was understood as the mechanical transcription of letters.

### **BUILDING CIRCLES OF MUTUALITY: THE PARTICIPATION PHASE**

During my participatory intervention phase, we explored the possibilities and potentialities offered by the children, in an attempt to

construct a curriculum that would be responsive to their needs and purposes. Although there was little we could do to alter the larger institutional structure, several possibilities opened up as we collaboratively constructed our classroom into a bonded context, within which we could and did take action. We reconstructed the social structure of the classroom and assigned different roles to each other with a corresponding reordering of rights, responsibilities, and duties. We constructed a connective ideology and transformed the political structure of the classroom from a chain of oppression to several circles of mutuality. These were spaces of inclusion, participation, addressal, and response.

In the newly constructed social space, the children had the right to:

- make choices,
- offer consent,
- perform,
- play with language,
- make requests,
- offer suggestions,
- display their knowledge for their peers and me,
- help their peers by sharing competencies,
- ask for help,
- be helped by the teacher and their peers,
- express their needs and wishes,
- have these needs attended to, and
- respect the decisions of the teacher.

As teacher, I:

- provided a model,
- addressed questions,
- solicited suggestions,
- made suggestions,

provided the text,  
performed for them,  
played with them,  
conducted the performance,  
listened to them and responded to them, and was their addressee,  
evaluator, and collaborator, sharing my competencies and leading  
them on to higher competencies.

The children began to appropriate a more central role in the construction of the events of the classroom, as we entered into several negotiations and collaborations while transacting the literacy curriculum. They played a decisive role in constructing the literacy we practiced, and it was in response to their demands that the curriculum took a performative shape. They “decided” that the curriculum should be woven around poetry, song, drama, and story. The following are some of the literacy events that occurred on the new curricular stage.

### **Poetry and Song**

- Recitation of rhymes, poems and songs.
- Copying teacher models from the blackboard.
- Copying peer models.
- Teacher dictation of poems and songs.
- Peer dictation of poems and songs.
- Composing poems (extending and modeling an official sample).

### **Story**

- Reading stories from the text book, and library books, and using child-produced texts.
- Recomposing stories collaboratively from text book and library books.
- Copying collaboratively composed stories from the blackboard.

- Teacher dictation of collaboratively recomposed stories.
- Semidictated composing, that is, extending partially dictated stories.
- Retelling stories heard or read.
- Rewriting stories heard or read.
- Composing their own stories:
  - a. Narrativizing events and experiences, real and imagined.
  - b. Extending story-starters and story ideas provided by teacher.
  - c. Picture compositions:
    - Teacher draws figures requested by the children and they compose the text.
    - Children draw and compose descriptive text.
    - Teacher draws on the board and teacher and children compose the descriptive text or story collaboratively.
    - Teacher brings printed pictures, and children compose oral stories collaboratively and written stories individually and collaboratively.

### **Drama**

- Enacting stories from the text for each other as a class and for the rest of the school:
  - a. Story theatre: Teacher narrates; children act; children narrate and act.
  - b. Readers theatre: Teacher reads dramatically; children read dramatically.
- Enacting poems.
- Enacting songs.

In the following sections, I provide a brief descriptive analysis of the developmental histories of two of my focal children in order to illustrate how they appropriated literacy as they grew as writers and as persons during the intervention phase.

## RAJESH: FINDING A VOICE

Rajesh is a thin, gaunt-looking boy with short cropped hair and a very wide smile. His large, black eyes leap out from his thin face; his look is as tentative as his smile. He has a high-pitched voice and a shy, retiring demeanor. Rajesh lives with his mother, sister, and younger brother in Hamirpur, which is a mile from the school. Hamirpur is like any other village in the area, (with dirt roads and mud huts lined one next to the other. Rajesh lives in a mud hut with a raised platform in front and a courtyard inside with a couple of rooms around it; one room served as the family kitchen and store and the other as the bedroom. The family did all their living in the verandah and the courtyard. Because there was no electricity, they lit oil lamps when it got dark in the evening and went to bed early to save on fuel costs, as did most of the people in the village.

Rajesh's father, now deceased, used to hire himself out as a laborer in the fields. His mother now does the same work. She and a neighbor argue about Rajesh's age, finally agreeing on 10 years. Rajesh is the only member of the family who has any education, and his mother has her hopes pinned on him. She hopes that he will "progress in life and not be a 'mere' laborer like she and her husband." She values education greatly and intends to educate her son until high school.

During the observation phase, I noticed that Rajesh was an uncertain follower. He had beautifully formed handwriting, of which he was very proud as it earned him the esteem of his teacher and friends. He worked and played in his friendship group. He knew they all were better spellers than he, but reveled in the fact that his handwriting "is better than anyone else's." Rajesh was a copier. Having no faith in his ability to spell, he copied faithfully from the text and the blackboard, but most of all he copied from his friends. For him, writing meant copying from the text or the blackboard or from someone else's text in a beautiful hand. Owning it or "authorship," meant having it on his slate or page. His focus was on the precise and ornate formation of the letters. The letters seemed to symbolize only sounds and words, although not his own. At this point, he was "drawing" letters, which had aesthetic meaning for him and gave him the sense that he was writing, much in the sense in which an early writer scribbles, pretending to write. He had not yet reached second-order symbolism. Rajesh was afraid to take risks or follow an independent path, unable to perceive his own competencies and own them enough to use them for himself. Even

though he relied so heavily on copying, he did have a fairly sound sense of the letter-sound association.

Rajesh seemed to be afflicted with a fear of autonomy, which might be rooted in his personal history. He is the first literate in his family. Landless, fatherless, the eldest son of a widow, he knows the family's hopes are all pinned on him. This is probably a tremendous pressure for a 10-year-old, unsupported by any literate member or literacy in his home. Lower caste laborer, widow in a feudal patriarchal casteist society, his mother's social place, and his too, consequently, is not one that inspires hope; it is one that is based on respect for the authority of one's "betters." It is in following rules that survival and security lay, and this is what he seemed to do. Furthermore, the literacy instruction in the classroom emphasized following, in terms of correct modeling of the rules of language (e.g., spelling and handwriting), and this is what he worked at. His guiding purpose was to learn literacy and to get it right.

As a result of the intervention, the participant structure, the pedagogical environment, and the definition of literacy and its demands changed, and shaped Rajesh's development as a writer. He began to make tentative moves toward finding his own words. He learned to copy selectively, learning that one can copy not only words, but speech, even if it is someone else's, in order to express one's own meaning. He copied the following sentences from another girl's book:

Mamiji (me) teaches us poems. She greets us with a namaskar. We greet her with a namaskar.<sup>1</sup>

He wanted to establish a relationship with me and this was his way of using writing to do so. He showed his first signs of independence in his drawing, an element introduced by me in the literacy curriculum. He began to draw his own figures and to appropriate drawing as a symbolic support for his writing, using his figures to contextualize his writing. He began by writing simple descriptive sentences such as the one under the figure of a parrot, drawn jointly by him and me: "The parrot speaks. The name of the parrot is Mithu. Ram Ram," and progressed to writing a short narrative a few days later with help from me. I prompted him with questions and at first composed each sentence for him, after which he wrote it out himself, coming to me after each

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<sup>1</sup> Indian greeting meaning *I bow to you*.

sentence and using our talk as support for his writing. He composed some of the sentences himself; the narrative structure was his own, but he needed oral support and confirmation to organize his writing. He came for help frequently, driven by his need to become a writer in this new sense. He began to focus less on his handwriting, which was valued less now by his friends too.

Three months into the study, Rajesh wrote simple narratives by himself, relying less on supportive talk from me and more on contextual and personal supports like the topic and its relevance to him and his own purposes. He wrote about his friend Dashant and the game they played together. I started him off with the first sentence, "My friend's name is Dashant," after which he wrote:

If Dashant comes to my house, then I will play bat ball with him. And we [will have a] match and who ever has more runs he wins. I will win.

He did not need drawing as a supportive context. Rajesh seemed to move to a second order symbolism: He was writing speech, not mine but his own. He seemed to have transformed our interpersonal composing into intrapersonal composing. He announced his intention to "win," which, given his tentative, shy, retiring demeanor, I interpreted as a sign of increased confidence in himself and the possibilities of his life.

Inventing imagined worlds, Rajesh began to use writing to imagine and fantasize with. In an official assignment in which the children were asked to write about all the things they liked to do, he wrote the following:

I like the fair a lot and I like drama and I like apples and I like mangoes and I like my mother and father and I like my mamiji and my teacher and I like food and I like books and there are many mangoes in my orchard a when the mangoes ripen then I will give my mamiji mangoes from my orchard and then she will like them a lot.

Rajesh has no father and no orchard, and he knows I know this, but he has learned to invent imagined worlds with his writing. He has acquired symbolic power and is able to create symbolic worlds, hoped-for worlds and wished-for worlds, which is also evident from his next story:

## My Story

Tonight I dreamt that I went to my mamiji's (myself) house and I liked the house very much. Mamiji received me very lovingly and I sat in mamiji's car and I went all over the city. I liked that very much. Then with mamiji, I went to Bahenji's (the class teacher). There I met Bahenji's mother and she received me very lovingly. She sent for tea from the restaurant and I went with love. On the way I met Ekta (the class teacher's daughter) in the lane. I did not recognize her but she recognized me. She took me home and we sat for a while. Then Ekta showed me some flowers and I liked the pretty, pretty flowers. Now I think I'll be leaving. Namaste to all. Namaste to Raakhi too.

Rajesh had learned to take symbolic action. He "made" a cultural bridge between our vastly different worlds, one middle-class urban and the other working-class rural, and he walked over to the other side. In this world, he was treated lovingly and with respect by all the people he knew. This was the way he wished to be treated. Using his narrative imagination in this story, he traversed social power boundaries and distances, positioned himself socially, staked his claim to love and respect, and created a respectable, hospitable place for himself in a socially distant world, with his writing. He envisioned possibilities for himself (a possible self and a possible world), and reached out for them symbolically. In appropriating literacy as an expressive, inventive tool and a self-presentational medium, he acquired the power of imagination or envisagement as he became a writer.

Toward the end of the study, Rajesh became a confident composer, writing easily without any help from me, using me as his addressee and occasional helper, leaning on his friends, for social support and occasional spellings, but writing his own words and meanings, for purposes of his own. His composed texts had a distinct dialogic character. The writing was always addressed to someone, either to me or to his friends, and its addressive context provided the support he now needed. It was the dialogic import of his writing that he valued. He found his voice through the medium he used for expressing it, and it grew stronger the more he exercised it.

## **SHEELA: A PERSON ADDRESSED AND ADDRESSING**

Sheela is an 8-year-old, tall but slightly built girl. She has large expressive eyes set in a round face and a wide disarming, charming smile. She lives in Sannasibagh with her parents, brothers and sisters. Her house, a few minutes walk from the school, looks much like Rajesh's. Youngest of four children, Sheela's older sister, 14, is enrolled in the sixth grade in the same school, and both older brothers have at least an eighth-grade education. Both Sheela's parents are illiterate and unemployed. They are all supported by the older brother, who owns a cycle repair shop. When interviewed, Sheela's mother displayed apathy toward her daughter's education and expressed her scepticism about its value for girls, saying, "I'm going to marry off my daughters as soon as they pass the eighth grade. What will they do with literacy? This is a village."

Sheela's home environment is not unusual in the village, especially in its gender stance. Girls are expected to be silent little creatures, who should try to make themselves useful around the house as soon as they can. The hours spent in school are allowed begrudgingly, because the only end in mind for daughters is marriage as soon as they attain puberty.

At school, Sheela liked to sit at the back, far away from the teacher's gaze, where she would try not to attract too much attention. A very careful child, she was afraid of making mistakes and worked cautiously and painstakingly. Sheela was very interested in writing and reading, working busily at all the official and unofficial literacy tasks in the classroom. Like the other children, she conceived of literacy as "copying" print. She used written language like an object to be transferred from page to page and handed to others, as in the form of the poems she so liked to share with her friends. It was still an external thing, a fun thing, to be played with, a valued thing, to be stored and an attribute to have, one that lent prestige. She had not yet discovered the potency of written language as a symbolic and intersubjective transactional medium.

Early in the intervention phase, Sheela wrote, "I greet mamiji with folded hands," and she brought it to show me. It was her first independently generated sentence. It was a way of making a connection with me, adopting me as addressee and forming her circle of mutuality. She had found a dialogic context in which to embed her writing.

Like Rajesh, Sheela too began to discover drawing as a symbolic support. She copied a poem about a parrot from her friend and brought it to me, asking me to draw a parrot for her. As I was drawing, she told me she had a parrot at home. Expressing interest, I told her she could write about her own parrot. She gave me a very tentative look, willing to try me out to see what she would find, surprised too, that I should be asking her to write and draw about herself. She then took the drawing, colored it, and generated these sentences: “My parrot speaks and he calls out ‘Bimla’ [her sister] and calls out to me, calling out, ‘Sheela’.”

She built on my dialogic support to compose these sentences, as I prompted with questions like, “What does your parrot like to talk about?” She had found a real, live personal context to write about. In response to her, I wrote, “What is your parrot’s name, Sheela? Do you like him a lot?” hoping to firm up the circle of mutuality that she had begun to build. Responding cautiously to my interest in her, Sheela began to write and draw her worlds, using me as her addressee. The few minutes that I spent with each child, negotiating topics, providing verbal scaffolding, or drawing supportive contexts, were moments of individual address for them and were extremely important for Sheela. Her writing developed as she discovered its transactional potential, and found that with it she could build and maintain relationships with distant others. The main purpose that seemed to drive Sheela’s writing was maintaining a relationship with me and, through me, with her teacher.

My interview with Sheela’s mother, during which Sheela was present, revealed her apathy toward her daughter’s education. Sheela used writing to reconstruct her reality according to her own needs and desires:

I am studying from class one to class three. My mother came to enroll me. My mother understood very well that is why my mother wanted to educate me that if I educate my daughter it will be very beneficial to me. Mother says I like educating my daughter. My mother liked sending me to school so she sent me to school. If I will educate my daughter then it will be good for me.

This was a wished-for representation (Stern, 1985) and presentation of her life. She had discovered the constructive possibilities of writing, its “constitutiveness” as Bruner (1990) calls it, “the capacity of language

to create and stipulate realities of its own" (p. 89) and was using it to reinterpret her own lived reality, to "distort and transcend it" (Stern, 1985, p. 182).

In the same composition she wrote:

Mamiji is my friend. Friend means she is Sheela's friend [using a synonym]. Why do I like to study because my teacher teaches then I like it. I like Bahenji's way of speaking. [The class teacher and I use standard Hindi and they speak the dialect]. Bahenji and Mamiji are very good friends and I am very good friends with Bahenji and Mamiji.

She brought this to show me, beaming brightly, as though she had made an important discovery. Mrs. S, the class teacher, read it over my shoulder. Not very pleased at the declaration of friendship, she frowned gently: "What's this about friends. How can you be friends?"

Sheela was undaunted. She stood her ground without saying anything and kept smiling at us. This is very significant, considering the traditional norms of distance between adult and child, teacher and student, upper and lower caste and class, specifically in the village and generally in the Indian context. Sheela seemed to transcend all these boundaries with this declaration of friendship. Friendship is a relationship of equality, and she was declaring herself an equal person staking claim to an equal relationship. Using writing as a personally expressive and exploratory tool, Sheela had found its empowerment potential; with it she could reposition herself with regard to the people in power and alter the power relationship for herself as she did so. She had appropriated literacy as a symbolic tool to define herself in relation to others in a way that was compatible with her vision of herself. After this, she continued to write narratives peopled with "friends." She referred to another visitor to our classroom, also an upper class adult, as "mataji (mother) is my friend." Then she extended her claims to friendship to Mrs. S's daughter Ekta as well, writing, "Ekta is my friend."

Like Rajesh, Sheela used literacy to take symbolic action in the world, although they each did so in different ways. Rajesh built a bridge, trying to bridge power differences and distances. Sheela dissolved these differences by redefining herself and her relationship with the distant powerful others in the school context, an important one

in her life. She declared the differences dissolved with her redefinition of our relationship in terms of friendship. Retaining the third person form of address and the Indian suffix of deference *Ji*, she acknowledged the difference of age and the deference traditionally due to it in the Indian cultural context, but with her declaration of friendship she refused the power differences.

## EMPOWERMENT PEDAGOGY FROM YOUNG CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE

Reflecting on the focal children of this study, and their development during the course of this study, I believe they were all empowered by the literacy practice, although not perhaps in the sense in which Giroux and others conceive of empowerment, as the acquisition of "critical knowledge about basic societal structures." They were empowered in the sense that they owned themselves more as they grew in autonomy and a realization of their self-hood. The children were empowered because of the various kinds of power they harnessed, as they appropriated literacy and thus found important self-constructing tools.

Empowerment has been conceived largely in macropolitical terms, by critical educators. Lankshear (personal communication, Spring 1994) defines it in relation to power structures, pointing out that a subject is empowered in relation to a power structure, in order to take action upon or within a given structure. Giroux (1989) has taken a similar stance, defining empowerment as 'the ability to think and act critically' he conceives empowerment pedagogy as teaching for social transformation. Following Freire's (1987) lead, all these educational theorists, define power and empowerment in both large social and political terms. According to them, education for empowerment involves primarily the cultivation of a "sociological imagination" defined by Mills (1959) as "a quality of mind which enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (p. 6). Freire (1987) refers to this as "conscientzia" or a critical consciousness that involves naming the world and our position in it as historically, socially, politically constituted beings, in order that we may transform the world.

It is significant that the Freirian perspective just described comes from men, who because they are men in a world structured largely by men, locate both power and empowerment in political and social

structures. They view the larger structures as being within their reach (and given their place in it, it is) and can conceive of the possibility of action upon them. I suggest that this conception of empowerment and critical pedagogy is more appropriate for adults than for children. Children (and most women) given their place in the sociopolitical power structure, feel too distanced, too far down on the power ladder, to consider it within their reach. Furthermore, they see themselves as inhabiting peopled worlds, personal and interpersonal worlds, rather than structured worlds. Children, particularly, do not conceive of reality in a structural sense, in terms of social, political or logical structures, except when these structures are embodied in the people with whom they live their lives. As Donaldson (1978) points out, children make child-sense of themselves and the world, which is different from an adult-sense. In my view, this is a more peopled, personal and interpersonal, intentional, narrative sense, one contextualised in human purposes, feelings and endeavors.

More than nurturing a sociological imagination in children, empowerment involves nurturing and developing children's narrative imaginations. The children in my study gave very few cues for social dialogues of the kind referred to by critical theorists (i.e., discussions about the "realities" of their lives such as poverty and caste). They preferred instead to talk about the imagined possibilities created by poetry, stories, and songs. Children inhabit a special place as children. We should respect their childhood and allow it to grow. They are not miniature adults, and the social structure, although it impinges on their lives, imposing limits and constraints, is still too distant to matter. More than helping them to acquire the ability to think and act critically about the realities of their lives, I found it more useful to help them compose creative and imaginative stories. They need the symbolic and social tools with which to construct stories where their own role is a more powerful one. It is with stories like the ones described earlier, that children construct their identities, negotiate relationships, and position themselves in the world.

Sheela and Rajesh both illustrate that when the imagination is released its power can be harnessed for self-construction and transformation. The imagination is powerful because it enables thinking in terms of possibility, rather than actuality. The first step in transcending or transforming a "real" world of despair is to be able to conceive of a possible world and a possible, wished-for, hoped-for self positioned comfortably in it. Sheela repositioned herself in the power relationships

she encountered and effected a structural change as well, changing the power realities in the world she was constructing. The larger structure remains stable only if its components remain in their designated positions; otherwise it is destabilized by any shift. Sheela seemed to make such a destabilizing shift, not by acting on distant abstract social and political structures, but by creatively restructuring her relationship with me and the teacher, the powerful others in her school life. She seemed to be empowered by a self-knowledge, a growing, creative, imaginative understanding of who she was and who she could be in relation to others in her world. She was able to envision a possible self and was finding ways of actualizing this self.

As for Rajesh, what is the point of all this literacy, given the stark reality of his life? What will change in his life because of it? A skeptical friend confronted me with this, as I recounted Rajesh's progress enthusiastically. Perhaps it is naive optimism, born out of the comfort of my own world, but I consider Rajesh with a sense of possibility, rather than futility. Nothing had changed in the external conditions of his existence, but his personal world evolved. He had grown in confidence and self-respect. He had learned to become an active composer of his own thoughts and ideas, a writer of his own texts, rather than a passive copier of other people's words. He had appropriated a valuable symbolic tool and with this had gained an important self-construction and life-transformation tool. He had not moved up in the power structure, but a power space had emerged within himself, with which he could now act more powerfully as a person among other persons in the world. He could also construct possibilities for his life symbolically, which he did, building bridges to extend his life into other alien more powerful worlds.

As the children negotiated the curriculum and participated in structuring the events in the classroom, they learned to make decisions, take risks, and make choices, and thus grew in autonomy. Most importantly, they acquired a view of themselves as persons with a voice that counted. They learned that they had the right to participate in structuring their classroom life. Furthermore, they learned that their composed texts, crafted out of their own lived and imagined experiences, were as valid as the revered text book, a legitimate part of the curriculum. They also learned that they had the right to participate in the construction of knowledge, and they gained with this a special power, the power associated with knowledge, used in especially oppressive ways in school.

The children in my study thus point toward another conception of empowerment, one missed by the critical educators discussed earlier, one centered in and around relationships. It is people who empower and depower each other in their daily interactions with each other. From the children's perspective, empowerment has more to do with relationships than with structures. Redefined in children's terms, empowerment, although a relational term, is better understood in relation to the self and to people in immediate contexts, rather than to abstract, large social and political structures. Empowerment involves transformative action as Giroux (1989) says, but instead of a direct social transformation, for children, empowerment takes the form of imaginative self-transformation and creative symbolic action in their own lives. Most importantly, it involves an achievement of their personhood. More than naming the real world, children's *conscientzia* manifests itself in an imaginative narrative and poetic invention of possible worlds and possible selves.

## LEARNING FROM CHILDREN

The main change in the classroom after the intervention occurred in terms of the restructured relationships. The classroom was constructed into a circle of mutuality in which several such circles proliferated. The chief feature of this circle was a relationship of respectful response. The children learned to write because they had someone for whom to write. Relationships were very important to the children. They wrote because the relationship mattered to them and they wanted to nurture it; the relationship nurtured their growth as writers and persons. The curriculum was responsive because it emerged from and was grounded in a set of responsive relationships. The important factor was the relationship, even more so than the literacy, although both developed simultaneously or interactively. Given the power difference in any student-teacher relationship, this relationship assumes special significance in terms of its empowering or depowering potential. A teacher occupies an important power-space in a child's world and she can be empowering or depowering depending on how she uses her power-space.

Perhaps critical theorists, planners, and policymakers could learn from children because they seem to point in an important direction. Perhaps we need to reconceive society and politics in terms of relation-

ships, circles of mutuality based on mutual respect and response which cohere well with our commitment to participatory democracy, defined well by Dewey (1985), who said “More than a form of Government, it is a mode of associated living, of conjoined communicated experience.” (p. 93)

With specific reference to education, we need to reconceive the role of schooling and literacy, taking a view of children as persons with legitimate ends of their own to pursue. The critical theorists have done invaluable work in pointing out that the political ideology underlying the institutional structure and practice in schools deserves critical examination. Yet they should guard against falling into the ideological trap of taking an exclusively political view of literacy and schools. I agree with Giroux (1989) that public education should be linked with the imperatives of democracy, in that the institutional structure of education should take a participatory form in line with the ethical principles of democracy. I argue that he defines the purpose of schooling in reductionist political terms, as do policy planners who view literacy predominantly in its potential for national development and modernization. I protest on behalf of children, at thus being objectified and instrumentalized, viewed primarily as national resources or political agents, with the school perceived mainly as a political arena. Children are not merely national resources. They are persons, and the primary purpose of schooling is to nurture their growth as persons, and to help them appropriate literacy for their own purposes. My study suggests that young children would reconceive the school as a playground rather than a political arena and redefine critical literacy as creative literacy, construing it as a tool with which to construct a self related to others in the world. This tool can be used to imagine possibilities for their lives and consequently for the larger public spheres. The critical theorists speak of schools as “democratic public spheres,” Giroux (1989) and so they should be, but not ones that obliterate or swallow up the personal spheres. Viewed from the perspective of young children, literacy is not for social and political revolution or national development; it is for people to use in relation to each other. Perhaps that is another form that social and political revolution might take, a deconstruction of power structures, not by attacking them frontally, but by transforming them into empowering relationships, or as the children show, *circles of mutuality*.

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# 1 The Evolving Role of Educators

*The story of Keyshawn.* “I’m not going to talk to you” were the first words that Keyshawn said to the school psychologist who was assigned to work with him. Keyshawn was nine years old. He had an extensive history of trauma and abuse. In a fit of rage, he turned over an entire classroom. He caused thousands of dollars in damage and he had to be restrained by a school resource officer while he was using a chair to smash school windows. Fortunately, the school psychologist gave Keyshawn the time and space he needed to feel comfortable and open up. She met with him outside the classroom and offered him tissues and water, which he reluctantly took. Then she asked him to take her to his favorite place in the school and they proceeded to go to a large oak tree where students gather for recess. She also validated his frustrations and provided him with emotional support. Keyshawn then melted. He began crying loudly, shaking, and profusely apologizing; he wrapped his arms around the school psychologist while he wept. Keyshawn and the school psychologist began therapy the next day and worked with his teacher to develop a trauma-sensitive classroom.

*The story of Chloe.* Chloe did not fit in. According to her own words, she “was not like the other girls.” Chloe was feeling increasingly more attracted to her female peers. However, her family ascribed to traditional values and they did not accept non-heterosexual relationships. Therefore, Chloe was very worried that her family might find out about her sexual interest in other girls. Because of pain associated with living “in the closet,” Chloe began cutting herself with razors, glass, and other sharp objects. Her family members were confused by her behavior. They wondered why she would deliberately hurt herself when she had everything: beauty, intelligence—and she was making good grades. Fortunately, the cuts on Chloe’s arm were noticed by a concerned teacher. Her teacher then encouraged Chloe to start seeing a counselor who helped her immensely. She and her counselor worked together on problem-solving and developed strategies to reduce Chloe’s emotional distress. They saw each other twice a week for a semester. Chloe is now in college and she is doing well.

*The story of Jared.* It was the first week of school, a week that often sets the tone for the rest of the year, and Jared had already gotten in a fight with another student. He was suspended for fighting but the other student was not. This enraged Jared and he vowed revenge. Jared told a friend that he was going to bring a gun to school and shoot the student that he fought, as well as the school’s assistant principal whom he blamed for his suspension. Fortunately, Jared’s friend took this threat seriously and he told his mother who then called a teacher she knew at Jared’s school. Immediately, consistent with the school’s established safety plan, local authorities were contacted and the police searched Jared and his possessions. They found a gun in his backpack and a suicide note. Upon expulsion, Jared was sent to a residential treatment center where he and his family received intensive therapy.

What is common in these stories is that concerned educators, as well as school-based mental health professionals, students, parents, administrators, and local police officers, all stepped in to

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support students' mental health and ensure school safety. In the first story, a school psychologist had the forbearance to look past the student's abusive words and the equanimity to provide emotional support. In the second story, a teacher noticed that a student was in distress and had the foresight to refer her for counseling. Lastly, in the third story, a range of educators and others from the community acted to avert a potential tragedy while providing a highly distraught student with the support that he needed. Overall, these stories underscore how creating safe and supportive schools and fostering students' mental health is a job for all members of school communities—not just for school-based mental health professionals, administrators, and school resources officers (SROs). Moreover, to maximize these efforts, all educators such as teachers, administrators, teachers' aides, school-based mental health professionals, and other key adults at school must come together and work collaboratively.

### **Creating Safe Schools and Fostering Students' Mental Health**

Educators are well positioned to help create safe and supportive schools and to foster students' mental health. In fact, they are on the front line with these efforts as they influence the way that students feel at school. In addition, they frequently encounter students with mental health problems. In support of the former, educators typically spend almost eight hours per day with the students they teach and support in varying capacities. Moreover, many students report that educators are among the most important adults in their lives (Sulkowski, Demaray, & Lazarus, 2012; Woolley & Bowen, 2007). Further, regarding the role of educators in supporting students' mental health, one study found that approximately three-quarters of educators report having worked with or encountered a student with a serious mental health problem during the past year (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). Thus, educators have tremendous power to influence learning environments and impact the lives of the students they serve. To help in this regard, Chapter 2 discusses strategies for creating safe and supportive schools.

But isn't the role of educators to teach? Although it is true that delivering rich instruction remains the central role for educators, thousands of educators across the U.S. and beyond are now also helping to foster students' emotional well-being. Research suggests that educators are becoming increasingly open to supporting students' mental health. Specifically, results from a study by Reinke et al. (2011) indicate that the overwhelming majority of teachers (94 percent) report that schools should be involved in the delivery of mental health services to students, which indicates that the majority of educators view their role as being broader than just delivering instruction. Unfortunately, however, in the same study, 66 percent of teachers reported that they lacked the skills necessary to support students with mental health problems. Therefore, an obvious need exists for providing educators with the knowledge and skills they can use to support students' complex and multifaceted mental health needs. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 discuss individual and whole-school efforts to foster students' mental health.

### **The Evolving Role of Educators in Public Education**

Schools have not always been democratic institutions in the U.S. Prior to compulsory school acts—first in Massachusetts in 1852 and last in Mississippi in 1917—education largely was reserved for the wealthy (Jeynes, 2007; Rothbard, 1999). Schools enrolled children from affluent families and these students were taught skills that would enable them to navigate the upper echelons of society successfully. However, U.S. education has become increasingly more egalitarian in that its role has changed from being a vehicle for propagating the status quo to a mechanism for social advancement, cohesion, and justice (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985).

As a general trend, public education has become increasingly more inclusive throughout the twentieth century. Following the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of*

*Education of Topeka* (347 U.S. 483) in 1954 that established that separate public schools for black and white students were unconstitutional, great strides have been made toward opening the doors of education to all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, background, or beliefs (see Kluger [2011] for review). However, as schools became more inclusive of students from culturally diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities were often still prohibited from benefiting from public education (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). In fact, it was not until the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794; 34 C.F.R. 300.1 et. seq.) that Federal programs could no longer discriminate against individuals on the basis of their disability.

To provide protections to students with disabilities, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law [PL] 94-142). This major piece of legislation has been aptly described as the “Bill of Rights for Handicapped Children.” The implementation of PL 94-142 had a profound effect on exceptional student education. Children with disabilities who were not previously served in schools were afforded a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) centering on special education and related services (Strichart & Lazarus, 1986). The law provided handicapped students with rights, including the right to due process, nondiscriminatory assessment, confidential handling of personal records and information, and the opportunity for caregivers to examine all records pertaining to the evaluation, placement, and educational programming of their child. Furthermore, caregivers were given the right to challenge the contents of records and to obtain an independent evaluation of their child.

Public Law 94-142 was later re-authorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990 with additional provisions. Basically, PL-94-142 and IDEA aimed to level the playing field and mandated that every student with a disability be provided with an individualized educational plan (IEP) that allows them to participate fully in their education in the least restrictive environment possible (Sulkowski, Joyce, & Storch, 2012). This act was re-authorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA; PL 108-446) and under the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McK-V Act; Pub. L. 100-77), which was incorporated under IDEIA, it provided additional protections to some highly at-risk or vulnerable student populations such as homeless students. In addition to providing other protections, the McK-V Act ensures the immediate enrollment of students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). Therefore, the act protects students who are homeless or seriously economically disenfranchised. To help address the needs of students who often are overlooked, Chapter 14 discusses helping highly vulnerable student populations such as homeless students.

As a general trend, U.S. schools have become increasingly more inclusive of students who are racially, ethnically, and economically diverse as well as supportive of students with classifiable disabilities. However, despite this progress, considerable room for improvement still exists to support all students. Currently, consistent with the school mental health movement, which began roughly in the 1990s, thousands of schools appear to be in the process of becoming more inclusive and supportive of the needs of another group of students—those who have mental health needs—who traditionally have been neglected (Flaherty, Weist, & Warner, 1996; Sulkowski et al., 2012). Therefore, as recent trends suggest, the evolving role for educators likely will involve supporting students’ mental health and emotional well-being.

## **School-based Mental Health**

One out of every five students is suffering with a serious mental health problem according to estimates by the office of the U.S. Surgeon General (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2000). The prevalence of mental illness among children has increased (Perou et al., 2010) and almost half of adolescents ages 13 to 18 have had a mental disorder (Merikangas et al., 2010; see Chapter 3 for further discussion on the impact of mental illness). Moreover, from

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2007 to 2010 there was an increase of 24 percent in inpatient mental health and substance abuse admissions according to the Health Care Cost Institute (2012).

Mental illness places a huge burden on U.S. students, schools, and society. As noted by Dr. Stephen Brock, the Past President of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), experiencing mental illness causes significant pain and impairs healthy functioning (2015). In a NASP Presidential Address, Brock argues forcefully that all stakeholders in schools should support efforts to provide access to school mental health services. Failure to do so can result in the loss of life. For example, research indicates that suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 19 and that than 9 out of every 10 completed suicides are related to some type of mental illness, most frequently depression (Erbacher, Singer, & Poland, 2015; Miller, 2011; Shaffer & Craft, 1999). Moreover, more youth have died by suicide than by cancer, heart disease, birth defects, pneumonia, influenza, cerebrovascular disease, pregnancy and childbirth complications, and chronic lung disease *combined* (Brock, 2015; Hoyert & Xu, 2012; Kalafat & Lazarus, 2002). Because of the importance of this topic, Chapter 16 discusses suicide assessment, prevention, and intervention.

### ***Student Access to Service***

As previously noted, millions of students display mental health needs. Unfortunately, however, most of these students do not receive mental health services to address these needs (Farmer, Burns, Phillips, Angold, & Costello, 2003). In fact, according to the U.S. Public Health Service (2000), in any given year only 20 percent of children and adolescents with mental disorders receive mental health care. Yet, for students who do receive mental health support, over 60 percent of these individuals receive it in public school settings. Therefore, school is the entry point for the delivery of mental health services for a majority of our nation's youth (Farmer et al., 2003). In light of this, in addition to their traditional goal of teaching academic skills, U.S. public schools have become key institutions that also support students' mental health. Further, a great capacity exists for these institutions to expand the provision of school-based mental health services to support students who experience barriers to access treatment in clinical or community mental health centers—that is, the rest of the students who need mental health care—yet do not receive these supports (Sulkowski et al., 2012; Sulkowski, Wingfield, Jones, & Coulter, 2011).

Providing further support for the provision of school-based mental health support, Brock (2015) argues the following: (a) at some point in their lives, the great majority of youth will attend public school; (b) youth are 21 times more likely to visit a school-based clinic for their mental health care than they are to visit a community-based clinic (Juszczak, Melinkovitch, and Kaplan, 2003); and (c) half of all lifetime cases of mental illness have their onset prior to age 14. Moreover, Brock (2015) points out the significant burden that mental illness places on society. Approximately half of students aged 14 or older who are living with mental illness drop out of school according to the U.S. Department of Education (2001). This is the highest dropout rate of any established disability group.

Not only would the provision of mental health supports by schools help reduce the pain and suffering of so many of our youth, but it could also have long-term economic and health benefits for our nation. In support of this position, the National Research Council & Institute of Medicine (2007) has noted that mental disorders in children—especially those untreated—are associated with an increased risk for mental disorders in adulthood. In the U.S. alone, the estimated cost of mental disorders (which includes health care, juvenile justice, the use of special education services, and decreased productivity) in any given year has been estimated to be 2.5 billion dollars.

Further supporting the need for school-based mental health services, a study by Cummings, Ponce, and Mays (2010) found that providing these services in schools helps reduce disparities

in service delivery, particularly among racial and/or ethnic minority students. Students often view schools as trustworthy institutions and centerpieces in communities across the U.S., which makes some students more willing to access mental health services in these familiar and trusted settings (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014; Sulkowski et al., 2013). In addition, schools also have a precedent for delivering services to highly at-risk, vulnerable, underserved, victimized, and stigmatized students (Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). In light of this, increasing numbers of educators and members of related disciplines are advocating for the provision of mental health services at school (Brock, 2015; Kutash, Duchnowski, & Lynn, 2006). Thus, consistent with a trend to support all students, many schools across the U.S. are increasing their capacity to address the needs of students with mental health problems.

## School Safety and Violence Prevention

In addition to supporting students' mental health, educators are now also taking on roles to increase school safety and prevent violence. School safety has become a salient issue for legislators and policy makers who develop and enforce educational standards and guidelines. To address problems with student drug use and school violence, the Clinton administration promoted the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (U.S. Department of Education [COE], 1994) in 1993. A key goal of this act focused on enhancing school safety by stating that: "by the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning, by ensuring that all schools are safe and free of violence" (U.S. DOE, 1994, p. 2).

In the following year, the Gun-Free Schools Act was passed to specify how disciplinary actions would be carried out for students in possession of guns while on school grounds. In general, this act stated that schools receiving federal funding are required to expel offending students for a minimum of one year. However, despite these efforts, President Clinton formally requested that the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) draft guidelines to address school violence and support students with serious mental health problems. The guidelines were written because of a series of highly publicized rampage school shootings that occurred in the mid to late 1990s and the inability of the previous efforts to prevent these tragedies. The goal for developing school violence prevention and intervention guidelines was to help educators and parents more effectively identify warning signs when students were displaying signs of serious emotional disturbance or violent potential. Ultimately, the U.S. DOE's guidelines were crafted into the publication entitled *Early warning, timely response: A guide to safe schools* (Dwyer, Osher, & Warger, 1998). Expert Interview 1.1 by Kevin Dwyer, co-author of the *Early warning guide*, discusses how education has changed over the past half century and the impact of this document on school violence.

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### Expert Interview 1.1 with Kevin Dwyer

#### *Past President, National Association of School Psychologists*

*PJL. You have worked as a school psychologist for more than 50 years. Have the conditions in schools gotten better, worse or remained about the same? Are we making progress since the publication of the text you co-wrote: Early warning, timely response: A guide to safe schools?*

*KD. Public education has improved over the half century. Previously, many more youth did not graduate. In my earliest years (starting in 1962), all schools in my district were still segregated. Children with disabilities such as Down's syndrome were placed in restrictive institutions rather than in public schools. Some children with IQs of 79, then called retarded, had their education terminated in eighth grade where they could stay in special education classes until age 16; they*

could not even enter vocational high schools. Supports for children with learning disabilities were non-existent and the recognition of poverty as a barrier to learning was close to zero. Moreover, in 1992 data from CDC and elsewhere were quite depressing. Rates of homicide and suicide were at an all-time high, as well as rates of drug use and teen pregnancy. Further, a lot more students reported carrying weapons at school. However, measures undertaken by the U.S. Courts and initiatives from presidents such as Lyndon Johnson have changed this and things have gotten better. On all the previous metrics, levels of danger and lethality are down and graduation rates are higher. Since Columbine, more students have gotten the message that they need to tell an adult when they have heard that a fellow classmate has threatened violence. But most importantly, students are much more likely to inform an adult when they perceive the school culture as positive; that is, when they trust that adults at the school will take positive action and when they view the school faculty as respectful and caring. Positive relationships between students and staff matter.

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More recently, following the tragic shooting that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary in CT, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) drafted the *Framework for safe and successful schools* document (Cowan, Vaillancourt, Rossen, & Pollitt, 2013). This document provides a framework that aims to improve school safety and increase access to mental health supports for students. In the document, efforts to improve school climate and safety are described as being overlapping initiatives that complement each other. Ultimately, in order to create safe and supportive schools, schools must work toward integrating the services they provide (e.g., academic, behavioral, social, emotional, mental health). Table 1.1 lists key best practices from the *Framework* on how to create safe and successful schools. In addition, Expert Interview 1.2, with Eric Rossen, one of the authors of the NASP Framework, discusses the development and the implementation of the *Framework* and actions that all educators can take to help ensure the physical and psychological safety of all students.

*Table 1.1* Key points from the *Framework* on how to create safe and successful schools

- 
1. Integrate services through collaboration
  2. Implement multi-tiered systems of support
  3. Improve access to school-based mental health supports
  4. Integrate school safety, crisis/emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery
  5. Balance physical and psychological safety
  6. Employ effective, positive school discipline
  7. Allow for consideration of context
  8. Acknowledge that sustainable and effective improvement takes patience and commitment
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## **Expert Interview 1.2 with Eric Rossen**

### ***National Association of School Psychologists***

*PJL. What is the Framework for safe and successful schools and why was it developed?*

ER. The *Framework for safe and successful schools* constitutes a joint statement from school principals and organizations that represent the professionals and community partners who work day in and day out to keep our children safe, ensure their well-being, and promote learning. The partnership between our organizations seeks to reinforce the interdisciplinary, collaborative, and cohesive approach that is required within each school building to create and sustain

genuinely safe, supportive environments that meet the needs of the whole child. The Framework is available at [http://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/Framework\\_for\\_Safe\\_and\\_Successful\\_School\\_Environments.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/Framework_for_Safe_and_Successful_School_Environments.pdf).

The Framework outlines evidence-based policies and practices for improving school safety and increasing access to mental health supports for children and youth. Efforts to improve school climate, safety, and learning are not separate endeavors and must be designed, funded, and implemented as a comprehensive school-wide approach. The statement is intended, in part, to guide policy leaders in shaping meaningful policies that will genuinely equip America's schools to educate and safeguard our children over the long term.

Despite growing consensus in recent years among educators (administrators, mental health professionals, and security personnel) regarding best practices to improve and sustain school safety, there has been little commonality in public policy discussions or proposals. This disconnect became glaringly apparent in the wake of the Sandy Hook shootings. Almost every company/organization/advocacy group had an opinion about the best way to safeguard schools (e.g., bullet-proof whiteboards and backpacks; arming every teacher; installing bulletproof doors). The Obama administration took a proactive role in generating a set of executive actions, (found within the Now Is the Time plan: [www.whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence](http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/preventing-gun-violence)).

Despite attempts to gather ideas and recommendations from a variety of stakeholder groups, these executive actions lacked specific guidance on scientifically proven approaches to improve school safety. When combined with the call by some vocal groups to arm educators as a primary solution, the core Framework group came together and unanimously agreed on the need for a collaborative, unified document providing specific policy and practice guidance on maintaining physical and psychological safety in schools, and to seek endorsement from other education and mental health groups. We needed one voice making clear, evidence-based recommendations from the professions charged with this work to cut through the din of often misdirected and potentially harmful ideas. The Framework provided that voice.

*PJL. What are the major actions that schools can take to ensure the physical safety of students?*

ER. As described in the Framework, the degree of physical violence in a school is significantly impacted by the attention to school culture, connectedness, and psychological safety. Schools that encourage positive behavior supports, restorative justice, and appropriate discipline policies, and create an improved sense of school community tend to notice reductions in violence.

Additionally, the Framework describes the importance of evidence-based, sustainable emergency and crisis preparedness, response, and recovery planning and training, along with multi-tiered systems of supports.

The following excerpt from the Framework best answers this question:

Any effort to address school safety should balance building security/physical safety with psychological safety. Relying on highly restrictive physical safety measures alone, such as increasing armed security or imposing metal detectors, typically does not objectively improve school safety. In fact, such measures may cause students to feel less safe and more fearful at school, and could undermine the learning environment. In contrast, combining reasonable physical security measures with efforts to enhance school climate more fully promotes overall school safety. Effectively balancing physical and psychological safety entails:

- Assessing the physical security features of the campus, such as access points to the school grounds, parking lots and buildings, and the lighting and adult supervision in lobbies, hallways, parking lots, and open spaces.
- Employing environmental design techniques, such as ensuring that playgrounds and sports fields are surrounded by fences or other natural barriers, to limit visual and physical access by non-school personnel.

## 10 *Creating Safe and Healthy Schools*

- Evaluating policies and practices to ensure that students are well monitored, school guests are appropriately identified and escorted, and potential risks and threats are addressed quickly.
- Building trusting, respectful relationships among students, staff, and families.
- Providing access to school mental health services and educating students and staff on how and when to seek help.
- Providing a confidential way for students and other members of the school community to report potential threats, because educating students on “breaking the code of silence” is one of our most effective safety measures.

*PJL. What are the major actions that schools can take to ensure the emotional safety of students?*

ER. This question is even more complex than the last, and the entire Framework is dedicated to answering that question. If it had to be boiled down to a few short sentences, it would likely require a dedicated, comprehensive, and integrated approach to addressing the mental health needs of all students through multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS); ensuring appropriate staffing of school-employed mental health professionals (school psychologists, school counselors, and school social workers); and improving school climate and connectedness so that students never question whether they will be cared for or accepted as part of the school community.

*PJL. What is the connection between physical/emotional safety and academic achievement in children?*

ER. They are deeply integrated, such that you likely won’t find one without the other. Ensuring physical and emotional safety is a prerequisite to learning. In simple terms, the brain does not attend to learning under stress, even if that stress is a dull yet chronic sense of fear and isolation. This document summarizes the research regarding mental health and academic achievement: [www.nasponline.org/advocacy/Academic-MentalHealthLinks.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy/Academic-MentalHealthLinks.pdf).

*PJL. What are the major actions that principals can take to create safe and successful schools?*

ER. Principals should consult and collaborate with their school psychologist and professionals in the building to help determine what would work best for their school. The Framework provides some more specific recommendations for systemic change:

1. Fully integrate learning supports (e.g., behavioral, mental health, and social services), instruction, and school management within a comprehensive, cohesive approach that facilitates multidisciplinary collaboration.
2. Implement MTSS that encompass prevention, wellness promotion, and interventions that increase with intensity based on student need, and that promote close school–community collaboration.
3. Improve access to school-based mental health supports by ensuring adequate staffing levels in terms of school-employed mental health professionals who are trained to infuse prevention and intervention services into the learning process and to help integrate services provided through school–community partnerships into existing school initiatives.
4. Integrate ongoing positive climate and safety efforts with crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery to ensure that crisis training and plans: (a) are relevant to the school context, (b) reinforce learning, (c) make maximum use of existing staff resources, (d) facilitate effective threat assessment, and (e) are consistently reviewed and practiced.
5. Balance physical and psychological safety to avoid overly restrictive measures (e.g., armed guards and metal detectors) that can undermine the learning environment and

instead combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked doors and monitored public spaces) with efforts to enhance school climate, build trusting relationships, and encourage students and adults to report potential threats. If a school determines the need for armed security, properly trained school resource officers (SROs) are the only school personnel of any type who should be armed.

6. Employ effective, positive school discipline that: (a) functions in concert with efforts to address school safety and climate; (b) is not simply punitive (e.g., zero tolerance); (c) is clear, consistent, and equitable; and (d) reinforces positive behaviors. Using security personnel or SROs primarily as a substitute for effective discipline policies does not contribute to school safety and can perpetuate the school-to-prison pipeline.

*PJL. What are some of the actions that legislators can take to help ensure that our schools are safe and successful?*

ER. From the Framework:

#### Policy Recommendations to Support Effective School Safety

1. Allow for blended, flexible use of funding streams in education and mental health services.
2. Improve staffing ratios to allow for the delivery of a full range of services and effective school–community partnerships.
3. Develop evidence-based standards for district-level policies to promote effective school discipline and positive behavior.
4. Fund continuous and sustainable crisis and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery planning and training that uses evidence-based models.
5. Provide incentives for intra- and interagency collaboration.
6. Support MTSS.

*PJL. How might all educators get more involved to help make schools a nurturing and supportive environment?*

ER.

- Contribute to a positive school climate by making sure that every student has a trusted adult in the building to whom they can turn and by actively working to prevent negative behaviors such as bullying, instead of ignoring them.
- Know the risk factors and signs of students at risk for a mental health problem or unsafe behaviors. Know what to do and how to get help.
- Reach out and engage families to make them genuine partners in their child’s school and education.
- Understand the importance of mental health and well-being to both safety and learning and commit to meeting the social-emotional needs of students as well as their academic knowledge base.
- Insist on and help implement a MTSS model for academics, behavior, and mental health.
- Model positive behavior in interactions with students and other staff.
- Engage in positive discipline practices that focus on underlying issues and teaching appropriate skills rather than simple punishment.
- Use data to identify and address school-wide risk factors for unsafe or negative behaviors.
- Incorporate school psychologists and other school mental health professionals into school leadership teams.
- Advocate with local, state, and federal policy makers for the policies outlined in the Framework to improve the funding, objectives, and structures aimed at improving school safety.

*PJL. What are some of the best resources that NASP provides for creating safe schools and fostering students' mental health?*

ER. The best resources NASP “provides” are our members, the school psychologists who promote student well-being and support those students with risk factors every day. School psychologists work with teachers, school crisis teams, and administrators to improve the school climate, prevent and respond to safety issues, and help educators and families link mental health to learning and behavior to improve student outcomes in school and life. Professional development and knowledge of research-based practices are important, but they are not a substitute for our most valuable resource—the school psychologist.

NASP also developed the PREPaRE School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Training Curriculum in 2006 as part of NASP’s decade-long leadership in providing evidence-based resources and consultation related to school crisis prevention and response. PREPaRE training is ideal for schools committed to improving and strengthening their school safety and crisis management plans, teams and emergency response. See <http://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>.

In terms of other resources, NASP provides publically available free information related to supporting children’s mental health and safety; see:

- Framework for School-wide Bullying Prevention and Safety:  
[https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/Bullying\\_Brief\\_12.pdf](https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/Bullying_Brief_12.pdf).
- Relevant professional development for school psychologists and other school mental health professionals relating to crisis. <http://www.nasponline.org/professional-development/prepare-training-curriculum>.
- Publications and research; and advocacy for effective policies and funding:  
[http://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/School\\_Discipline\\_Congressional\\_Briefing.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Research%20and%20Policy/Advocacy%20Resources/School_Discipline_Congressional_Briefing.pdf).

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### ***School Violence and School Shootings***

Although tragedies can inform improvements in practice and policy related to school safety, considerable misinformation and questionable practices also can abound in their wake. For example, a veritable cottage industry has sprung up to offer dubious technologies and unsubstantiated strategies for reducing school violence and increasing student safety in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shootings. Some companies now offer bulletproof backpacks and sleeping mats, while others have proposed arming teachers with firearms (Siebold, 2013). Ultimately, however, violent school attacks are exceedingly rare. Contrary to public perception, less than 1 percent of annual homicides among youth between the ages of 5 and 18 in the U.S. occur in schools (Modzeleski et al., 2008).

According to an analysis of FBI data, Cornell (2015) has noted that for school-age youth for the time frame from 2005 to 2010, there were 9,847 homicides that occurred in a residence, 4,455 on a street, 1,209 in a parking lot, 522 in a bar or restaurant, 492 in a store or gas station, 288 in a public building or business, and 211 in a motel or hotel. In comparison, there were 49 homicides that occurred in a school. Certainly, based on this data, our young people are much safer in schools than in homes or on the street. Lastly, providing further support that schools are generally safe places for students, research by Cornell and Nekvasil (2012) indicates that the average school could expect to experience a student homicide about once every 6,000 years at the current rates. Thus, in light of the aforementioned statistics, it is hard to justify the high costs associated with untested and dubious security technologies (e.g., bulletproof backpacks) coupled with inflating risks associated with increasing the presence of weapons in schools (e.g., arming

teachers). This is especially true because effective school violence prevention and intervention approaches exist.

Even though extreme acts of school violence such as school shootings are rare, threats of violence are common in schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Neiman & De Voe, 2009), approximately 48 percent of schools experienced a student threat of physical harm without a weapon during the 2007–2008 academic year and middle schools accounted for the highest rate of student threats, at close to 15 per 1,000 students. Also concerning, Roberts, Zhang, and Truman (2010) found that threats with weapons among high school students during the 2008–2009 academic year ranged from 5 percent of twelfth graders to 9 percent of ninth graders. In another survey of 4,400 high school students, Nekvasil and Cornell (2012) found that approximately 14 percent of students reported being threatened by another student in the past 30 days, and among the 163 students who believed the threat was serious, only 22 percent informed a teacher or other staff member. For more information on school violence, Chapter 15 covers threat assessment and school violence prevention.

## **The Role of Educators**

As illustrated in this chapter, efforts to create safe and supportive schools and foster students' mental health have continued to evolve in light of the challenges that schools and students encounter. Although it is impossible to predict the future, it is safe to assume that increased progress in supporting the needs of all students will result from innovations in research and educators' practice. Thus, if emerging themes from the past reliably predict the future, the ways that educators serve students and school communities likely will continue to advance. In this regard, in addition to educating the minds of students or supporting their academic development, educators likely will also increase the amount of energy they invest in supporting "the whole student" and the environment in which students learn.

Supporting the whole student involves prioritizing the emotional well-being, mental health, safety, and security of all students. Similarly, ensuring that school environments are safe, secure, and healthy, involves implementing academic, behavioral, and social supports for all members of school communities. These goals build on what educators already do—and do well. In other words, they complement efforts to teach students the skills they need to be successful in school and in life more generally. Similar to how students need adequate nutrition to learn optimally, they also need emotional nourishment to feel safe and mentally strong, which then allows them to do their best in school. Thus, the overlapping goals of supporting the whole student and fostering healthy learning environments are foundational for maximizing student success. Consistent with these goals, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 discuss strategies for creating nurturing learning environments. Collectively, these chapters are integral for supporting the whole student.

## ***Doing More with Less***

A common theme impacting U.S. public education is that educators are being asked to do more with less. Almost across the entire country, budgets for state departments of education (DOEs), state educational agencies (SEAs), and local education agencies (LEAs), have been cut. This, in turn, is resulting in the closure of schools, classroom and school overcrowding, and unacceptably high ratios of students to school-based mental health professionals as well as other support personnel. Because of this difficult reality, it is reasonable to wonder how educators will be able to find the time and resources to do more for their students with less. In fact, in an era of aggressive accountability standards, high stakes testing, and administrative pressures for teachers to "teach to the test," it is reasonable to wonder how educators will continue to do what they already do well for their students.

However, efforts to support the whole student and to foster healthy schools do not need to overburden already busy educators. Instead, educational priorities must be shifted. For example,

when a school prioritizes school efforts to reduce bullying, the entire learning environment can change (Espelage, Low, Polanin, & Brown, 2015). Research indicates that most often it takes three years to make this shift (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009), yet once the school climate changes and all students feel physically and emotionally safe, learning becomes optimized and students and members of school communities work together to help keep it that way. This same dynamic is also true for schools that have implemented school-wide positive-behavior supports (SWPBS; Horner et al., 2009; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). It takes a great deal of effort up front to make the shift, but, if sustained, the benefits are reaped for years to come and as a result, it makes it easier and more rewarding for educators to teach (see Chapter 10 on SWPBS).

Enlightened educators understand the importance of making each and every student feel safe, valued, and supported and that children cannot optimize their learning unless their mental health needs are met. Thus, the major aim of this book is to build on what educators already know and already do well by providing practical information on creating safe and supportive schools and fostering students' mental health so they integrate this knowledge into their current practices. To help in this regard, this book sets forth an integrated and comprehensive framework to help all educators, administrators, and school-based mental health professionals promote school safety, and provide the requisite knowledge, skills, and strategies to enhance the emotional well-being of all their students.

It is worth noting that this book does not advocate for educators to abandon their instructional or administrative roles. Similar to how efforts to help improve children's physical health at school such as reducing the spread of germs do not require expert medical knowledge, efforts to create safe and supportive schools and foster student mental health do not require expert knowledge of psychology or criminal justice. However, what is needed is a willingness to learn and intervene in one's own school or classroom. To date, the most comprehensive review of research on supporting the educational and emotional well-being of students found that educators are more than capable of accomplishing these goals. In a meta-analysis that involved analyzed data from 270,034 students who participated in 213 school-based, social-emotional learning (SEL) studies, Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger (2011) found that educators were capable of effectively implementing SEL without additional personnel or expert help. In addition, results of this investigation indicated that, students who participated in programs designed to improve their social-emotional competence displayed an 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement as well as improvements in their social-emotional skills, attitudes about school, and overall school behavior when compared to students who were not exposed to SEL. Thus, in addition to underscoring the capacity of educators to help support safe schools and foster students' mental health, results of the aforementioned study also highlight that future efforts to improve students' academic success can be bolstered by improving their social and emotional competencies (see Chapter 4 for discussion of SEL).

## **Transforming School Communities and Engaging Every Educator**

### ***The Story of East Feliciana Middle School***

East Feliciana Middle School, located about an hour north of Baton Rouge in rural Louisiana, struggled with school-wide behavioral problems. During transition time, the halls roared with noise; fights between students happened on a regular basis and many students skipped school because they were afraid of being bullied. The behavioral problems impacted everyone in the school. Teachers felt as if the students were in control; administrators felt like they were reacting to behavioral problems and could not get ahead on school discipline; students were struggling to learn in a chaotic environment; and caregivers were thinking of pulling their children out of the school.

Fortunately, East Feliciana Middle School had a dedicated group of educators, many of whom were new to teaching and working in schools. Collectively, the school formed a school-wide positive-behavior support (SWPBS) team and this team began planning school-wide initiatives to improve student behavior and the school climate more generally. With buy-in from all educators and support personnel, the SWPBS team helped to get positive behavior supports and interventions in place across multiple tiers of service delivery. Then, once these supports were in place, the school climate began to improve. By the end of the school year, many of the behavior problems that had plagued the school had been reduced and parents often commented on how much happier their children were at school. The year after East Feliciana Middle School implemented their SWPBS program, student enrollment went up by about 20 percent.

### ***The Story of Lincoln High School***

Students at Lincoln High School in Portland, Oregon, were concerned about the level of bullying and cyberbullying they experienced in their school. Students also found the social and academic pressures at the school to be overwhelming at times, which may have contributed to suicidal behavior. Consequently, students in the Leadership Class got organized and asked for help from the counseling center. The school psychologist showed them data from years of formal and informal surveys regarding bullying at Lincoln. With the help of their school psychologist, they researched the literature on student-led, anti-bullying efforts and set goals for making the school a safer and friendlier place. The students then created a PowerPoint presentation with student-made movie clips, motivational messages, and information regarding the impact of bullying on students' lives. In groups of four, they presented to every ninth grade English class and also taught the students how to respond when they heard intolerant statements. Every year, the Leadership Class updated and improved their presentation, and chose successors to carry on this project. As a result of this initiative, students felt more connected to the school and empowered to help create a culture of respect where harassment and bullying were not tolerated. According to the school psychologist, this project, which is now in its seventh year, has reduced discipline referrals by 75 percent, increased students speaking up when they hear intolerant comments from 20 percent to over 50 percent, reduced student reported instances of bullying by two-thirds, and youth suicide has been reduced to zero (J. Hanson, May 15, 2015, personal communication). Now when students walk into Lincoln, they immediately see an entire wall covered by hundreds of anti-bullying pledges and the biggest trophy in the school is the annual award for the person(s) who contributed the most to the anti-bullying campaign.

### ***The Story of Santana High School***

In the aftermath of a tragic school shooting in Santee, California, in which two students were killed and 13 injured, the National Association of School Psychologists' National Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT) provided crisis intervention to Santana High School and the community. Based on the suggestion of this national crisis response team, the principal wrote a letter to all the students in the school in which she expressed her own thoughts and feelings and gave students permission to express a wide range of emotions. In addition, she informed them that a wide variety of activities would be provided to let them express their feelings including talking, writing, music, artwork, projects, ceremonies, and rituals. With the help of their teachers, students were asked to respond to a number of questions such as "What are you experiencing now and what are you worried about?" and "What would make you feel safer at school and what do you need in your life to help you cope?" Within two weeks, the principal commented that almost every student in the school had responded and, as noted by Poland and Gorin (2002), "the resounding message was that students wanted adults more involved in their lives" (p. xvi.).

Moreover, in surveying students the principal found that there were a number (between 20 and 25 percent) who had no adult in school with whom they felt emotionally connected enough to discuss school-related or personal problems. As a result of this survey, a major project was undertaken to ensure that every student was connected to a significant adult in school, such as an athletic coach, resource teacher, cafeteria worker, school secretary, reading coach, assistant principal, guidance counselor, volunteer, etc.

These three vignettes illustrate that creating a safe and supportive school is not just about providing psychological services to those most in need of mental health intervention. It is also about creating a culture of caring, respect, tolerance, order, and fairness; listening to and establishing emotional connections with all students; and providing the necessary social supports to every student in the school. It is about preventing problems and promoting wellness, not just ameliorating or repairing psychological disturbance or psychic pain. Furthermore, any or all concerned members of the school community including educators, administrators, and even students, can take the lead to make this happen.

The previous stories also highlight the importance of transforming entire school communities as a way to support safe schools and foster student mental health. The story of East Feliciana Middle School discusses the implementation of a SWPBS program to improve overall school behavior. In this story, a concerned group of educators worked together to get buy-in from their colleagues and address student behavior across multiple tiers of support. In addition they focused on increasing positive behavior in students—not just eliminating negative behaviors. With this aim in mind, Chapter 10 discusses implementing SWPBS and Chapter 11 covers the use of effective behavior management strategies.

The story of Lincoln High School illustrates how a group of concerned students helped create a safer and more emotionally healthy school climate for their school. This story underscores the point that when the entire school community saw the benefits of any successful program to create safe and supportive schools, the project became sustainable. To address problems such as bullying, Chapter 12 covers bullying prevention and intervention and Chapter 16 reviews suicide assessment, prevention, and intervention. These chapters also discuss effective strategies to prevent these concerning problems.

Lastly, the story of Santana High School describes how a school community began to recover from a tragedy. In this story, a concerned administrator worked with other educators to reach out to students so that they could support the individual needs of students who were coping with distress and trauma in the wake of a school shooting. Additionally, other members of the school community worked together to reach out to a national organization to help navigate the crisis as it unfolded and to help to facilitate healthy coping. To help schools prevent and prepare for crises, Chapter 17 covers crisis prevention; to help schools respond to these events, Chapter 18 discusses crisis intervention.

### **Working Together: Educators and Mental Health Professionals**

The need to engage educators in efforts to support school safety and students' mental health is critical in order to ensure the success of *all* students. Unfortunately, far too many students need help than can be addressed by extant providers. In fact, most professional associations for school-based mental health professionals report that the ratios between these individuals and students are far too high and National Education Association (NEA) agrees. As noted by Dennis Van Roekel, a Past President of the NEA: "We must dramatically expand our investments in mental health services. Proper diagnosis can and often starts in our schools, yet we continue to cut funding for school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists" (Walker, 2013). Simply stated, not enough school-based mental health professionals are currently employed in U.S. schools. Yet, even if every school employed its own full-time school

psychologist, counselor, and social worker, these professionals would still need to work hand-in-hand with educators to support students. Thus, because of limitations in available mental health professionals in the community and at school, serious efforts to improve school safety and foster students' mental health will involve collaboration between educators and school-based mental health professionals.

If armed—not with weapons as has been suggested by some legislators and others—but with the knowledge and skills to help support healthy, safe, and supportive school environments, educators, administrators, and school-based mental health professionals can work together to transform even the most challenging of educational environments (Chuck & Johnson, 2012). Solving complicated problems often involves getting buy-in from multiple parties and coordinated efforts from a range of stakeholders. Therefore, systematic efforts to improve students' mental health and make schools safer and more supportive for all students will need to involve all school personnel on some level. Essentially, creating safe schools and fostering students' mental health is *every* educator's concern.

### **Safe Schools and Student Mental Health: A–Z**

Consistent with the title and focus of this book, educators can do a lot to help create safe schools and foster students' mental health. Through their roles as key members of school communities, they can support the aforementioned efforts, either directly through their own action or indirectly through supporting the efforts of their colleagues. Although not completely exhaustive, educators can support a range of services that aim to increase school safety and mental health. These include

- (a) ensuring that the school is a safe place for all youth;
- (b) making sure that effective behavior management practices are followed in every classroom;
- (c) delivering social-emotional learning to all students;
- (d) fostering student connections to peers, teachers, parents, caregivers, and other adults in the community;
- (e) establishing school-wide positive behavior supports;
- (f) incorporating principles of positive psychology into the school curriculum;
- (g) focusing on improving the climate of the school to make it more responsive to student needs;
- (h) ensuring that all the requisite social supports are provided to students;
- (i) providing in-service to all staff so they have basic information about emotional and behavioral disorders;
- (j) making sure that at-risk and vulnerable student populations get the additional support that they need;
- (k) establishing school-family and community partnerships;
- (l) implementing and enforcing anti-bullying policies and incorporating established bullying reducing programs if needed;
- (m) implementing anti-violence curriculums and interventions as necessary;
- (n) providing instruction or curricula that focus on having a healthy lifestyle (e.g., developing a vigorous exercise regimen; avoiding drugs, alcohol and tobacco; understanding nutrition and a healthy diet);
- (o) establishing threat assessment teams to investigate potential acts of violence;
- (p) putting systems in place that enable students to report potential threats and concerns;
- (q) ensuring that all staff are trained in the basics of suicide prevention and intervention;
- (r) developing and training school crisis teams;
- (s) identifying students who need more intensive (Tier II and Tier III) interventions;
- (t) providing small group interventions for at-risk students or those who have experienced a problem and need additional support (e.g., bereavement groups, anger management groups,

- counseling for children who have failed a grade, social skills strategies for children who have been victimized by bullies, coping skills groups for students who have attempted suicide, etc.);
- (u) providing school-based intensive individualized support, whenever possible, for those needing more comprehensive services;
  - (v) ensuring that effective referral sources are available for all children requiring more intensive services;
  - (w) collaborating with colleagues across school, home, and community settings to ensure accurate assessment and service delivery;
  - (x) respecting and celebrating cultural differences among students and their families;
  - (y) being cognizant of and attending to individual differences in students and families; and
  - (z) becoming involved. Yes, just becoming involved . . .

Practices, programs, policies, and strategies that focus on all the aforementioned topics are covered within this book. However, it is important to emphasize that schools do not need one program for social-emotional learning, another for violence prevention, and another for bullying prevention. Instead, programs and supports can be incorporated into an effective student support system under one umbrella consistent with a multi-tiered system of support (see Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6). That is, in lieu of having separate silos for each concern, these can all be integrated into a unified and coherent system based on the individualized needs of each school.

## **The Structure of the Book**

As previously discussed, educators are increasingly being engaged in efforts to help schools address students' mental health concerns and problems such as bullying, suicide, and school violence (Sulkowski et al., 2013; Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman, 2014). Thus, educators now are on the front line to address these critically important topics. However, like adjusting to any new and important role, supporting students' mental health and ensuring school safety may feel like a daunting task for many educators.

To make this task seem less formidable, this book covers issues and topics by providing relevant and easy-to-comprehend information. Ultimately, this book aims to help educators prevent, pre-empt, handle, and recover from significant problems that impact their schools. In addition, interviews from experts on a variety of the topics are imbedded in each chapter. Thus, this book draws on the work of leading experts in education, psychology, and related disciplines to craft a resource that is designed for educators to work effectively within existing school structures to make schools safer and to help students feel more supported.

The first section of this book (Chapters 1 and 2) focuses on creating safe schools and emotionally healthy learning environments. In Part I, the evolving role of educators is discussed as it pertains to school-based mental health as well as efforts to make schools safer and more secure. Part II (Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6) discusses fostering student mental health using a multi-tiered model of supports, ways to incorporate social-emotional learning into every school, and the use of universal intervention (Tier I) practices (e.g., changing mindsets, encouraging grit, teaching mindfulness, decreasing anxiety, teaching emotional-self regulation skills, fostering resiliency, and creating resilient classrooms). It also focuses on implementing targeted (Tier II) and intensive (Tier III) interventions.

In Part III (Chapters 7, 8 and 9), ways to support nurturing learning environments are covered, such as improving school climate, providing requisite social support, fostering school connectedness and engagement, as well as integrating aspects of positive psychology into the schools. In particular, as previously discussed, this section describes how to support the whole student. Part IV (Chapters 10 and 11) discusses ways to improve student behavior

throughout the entire school community by using school-wide, positive-behavior supports (SWPBS) and in the classroom through effective behavior management strategies. This section includes practical strategies for improving student behavior that can be incorporated by educators across different settings.

Part V (Chapters 12, 13 and 14) covers ways to identify and help vulnerable and victimized students. More specifically, this section discusses bullying prevention and intervention; helping students with emotional and behavioral disorders; and providing a wide variety of supports to at-risk youth. Part VI (Chapters 15 and 16) discusses ways to reduce school violence and prevent student suicide. An emphasis is placed on using evidence-based and field-tested strategies such as threat assessment (Cornell & Sheras, 2006) and following guidelines as recommended by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2012), related to suicide prevention and intervention. Lastly, Part VII (Chapters 17 and 18) discusses preventing and responding to crises in the schools. In this section, developing school crisis response teams; implementing school crisis prevention, intervention, and postvention protocols, policies and procedures; and dealing with grief, bereavement, and trauma are covered.

This book is consistent with the *Framework for safe and successful schools* and, whenever possible, interventions are based on evidence-based practices that have been supported in the empirical literature. Consequently, this text expands upon the framework and it provides practical suggestions for educators, administrators, school-based mental health professionals, and all others who work in schools. The intention of our text is not to create additional burdens for educators and schools. Instead, our aim is to provide a needed resource to help infuse and integrate principles, practices, and programs to ensure student safety and promote mental health, and enable all readers, whether in pre-service education programs, in graduate school, or engaged in continuing education, to be on the cutting edge of research on all the included topics and to be able to apply this knowledge in their daily practice.

## Conclusion

Currently, the roles of educators and student support personnel are evolving. As noted by Walker (2013), our U.S. schools have by default become the mental health system for our nation's children. Furthermore, according to recent trends, this evolution may prioritize efforts to create safe schools and foster students' mental health (Cowan et al., 2013; Kutash et al., 2006). In this vein, an effective model for safe and successful schools has now been endorsed by major professional educational and psychological organizations. In addition, the knowledge base on social emotional learning, mindfulness, anxiety reduction, resilient classrooms, school safety teams, responsive school climates, social support, positive psychology, school-wide positive behavior supports, student engagement, bullying prevention, cognitive behavioral therapy, trauma-sensitive schools, violence prevention, suicide prevention, threat assessment, crisis prevention and intervention, and related topics has increased exponentially during the past few decades. Thus, it has never been a more challenging and exciting time to be an educator.

Patrick Kennedy (2015), a former U.S. Congressman from Rhode Island who was a chief sponsor of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008, described student mental health as a *force multiplier*. By this, Kennedy meant that students who possess high levels of mental health and emotional well-being are much more able to be successful in any endeavor or challenge that they face in life. When schools are safe and supportive and foster students' mental health, higher academic achievement and overall student success is inevitable. Thus, as expressed in this book, the factors that help students succeed are additive and interconnected. With this in mind, this book aims to provide you with state-of-the-art knowledge, evidence-based suggestions for prevention and intervention, and with the informed opinions of national and

international experts. We intend for this to be the book that every educator needs to help create safe and supportive schools and to foster students' mental health. We invite you to read on.

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