

Why Not Focus Only on Our Similarities?

Early Childhood Question Corner

In *Anti-Bias Curriculum*, Louise Derman-Sparks (1989, 6), an educator and specialist on child development, explains that many adults assume that young children do not notice color and other differences among people; she claims that children actually do notice and show curiosity about differences. Further, Derman-Sparks claims adults need to avoid only talking about similarities among people because while children need to understand the things that bind us as human beings, they also need to understand that shared characteristics, language and customs are expressed in different ways (1989, 7). She explains that children are not “colorblind” and that “ultimately, the colorblind position results in denial of young children’s awareness of differences and to non-confrontation of children’s misconceptions, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviours, be they about race, culture, gender, or different physical abilities” (1989, 7).

According to Jeff Hitchcock, author of *Lifting the White Veil: An Exploration of White American Culture in a Multiracial Context* (2002), “colorblindness” views race and ethnic group membership as irrelevant by focusing on the individual and our common humanity. “Colorblindness wants racism to go away,” states Hitchcock. “But in doing so, it practices a form of aversive racism based on denial that racism still exists and that race does still matter.” Hitchcock sees colorblindness as characterized by the following features:

- Colorblindness denies that race makes a difference in people’s lives.
- Colorblindness says that we are only individuals.
- Colorblindness believes color consciousness must be racist.

- Colorblindness enforces a taboo against talking about race.
- Colorblindness believes we will all assimilate into the mainstream.

Since child development specialists agree that children can see differences among people, adults should avoid glossing over differences by saying things such as, “We're all the same inside.” Instead, adults should teach children to learn to live and work with a variety of people and to appreciate and respect their differences. (*Bias-Free Foundations: Early Childhood Guidebook & Activities for Educators*, 2001, 21).

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