**[Catharine Hydon]:** Can you help us understand...? So, why does this matter so much? That construct is really helpful but how do we start to say, "Why does it matter?" And what do we think we need to do as we consider the relationship between that idea and helping children's development and learning?

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Sure. Thanks, Catharine. Thank you, and welcome to everybody today. I also would like to acknowledge that I'm on Wadawurrung land, which is up near Ballarat way, in Victoria, so it's nice and cold. Um, I would also like to say, just to also segue on from Jen's talk about the model, is that when...I wasn't directly involved so much with the model. I was sent away to look at all the assessment tools. But when that model was first done, I...the middle part was something that immediately came to mind when we were talking, in the early stages, about identity. But those two outside forces - the two...the social inward and the social...they're really powerful and I don't think they're something that we, um, by default, automatically think of, as professionals and even, sometimes, parents. We think of, um, the power of those outward social, um...um, parts coming into that concept model. So, we know that identity deeply matters to all of us. But in early childhood, when it is being moulded and formed, we look at this model and we think of the child, yet, who has not maybe even started school. So, the social aspects we're seeing are predominantly made up of the family unit or the early childhood service that the child is attending. So, we have a really strong sense of the power and the responsibility we have as carers and as educators in these child's lives, 'cause it's right at the beginning. Um, the literature that we reviewed tells us that a strong sense of identity is essential to many aspects of a child's learning and development. And when you look at the components of identity...Self-expression - the ability to convey thoughts and feelings. Self-awareness - the ability to influence your own behaviour. Self-esteem - how you evaluate and, indeed, how you value yourself. And efficacy, self-efficacy, which is that belief that you are capable. And that's extremely powerful in learning because we know that all these position the child as to what type of learner they will be. Will they be a passive learner, um, a very curious proactive learner? Um, will they be a risk-taker or nervous to take risks? These are all the components of identity that really influence the way that they engage in learning. And, more importantly, they tell us, as educators, what type of learner these children can become. Um, if you think about... if the participants think about all the children they've seen over their careers, I feel like everyone will know, quite instinctively, when these four components don't mesh very well.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Yeah.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** So, you have the child who... So, you might have a child who has a very strong belief that they're capable of many things, but they just...won't take the risk of showing anybody, they don't want to show their work, they're nervous, they hold it back. And you keep saying to that child, "But this is amazing! This is great!". And they don't value it themselves. And then you have the other... you know, another child who, um, is possibly, um...very confident of their value.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Confident, yes.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** ...but not necessarily...their self-awareness might not, and their self-expression might not, be as developed as their self-esteem. So, they're not sharing their ideas in a successful way. So, you know, the outer group might not be receiving them in the way that the child wants to. So, these are things that directly affect learning and development in children. And, you know... and as I said, it's difficult not having participants to say so, but I feel like everyone can relate to those sorts of children.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** I think they'd be thinking about that right now, Danielle. They'll be going, "Yes, I had a conversation with a child exactly like that today." So I think...

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Yeah.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** And is this true for children in this whole sort of birth-to-eight space. Is it...is it different for children who are younger and older?

**[Danielle Anzai]:** No. I mean, of course, the developmental stages are different. But I think I would argue that, um...that the...the look that you see on an eight-month or six-month-old's face when they're eyeing you off from the...is the same look you're going to see when they're four years old, or 14 years' old.

 **[Catharine Hydon]:** [Laughs]. Well, and they're trying to do that thing, aren't they? They're going, "Are you part of my tribe? Are you part of me?

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Exactly, exactly.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** "Is this...? Am I belonging to you?"

**[Danielle Anzai]:** And we do...and we did find tools that go down to those early months, pre-one-year-old years. So, I would say that it's very much...it's...it's evolving. And it's...it kicks off right at the beginning. And what we have to do is also find ways, as early childhood educators and professionals, to find that and measure it and be aware of it before sometimes speech even occurs. So, um...but what I wanted to say, just quickly, back on point, that this support and development of a strong and healthy identity it's important not to mix it up with a sense of good behaviour.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Mm, very important point.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** So that when we're talking about that balance of the four components, I hope that that was clear in that because a child who is obedient and willing to please is not necessarily a child who has a healthy identity. They might be...as I said, they might be doing that because they're afraid of risk-taking, they don't value things that they want. So, we need to be careful that we don't subconsciously align good behaviour with a good...with a healthy, strong identity.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** It rather is why a good model like that helps us to pull apart some of those ideas, so we can be a bit clear about what we mean and we don't conflate things like that. So, I think it's sometimes a bit dangerous that we do that and sort of...it positions children in a particular way. And, you know, we know that that's not very helpful in terms of supporting them to grow and learn.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Yes, absolutely. And that everyone is unique in their own way.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Indeed.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** …and it's about feeling, all those components, safe and secure and loved. Yeah.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Yes. One thing that I did notice, as I was perusing these documents - and this is a question for both you, Danielle, and Jen, and you might want to take it in turns or respond, both of you, for this -is that I noticed that you said specifically that identity was described in this or articulated in these documents in a way that does not focus on attributes of a child. So, things like gender, things like ethnicity, for example. Um, but I'm sure there are people in the audience here who are thinking, "Hold on a second. Isn't...like, like, isn't gender part of this? "And aren't we having conversations around this?". So, can you talk to us a little bit about why that decision was made, what that's about and what are we trying to be careful about, I guess, in the conversations around identity? So, maybe, Danielle, you can go first and then we'll hear from Jen.

**[Danielle Anzai]:** I was going to say, do you want to go first on this one, Jen? I feel like Jen's got more of the...the theoretical models...

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Alright, so, let's go to Jen and then we'll come back to you, Danielle, and we'll, uh, hear from you, too.

**[Jen Mitchell]:** I jumped in there because that was exactly a conversation that we had when we had this task of creating this practice guide, and when...literature review and practice guide. When we started mapping the components of identity, that's what we started doing, which is a natural thing. You think about gender. You think about ethnicity. You think about geography. You know, all the...

You think about culture. All of those things. And then we realised that there were two reasons why we didn't go down that path. So, the first one was because there were just too many and we realised that, firstly, it would be impossible to list all the things that are important to your identity. And, secondly, if we tried to do that, we'd be making decisions around what was important that might not actually be true to what's important to a particular community, a particular family or a particular child. So, adults might think about identity as sort of gender, ethnicity, all of those big things. Children might be thinking about Ninjago characters or something totally different. And I think that...it's a decision to be made by individual educators, which aspects of identity are most important to the...to the children and the families that they work with and the communities that they're in. Now, that doesn't mean just responding to whatever people bring in, because sometimes people can be not thinking about aspects of identity that perhaps they could be. If you work in a community that's, say, very monocultural, you might not get a lot of chat about different cultures and children might be missing out on an opportunity to learn that valuing - both the knowing and the valuing of other cultures. So, it's not saying just respond to whatever's in front of your nose. But it is saying, feel that you can prioritise and decide which aspects of identity are really live for your community.

 **[Catharine Hydon]:** So, it's a bit about tuning in, isn't it, to your community and finding out what's... what's really important for your community?

**[Jen Mitchell]:** Absolutely about tuning in. And we know that that's the heart of reflective practice is keeping your eyes open and thinking, "Well, what can I do about this?" And that brings me to the second reason that we went with that model, and that was if we described identity just as those attributes, it doesn't really help you know how to support a child to develop that strong sense of identity. It's a bit static.

 **[Catharine Hydon]:** Mm.

**[Jen Mitchell]:** Um, whereas if you think about that model and you think about those statements that we've got in there about the child - "I know who I am," "I value who I am," "You know who I am," "You value who I am," and then "I know and value who you are," if you think about those statements, you can actually think about a trajectory of learning. You can think about a way for children to develop from where they are to where you might want them to be. And I think that's really helpful with intentional teaching. And you can apply that thinking to any aspect of identity. So, you might take gender, for example. You might say, "Well, do the boys in my class, do they value...?" You know, "They know they're boys. Do they value that? "Do the girls value that - them being boys?" You know, "What can I do to build that up?" Then you can try maybe some of the trickier ones, if you've got some really tricky challenges around identity in your community. But I think that model just is flexible enough to be brought to any problem that you might have or any professional wondering that you might have in relation to this outcome.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** Or any possibilities that you might consider in terms of exploring identity with children.

**[Jen Mitchell]:** You got it.

**[Catharine Hydon]:** So, it's got a, um... sort of depth to it, I guess, that you can apply in your particular context. And, you know, what's great about these opportunities for everyone to join like this is that we spark people's interest in going and exploring it in more detail, and applying it into your local contexts. Danielle, do you want to tell us what you're thinking around that...

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Yeah.

**[Catharine Hydon**]: ..that application? You know, the ways that attributes were or weren't used?

**[Danielle Anzai]:** Yeah, as Jen was saying, when we started the initial research, it was a tiny bit overwhelming, once we...with...with, you know, gender and culture and language and so many different things. And then, once we made the decision not to put them in and we just went with those core units, it felt to me like the core components were the foundation and then the attributes - these attributes of gender and culture and all those - sat on these foundational components. And then it made so much more sense to me that you were able to then customise your...

 **[Catharine Hydon]:** Yeah

**[Danielle Anzai]:** ...the way that it relates to your context and how it works really well for you. So, I found it...it didn't detract at all from the model by not doing that. It actually gave a really...provided really strong and foundational components that people could then…Because once you have that model, you can then say, "Well, in my context, we have this and this and this," and you can see where it fits, and you can see then...And because it fits in with the model, you can then also see how the interactions work and then you can...it strikes up that thinking about how these social aspects and the child's inner voice and so forth is working. So, I found it really a very...a very helpful thing, and it was once we sort of let that go...And then bringing it back in to your context was really helpful.

 **[Catharine Hydon]:** So, there's a big invitation to everybody who's online now to go away and take that model and start to contextualise it and explore it in their space and start to see where it applies and what else is going on in your context. 'Cause I would agree with both of you in the sense that I think there are some communities in some places where identity...there's some strong roots of identity. They're really clear in communities. And, you know, children are raised really strongly into lots of conversations around identity. But then, other one...other communities are emerging, you know? They're changing all the time. And we know the current processes that we're going through in terms of COVID-19 are shaping us as we speak. So, it's a really... I like the intangibility of this idea of identity. It's a little bit fluid. I'm sure some of us are trying to hold onto it, but it's great to have a structure that we can put a few ideas into.

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