
Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society

Second Edition



DONNA M. GOLLNICK / PHILIP C. CHINN

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DONNA M. GOLLNICK

Director of Professional Development,
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education,
Washington, D.C.

PHILIP C. CHINN

Professor and Head,
Department of Special Education,
East Texas State University,
Commerce, Texas

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Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company

A Bell & Howell Company

COLUMBUS • TORONTO • LONDON • SYDNEY

Published by Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company
A Bell & Howell Company
Columbus, Ohio 43216

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First edition copyrighted 1983 by The C.V. Mosby Company.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 85-28469

International Standard Book Number: 0-675-20573-5

Printed in the United States of America

To Our Parents

Charles and Kathleen Kuhn

Beatrice W. Chinn

Preface

We are a multicultural nation of persons of different ethnic backgrounds, religions, socioeconomic levels, and native languages. In addition, there are natural differences based on sex, age, and physical and mental abilities. Every day we and our students are exposed to social curriculum that makes positive and negative statements about these differences through radio, television, and newspapers as well as family attitudes. Often distorted messages about people who are ethnically and religiously different from oneself are portrayed in the social curriculum. We learn that Italian-Americans control organized crime, Blacks are on welfare, old people are useless, females are helpless, hard hats are racist, and handicapped individuals must be taken care of. These stereotypes about groups of people are broad generalizations that totally neglect the majority of individuals within each of these groups. Decisions made by employers, educators, politicians, and neighbors are often based on such misconceptions. As educators, we must help students interpret and analyze the cultural cues that are forced on them daily.

An overall goal of multicultural education is to help all students develop their potential for academic, social, and vocational success. Educational and vocational options should not be limited by sex, age, ethnicity, native language, religion, socioeconomic level, or exceptionality. Educators are given the responsibility to help students contribute to and benefit from our democratic society. Within our pluralistic society, multicultural education values the existing diversity, positively portrays that diversity, and uses that diversity in the development of effective instructional strategies for students in the classroom. In addition, multicultural education should help students overcome the debilitating effects of institutionalized racism, classism, and sexism.

Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society provides an overview of the different microcultures to which students belong. The first chapter examines the pervasive influence of culture and the importance of understanding our own cultural background and experiences as well as those of our students. The following seven chapters examine the microcultures of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, language, sex and gender, exceptionality, and age. The final chapter describes how the educator can portray and use this pluralism in the implementation of multicultural education.

Students in graduate and in-service courses should find this text helpful in examining social and cultural conditions that influence education. It is designed to assist them in understanding pluralism and how to use it effectively in the classroom and school. Other professionals in the social services will find it helpful in understanding the complexity of cultural backgrounds and experiences as they work with their clients.

Our approach to multicultural education is based on a broad definition of the concept. By using *culture* as the basis for understanding multicultural education, we have presented descriptions of seven microcultures to which Americans belong. Of course, these are not the only microcultures to which individuals belong, but in our view these are the most critical in understanding pluralism and multicultural education at this time. Not limiting the approach to ethnicity, as many authors have, we focus on the complex nature of pluralism in this country. An individual's cultural identity is based not only on ethnicity but also on such factors as socioeconomic level, religion, and sex of the individual. To further complicate matters, the degree of identification with one's ethnic origins, religion, and other microcultural memberships varies greatly from individual to individual. The complexity of pluralism in the United States makes it difficult for the educator to develop expectations of students based on their group memberships. This text is designed to examine these group memberships and ways in which the educator can develop educational programs to meet the needs of those groups and the nation.

The reader should be aware of two caveats related to the language used in this text. First, both male and female pronouns are used sparingly throughout the text. Second, although we realize that the term *Americans* includes populations beyond the boundaries of the United States, it has been used here to refer to the U.S. population.

The preparation of any book involves the contributions of many individuals in addition to those whose names are found on the cover. We thank our colleagues who reacted to our ideas as the book originally was conceptualized, particularly Gwendolyn C. Baker, James A. Banks, Carl A. Grant, and the many individuals at all educational levels who have been developing and implementing multicultural education programs across the nation. We are especially indebted to Francisco Hidalgo, Richard Needham, Charles Payne, Donnya Stephens, Ernest Washington, and Kathryn W. Wright, who reviewed the manuscript and provided insights that are reflected in this second edition. A special thanks is extended to Donald R. Williams who reviewed the chapters on culture, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status and argued about the undergirding philosophy, which helped clarify critical concepts and issues. We also would like to express appreciation to Neal McMann, Eddie Robertson, and Louise Skinner for their assistance in the development of this edition. Finally, we thank our children—Michele, Kelleth, and Kristin—for continued support throughout this revision.

Donna M. Gollnick
Philip C. Chinn

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Culture and Pluralism

B*ecause job opportunities, marriage, and family responsibilities often require educators to move away from their own cultural communities and roots, it is essential that they are aware of the great cultural diversity that exists in this country and have developed skills for adapting to these different settings. Even those educators who work in the communities in which they were raised are likely to find themselves in schools with children from cultural backgrounds unlike their own. This introductory chapter will discuss the concepts of culture and cultural pluralism and their influence on education. The educational strategy—multicultural education—in which students' cultural backgrounds are viewed as positive and essential in developing classroom instruction and a desirable school environment will be introduced.*

OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define culture and explain how it influences the lives of students and families.
- Identify four characteristics of culture.
- Define and contrast the interrelated processes of enculturation and socialization.
- Describe the limitations of ethnocentrism.
- Identify the dominant characteristics of the U.S. macroculture and explain the influence of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) on the macroculture.

- Explain why individuals are members of both the U.S. macroculture and numerous microcultures and how their lives are influenced by membership in those microcultures.
- Describe multicultural education and explain the importance of this educational strategy in today's schools.

Cultural Diversity in Schools

All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself. (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983)

Local, state, and national reports on education that were issued in the 1980s called on educators, parents, and students to push for excellence in the nation's schools. State legislators and local school boards responded by requiring more rigorous curricula and standards for student achievement. However, teachers have been provided with little direction or assistance to ensure that *all* students are able to realize that excellence or gain the rewards provided by such an educational opportunity. Thus educators today are faced with an overwhelming challenge to prepare students from diverse cultural backgrounds to live in a rapidly changing society and world.

To work effectively with the heterogeneous student populations found in our schools, educators need to understand and feel comfortable with their own cultural backgrounds. They also must understand the cultural setting in which the school is located in order to develop effective instructional strategies and to assist students in becoming aware of cultural diversity in the nation and world. An educational goal is to help students value cultural differences while realizing that individuals across cultures have many similarities.

Although prospective teachers may have in mind the type of school or community in which they would like to teach after they have been certified, jobs are not always available in those areas. A look at four different school settings will show the diversity of student populations with which one may work.

School 1

For the past 20 years this suburban community has been composed primarily of white middle-class families although there have been several dozen black and Japanese-American families who have settled here as well during that time. Recently there has been an influx of Vietnamese students with limited English skills who have entered the schools. Although their names reflect an ethnic identity, there are not observable differences among the white students. Parents



Figure 1-1 Minority students compose all or a large part of many urban city schools. (Photo by Sharon Givens. © 1985. All rights reserved.)

are professionals (for example, lawyers, teachers, and engineers) and managers or employees of several large corporations located in the city. About 10% of the students live with divorced parents. Mothers of nearly half the students work outside the home as professionals, secretaries, or salespersons. Students come from Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant families. Most students seldom venture into the major city, which is within 30 miles of their homes.

School 2

Spanish is the first language of nearly half the students in this inner-city school. Students identify themselves as black, Puerto Rican, and Mexican-American. Children from Central America are beginning to enter the schools as well. Many students live with their families in small apartments. About 10% live in households headed by women who work outside of the home when work is available. Parents primarily hold unskilled jobs, and a disproportionately large number are unemployed.

Many students are Catholic and many of the Protestant students attend charismatic churches. Most students have never been beyond the area in which they live; most have never been outside the city or interacted with individuals outside of the few blocks that surround their apartment.

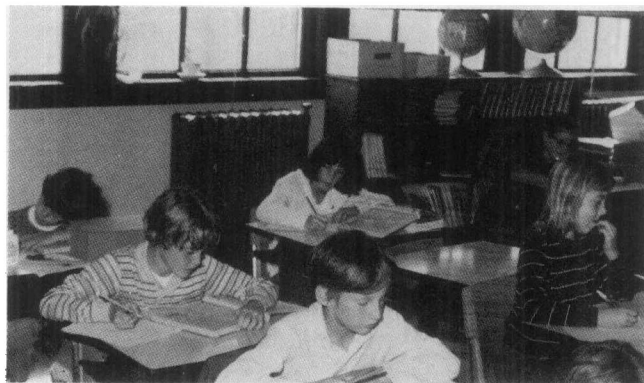


Figure 1-2 Small town and rural areas reflect a more homogeneous population than other areas; the population is predominantly white or minority, but religious diversity usually exists in these communities.

School 3

All students are white with a German or English surname in this rural area. Parents are self-employed farmers, farm laborers, or employees at factories in the area. Most families have lived in this community for over a century and much of the community's social activities are centered around the one Catholic and three Protestant churches. The only recent migration to this community occurred about 10 years ago when an Amish community purchased farmland in the area and settled there. About one fourth of the students' mothers work outside the home as teachers, secretaries, salespersons, or factory workers. Only a few students live with a single mother. Most students are familiar with the small town that is the county seat in which they shop and occasionally see movies. The nearest large city is the state capital, which they sometimes visit for a special activity such as the state 4-H fair. Few if any have ever interacted directly with members of minority groups, and they remain puzzled about the Amish culture.

School 4

The student body of this urban school is 55% black, 30% white, 7% Hispanic, 4% Asian-American, and 2% American Indian. Students from several foreign countries also attend the school. There are students who speak no English when they enter the classroom; 20 languages other than English are used by students. Parents are government officials from the United States and other countries, professionals, business managers, small business owners, skilled and unskilled workers, and unemployed. The mothers of more than half the students work in jobs ranging from unskilled to professional positions. Students come from homes of wide religious diversity, including Catholic, Protestant, Judaism, Black

Muslim, and Islam. Students travel from all over the city to attend school. Many students are very cosmopolitan, but others maintain cultural ties only with their primary cultural communities.

Educators have the responsibility for knowing the cultural backgrounds of their students to help them reach their full potential. Teachers who enter a classroom of 30 students will find that students have individual differences even though they may look alike. These differences extend far beyond intellectual and physical abilities. Students bring to class different historical backgrounds, religious experiences, and day-to-day living experiences. These experiences direct the way the student behaves in school. If the teacher fails to understand the cultural factors, in addition to the intellectual and physical factors, that affect student learning and behavior, it will be impossible to help all 30 students reach their potential.

Multicultural education is the educational strategy in which the student's cultural background is viewed as positive and essential in developing classroom instruction and a desirable school environment. It is designed to support and extend the concepts of culture, cultural pluralism, and equity into the formal school setting. An examination of the theoretical precepts of these concepts will lead to an understanding of the development and growth of multicultural education.

Culture

Everyone has culture. Unfortunately, many individuals believe that persons who are culturally different from themselves have an inferior culture. Until early this century the term *culture* was used to indicate groups of people that were more developed in the ways of the Western world and less "primitive" than tribal groups in many parts of the world. Individuals who were knowledgeable in the areas of history, literature, and the fine arts were said to possess culture. No longer is culture viewed so narrowly. Anthropologists and sociologists define culture as a way of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving (Good-enough, 1976). Culture provides the blueprint that determines the way an individual thinks, feels, and behaves in society.

Thus in a classroom of 30 students, each of them has culture. Parts of the culture are shared by all of the class members, whereas other aspects of the culture are shared only with family members or the community. All of the students belong to the same age cohort and as such share membership in an age group. All live in the same country, state, and community and as such are subject to the same basic values, rules, and regulations that govern the shared national culture. Students with English as their first language may differ in the dialect spoken, and other students will be learning English as a second or third language. In most classes there will be both boys and girls, and within both

groups aspects of being either a boy or a girl are shared with others of the same sex.

In one elementary classroom a number of ethnic backgrounds might be identified. Even when the class is composed totally of white students, ethnic identities could include Swedish-Americans, German-Americans, Irish-Americans, and Polish-Americans. Students within each ethnic group might share the same religion, life-styles, and values, and these may be somewhat different from those of classmates with a different ethnic background. Skin color is not an indication of ethnic identity. Black students may identify themselves ethnically as Jamaican-American, Puerto Rican, Panamanian-American, black American, or Afro-American. Unless the school is parochial and limits attendance to children of a specific religion, several religious affiliations will be represented in the classroom. Some rural or small-town communities will be composed primarily of liberal and fundamentalist Protestant families. Large urban schools may include students who consider themselves to be Protestant, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Latter-Day Saint (Mormon), Jewish, or Islamic, in addition to those who claim no religious affiliation. Other culture differences will result from the socioeconomic status of students' families and the geographic area from which the family may have recently come.

To understand the different cultural experiences brought to the classroom by students, it is necessary first to examine culture itself. All people have the same psychological and biological needs that must be met to survive. How they fulfill these needs varies greatly. These variations depend in part on the resources available and climatic conditions of the region, but the different means for meeting these needs depend primarily on the culture of the people.

Food must be consumed to survive, but the foods selected as edible by different cultural groups vary extensively. Many Americans reject foods, such as horses, dogs, cats, rats, mice, snakes, snails, grasshoppers, caterpillars, and numerous insects, consumed by other cultural groups in different areas of the world. At the same time, other cultural groups reject foods that are normal to many Americans. Muslims and Orthodox Jews do not eat pork. Hindus do not eat beef, some East Africans find eggs unpalatable, and some Chinese do not drink milk. Yet many Americans believe that meat, eggs, and milk are absolutely essential to maintain good health. Do you remember the foods included on the Basic Four charts learned in elementary school? Often we find it difficult to believe that not everyone has a diet that includes the basic four foods seen on those charts. Those foods are determined by what is generally acceptable in our culture as both edible and desirable. In other parts of the world the typical American diet may seem strange or even barbaric.

Culture not only helps to determine what foods we eat, but it also influences when we eat (for example, one, three, or five meals and at what time of the day); with whom we eat (that is, only with the same sex, with children or with the extended family); how we eat (for example, at a table or on the floor;

with chopsticks, silverware, or the fingers); and the ritual of eating (for example, in which hand the fork is held, asking for or being offered seconds, and belching to show appreciation of a good meal). These eating patterns are habits of the culture. The way we eat and the foods we eat seem natural to us. It is difficult to imagine eating any other way or eating any other foods. Kluckhohn (1949), an anthropologist, reported knowing a trader's wife in Arizona who took delight in soliciting a cultural reaction to food that she served:

Guests who came her way were often served delicious sandwiches filled with a meat that seemed to be neither chicken nor tuna fish yet was reminiscent of both. To queries she gave no reply until each had eaten his fill. She then explained that what they had eaten was not chicken, not tuna fish, but the rich white flesh of freshly killed rattlesnakes. The response was instantaneous—vomiting, often violent vomiting. A biological process caught in a cultural web. (p. 19)

All human groups have about the same biological equipment and undergo the same poignant life experiences of birth, helplessness, illness, old age, and death. We even share many of the same institutions such as marriage ceremonies and incest taboos. However, the ways in which we use our biological characteristics, handle the same poignant life experiences, and create the same institutions are limitless. These differences are not innate, but culturally determined. A traditional Greek-American may show a great outpouring of emotion at the



Figure 1-3 Culture influences everyday, common activities such as eating, including when, how, and what we eat.

funeral of a family member. On the other hand, a third-generation Greek-American who has been acculturated may show considerably less emotion at the public funeral. None of the events, reactions, or habits of a group of people can be understood without understanding the context of the culture of which they are a part.

Culture is so much a part of us that we do not realize that we might behave differently from others. Most of us do not think that sitting at a table to eat, eating three meals a day, having different foods for breakfast than dinner, brushing our teeth, or sleeping in a bed are culturally determined behaviors. We know these habits and customs as the only way to behave. These ways of doing things have become accepted and patterned ways of behavior for people who live in the Western part of the world, particularly the United States. As a matter of fact, we must know and use these patterns in order to be acceptable to other members of the culture. Culture gives us our total identity through acceptable words; actions, postures, gestures, and tones of voice; facial expressions; handling of time, space, and materials; ways to work, play, express love, and defend ourselves (Hall, 1977).

Generally accepted and patterned ways of behavior are necessary for a group of people to live together. Culture imposes order and meaning on all our experiences. It allows us to predict how others will behave in certain situations. On the other hand, it prevents us from predicting how people from a different culture will behave in the same situation.

Culture gives us a certain life-style that is peculiarly our own. It becomes so peculiar to us that someone from a different culture can easily identify us as Americans. Travelers from our country who go overseas will usually be identified as American by the people of the country being visited whether the individual is a black American, American Indian, white American, Hispanic-American, or Asian-American.

Culture is not only reflected in our behavior but it also determines the way that we think and feel. It makes assumptions about the ends and purposes of human existence, about what humans have a right to expect from each other and God (gods), and about what constitutes fulfillment or frustration (Hall, 1977).

CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE

We all have culture, but how did we get it if we were not born with it? It is learned, and the learning starts at birth. Most individuals born in the United States first saw the world in a hospital delivery room where attendants were dressed in white or aqua-green uniforms. The first days of life were characterized by cleanliness—sterile sheets and gowns, sterile bottles or nipples, and a sterile environment behind glass except during nursing hours. The way the baby was held, fed, bathed, and dressed was culturally determined. Parents and hospital personnel knew this procedure as the only way, or at least the best way, to have

and care for a baby in the first days because it had been the acceptable pattern in this country.

A person learns how to become a functioning adult within a specific society through culture. Two similar and interrelated processes are learned: enculturation and socialization. *Enculturation* is the process of acquiring characteristics of a given culture and generally becoming competent in its language. *Socialization* is the general process for learning to function as members of the society by learning social roles, such as mother, husband, student, or child, and occupational roles, such as teacher, banker, plumber, custodian, or politician (Miller, 1979). Enculturation and socialization are processes initiated at birth by others, including parents, siblings, nurses, physicians, teachers, and ministers. These varied instructors may not identify these processes as enculturation or socialization, but they say, demonstrate, and reward one for acceptable behaviors. All people learn how to behave by observation of and participation in the society and culture. Thus individuals will be socialized and enculturated according to the patterns of the culture in which they are raised. The culture in which one is born becomes unimportant unless one is also socialized in the same culture, as Kluckhohn (1949) illustrated:

I met in New York City a young man who did not speak a word of English and was obviously bewildered by American ways. By "blood" he was as American as you or I, for his parents had gone from Indiana to China as missionaries. Orphaned in infancy, he was reared by a Chinese family in a remote village. All who met him found him more Chinese than American. The facts of his blue eyes and light hair were less impressive than a Chinese style of gait, Chinese arm and hand movements, Chinese facial expressions, and Chinese modes of thought. The biological heritage was American, but the cultural training had been Chinese. He returned to China. (p. 19)

Because culture is so much a part of us, we often tend to mix up biological and cultural heritage. Our cultural heritage is learned. It is not innately based on our biological heritage, as shown by Kluckhohn's example of the American man raised in China. Vietnamese infants adopted by Italian-American, Catholic, middle-class parents will share a cultural heritage with middle-class Italian-American Catholics, rather than with Vietnamese in Vietnam. Observers, however, may continue to identify these individuals as Asian-Americans because of physical characteristics and a lack of knowledge about their cultural experiences.

A second characteristic of culture is that it is shared. Shared cultural patterns and customs bind people together as an identifiable group and make it possible to live together and function with ease. An individual in the shared culture is provided the context for identifying with the group that shares the same culture. Although there may be some disagreement about certain aspects of the culture, there is a common acceptance and agreement about most aspects. Actually, most points of agreement are outside our realm of awareness. We do

not even realize their existence as culture; eating three meals a day or sleeping on a bed are examples of this.

Culture is an adaptation. Cultures have developed to accommodate certain environmental conditions and available natural and technological resources. Thus the Eskimo who lives with extreme cold, snow, ice, seals, and the sea has developed a culture different from the Pacific Islanders, who have limited land, unlimited seas, and few mineral resources. The culture of urban residents differs from rural residents, in part, because of the resources available in the different settings.

Finally, culture is a dynamic system that changes continuously. Some cultures undergo constant and rapid change, and others are very slow to change. Some changes, such as a new word or new hairstyle, are relatively small with little impact on the culture as a whole. Other changes have a dramatic impact and consequence on the culture. The introduction of technology into a culture has often produced changes far broader than the technology itself. For example, the replacement of industrial workers by robots is changing the culture of many working class communities. Such changes may also alter traditional customs and beliefs.

MANIFESTATIONS OF CULTURE

The cultural patterns of a group of people are determined by how they organize and view the various components of culture. Culture itself is manifested in an infinite number of ways through societal institutions, daily habits of living, and the individual's fulfillment of psychological and basic needs. To understand how extensively our lives are affected by culture, let us examine a few of these manifestations of culture.

Clothing has generally served four purposes: as protection against the weather; for purposes of modesty; as decoration; and as a symbol of sex, occupation, status, or ritual. Different climates around the world suggest different types and weights of clothing, although Western dress is now fairly common in urban centers worldwide. Eskimos dress differently from Saudi Arabians or Pacific Islanders to protect themselves from various elements of the environment. Although it makes sense to dress according to the environment, modesty also has influenced the parts of the body to be clothed. Early European and U.S. missionaries expected everyone to dress like them—covered from head to toe with several layers of clothing. Thus Christianized natives were required to wear the same clothing to meet the modesty requirements of the religion; the humidity, temperature, or conditions of daily living were overridden by the need to be covered. In our society how low the neckline, how high the hem, and how snug the fit continue to be determined by current fashion and acceptable standards of modesty.

Decoration is more inclusive than the fabric used for clothing. It also includes jewelry, hairstyles, and how the body is decorated with makeup, paint,