

Comprehensive
**MULTICULTURAL
EDUCATION**

Theory and Practice



Fifth Edition

Christine I. Bennett

FIFTH EDITION

Comprehensive Multicultural Education

T H E O R Y A N D P R A C T I C E

Christine I. Bennett

Indiana University at Bloomington



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*To Max
And his generation in every nation,
With the hope they will find worldwide justice and peace in their lifetime*

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Preface

In the aftermath of the horrific tragedy of September 11, 2001, the ideals, knowledge base, and practices of multicultural education have become more imperative than ever. We are in urgent need of national and global citizens who possess multicultural competence, and who are committed to the achievement of worldwide social justice and economic equity as a foundation for lasting peace on the planet. Classroom teachers as well as educators in college, community, and religious settings across the globe can make a difference in meeting this need. Now, more than ever, they must become leaders in the quest for world peace with justice and equity. We can start small, with the young children and youth in our own classrooms, making sure each one reaches his or her potential for academic achievement as well as fair-minded critical thinking, compassion, and concern for fellow humans everywhere. In addition to developing a strong sense of self, including ethnic, national, and religious or spiritual identities, our children and youth need to gain the ability to view people and events from multiple perspectives. To some readers this may sound overly optimistic or unrealistic, given the many demands teachers face every day. Indeed, since the 1960s, multicultural education scholars and advocates have been idealistic and hopeful for educational reform that can make a difference in our society and world. The events of September 11 have only intensified these hopes and ideals.

Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice was first written for my students and others new to the field of multicultural education. My goal in the early 1980s was to create a framework that would help them make sense out of a complex, ambiguous, multidisciplinary field that asks teachers to take risks and deal with controversial topics such as prejudice, racism, social justice, and cultural pluralism. I wanted to provide some of the historical background, basic terminology, and social science concepts that many students have not yet encountered when they enter the field. I hoped to engage readers on an emotional level, move them to take action in their classrooms, and encourage them to pursue academic inquiry and self-reflection after the book had been read. While the book's basic philosophy and approach remain the same, changes in later editions have grown out of nearly two decades of conversations with my own students as well as other students and instructors who are engaged in multicultural teacher education. These conversations have provided a steady barometer of the book's strengths and limitations, and they indicate that the book stimulates thinking and dialogue about critical issues in multicultural education in ways that I had only hoped would be possible.

The book deals with questions students continually ask that too often are left hanging. Doesn't multicultural education lead to lower academic standards? Won't cultural pluralism lead to the Balkanization of our society? Aren't we really stereotyping when we talk about cultural differences? Isn't it racist? Are you saying I can't set up my own standards for acceptable behavior in my classroom? How can I add multicultural content when I don't have time to cover the basic curriculum? What does multicultural education have to do with math and science, or with physical education? Doesn't multicultural education really boil down to indoctrination?

My approach to multicultural education focuses on ethnic diversity and community in the United States, diversity rooted in racial, cultural, and individual differences; it also emphasizes basic human similarities and global connections. Given that we live in a multicultural world, multicultural education is for everyone. Few of our nation's schools, however, have become multicultural in their vision or practice. They are hampered by societal policies and practices, often beyond their control, that impede reform of formal and hidden curricula. Shortage of funds and lack of understanding, for example, make it difficult for schools to replace or supplement biased or outdated books and films, to hire new personnel who can provide positive role models from a variety of ethnic groups, or to study alternatives to discriminatory school practices in areas such as co-curricular activities or student discipline. Teachers and administrators who are uninformed about cultural diversity, whose knowledge of history and current events is monocultural in scope, and who are unaware of their own prejudices are likely to hinder the academic success and personal development of many students, however unintentional this may be. And curriculum standards usually provide little help in the development of content that includes diverse ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, or global perspectives. How we might meet challenges such as these through multicultural education is what *Comprehensive Multicultural Education* is about.

First, the book's content is comprehensive and interdisciplinary in scope and practical in focus. Key concepts from education and the social sciences are often explained with primary source material, and the implications for teaching and learning are developed through vignettes of teachers and students I have known over the years. A primary goal is to assist practicing and prospective teachers to bridge the gap between multicultural concepts or theories and practices in our schools, such as classroom management, instructional strategies, and curriculum development.

Second, the book develops an interaction between cultural and individual differences. Teachers often fear that tuning into students' cultural differences is an indication of being prejudiced or racist. This fear is related to the misconception that equates color consciousness with racism. It also stems from feelings that differences are bad or inferior, and from the mistaken notion that recognition of differences means we must imitate or adopt these differences. Many cultural awareness and human relations workshops have failed because these basic concerns of the participants were not dealt with.

On the other hand, most teachers do believe in individualizing or personalizing their instruction. Most would agree that our ultimate goal as teachers is to foster the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students to each one's fullest potential. This book shows that the ability to reach this goal can be strengthened by an understanding of both cultural and individual differences.

A primary feature of the book's later editions is the development of closer connections between multicultural and global education. These connections were influenced by my experiences in China as director of Indiana University's exchange program with Hangzhou University. The multicultural concepts and strategies I had previously used to help prepare teachers for working in a multiethnic society in the United States proved to be equally powerful in developing the exchange students' readiness for immersion into Chinese society and culture. They were also valuable tools for preparing visiting scholars from China, whom I also taught, for their upcoming experiences in the United States. Several years later these insights were reinforced when I had the opportunity to travel and work with teacher educators at Al Ain University in the United Arab Emirates. Opportunities to work with groups of educators from South Africa, a variety of additional African nations, and Russia have also enlightened my work.

The book's fifth edition incorporates numerous demographic updates from the 2000 Census. Some updates, especially information from the Census 2000 Supplementary Survey, will become available too late to be included in the text; however, this information may be accessed through the Allyn and Bacon Curriculum and Instruction Supersite (www.ablongman.com) in the Multicultural Education Zone. For this edition I have added a section on selected sources for further study in each chapter. In addition, Chapter 9 (now Chapter 8) has been rewritten and moved to section Two. The new Chapter 8 employs conceptions of *respect* as a lens to develop positive classroom climates. Chapter 9 includes a new lesson by Anna Ochoa-Becker, a close colleague, friend, and mentor at Indiana University. I am grateful for her lesson, "Thinking Peace/Doing Peace," which was completed prior to September 11 and has even more meaning for us now. I also want to thank *Rethinking Schools* for allowing me to include the lesson "Poverty and World Resources," by Susan Hersh and Bob Peterson. This edition also includes a new introduction and conceptual framework for multicultural education, the addition of "exceptionalities" in Chapter 7's discussion of individual differences that make a difference, and numerous attempts to create more interesting chapter introductions and clearer explanations as requested by students who use the book.

Several outside reviewers provided excellent suggestions that guided my revisions. Deep thanks go to Fred Ramirez, California State University at Fullerton; David Tate, Clarion University; Mongkol Tungmala, Webster State University; and Susan Yarbrough, Florida Community College who reviewed this new edition. Also many thanks to Debbie Posner, who did a thorough job of editing. As ever, my deepest appreciation goes to David Blair, a partner and fellow educator who brings love, energy, and boundless support to my lifework.

This book is dedicated to our grandson Max who was born October 31, 2001. The long anticipated arrival of Max sustained us through a difficult spring and summer prior to September 11. His powerful presence in the midst of global tragedy and human suffering strengthens our hope that worldwide justice and peace will become a reality in the 21st Century.

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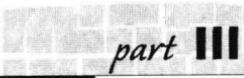
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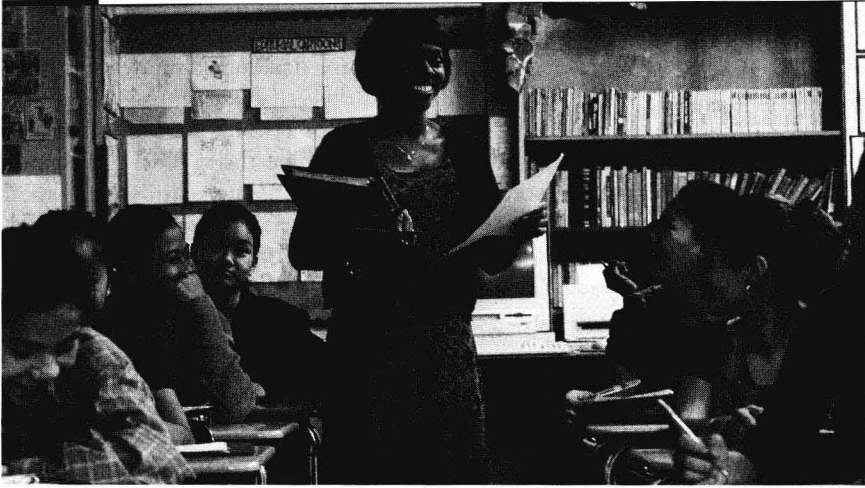
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*The Case for
Multicultural
Education*

To become an excellent classroom teacher in the twenty-first century is extraordinarily hard work, especially given the intense national climate of educational standards, high-stakes testing, increased diversity within the school-age population, and the ever-increasing expectations for schools to address special needs and community concerns. Excellent teachers are those who can inspire the intellectual, social, and personal development of *all* their students to their highest potential. These students are increasingly diverse in terms of race, culture, and socioeconomic background, as well as personal knowledge and experience. At the same time, prevalent social structures such as tracking and ability grouping, or parental concerns for their own children, even at the expense of other people's children, make it difficult for teachers to provide all of their students with equal opportunities to learn.¹

Still, this book takes the hopeful approach that teachers *can* make a difference in society by becoming competent and caring advocates for children and youth from all ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, family, and personal backgrounds. It provides a foundation for multicultural teaching in any school context, a foundation developed from theory, research, and practice in multicultural education over the past three decades. The conceptual framework in Figure 1 depicts four dimensions of multicultural teaching that are developed in this book.² One is *curriculum reform*, where teachers conduct inquiry to rethink and transform the traditional curriculum that is primarily Anglo European in scope. Another is *equity pedagogy*, where teachers create positive classroom climates, use culturally responsive teaching to foster student achievement, and consider cultural styles and culturally based child socialization, as well as the conditions of poverty or wealth, in their approach to teaching and learning. A third is *multicultural competence*, where teachers become comfortable with and learn how to interact with students, families, and other teachers who are racially and culturally different from themselves. And a fourth is *teaching toward social justice*, where teachers consider (and encourage student inquiry about) inequitable social structures; images of race, culture, class, and gender in popular culture; and social action to bring about greater societal equity, both locally and globally. Chapter 9 contains a sample list of multicultural teacher competencies developed from this conceptual framework.

Part I builds the case for multicultural schools. It begins with the stories of six students and a middle school science teacher. Although the names have been changed, each example is based on actual incidents that have recently taken place.

THE CASE OF FRED YOUNG

Fred Young grew up in the traditional world of the Navajo. Today, after having earned a doctorate in nuclear physics, Fred works at the Los Alamos scientific labs, where the United States's best scientists seek to understand the universe.

As a child, Fred lived in desperate poverty. He helped support his family at a very young age by hunting game, and sometimes he dug for food in the garbage cans outside Gallup, New Mexico, homes. During these early years,