

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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To my family: My wife, Marianne; and my children, Jennifer and Michael MLM

To my brother, Carroll, who has devoted most of his professional career to the education of children and adolescents

LGB

OUR NATION'S INCREASING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents is based on the premise that people from culturally different backgrounds enrich the United States and that a better understanding of people and their differences leads to higher levels of acceptance and respect for all people. This fourth edition is being published at a time when all demographic projections indicate that the number of people of differing cultures in the United States will increase.

Predictions suggest that the Hispanic American population will soon outnumber the African American population and that people of European ancestry will soon be in the minority. At this time, the Asian American population is increasing dramatically. Without doubt, the high birthrates among some cultural groups, increasing numbers of Spanish-speaking people, and the recent influxes of immigrants from Southeast Asia will increase the cultural diversity of the United States and challenge its citizens to accept and respect all people whatever their cultural background, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender, or religion.

At one time during the nation's history, the "melting pot" theory proposed to erase differences and to acculturate or "melt" cultural differences. In essence, the person of a different cultural background was supposed to forsake cherished and traditional cultural values and adopt "American values," probably those of the middle-class European American population. This concept viewed differences as wrong or inferior and promoted wholesale abandonment of cultural heritage.

Realistically, for any number of reasons, the melting pot is not an accurate model—people have difficulty giving up cultural characteristics or they live in enclaves in which assimilation with the mainstream society is unnecessary. Likewise, some people chose to maintain their culture as well as to adopt American values. Regardless of the reasons, the melting pot did not account for all the citizenry as some proposed; the nation is a heterogenous mixture of different peoples.

Serious questions continue to plague educators and other concerned people: Why is there an increase in racism? After fifty years since the landmark *Brown* decision, why are schools still segregated? Why do elementary and secondary schools address primarily the needs of some learners and allow others to fall behind? Why do people fear diversity? Why are victims often blamed for their problems? These questions defy easy answers and evince many people's belief that differences are negative manifestations in need of eradication.

Rather than provoking anger or causing fear, differences in values, customs, and traditions should be celebrated and considered a means of enriching the United States. We do not claim that the people who perceive differences as enriching will eliminate racism and acts of violence. Celebrating differences, though, is a first step, especially if

efforts focus on today's children and adolescents, who will lead the nation during the twenty-first century. Considering differences to be positive and enriching, however, is only a beginning. Significant change will require more comprehensive and deliberate efforts.

Elementary and secondary schools can play a major role in teaching acceptance and respect for all forms of diversity. The schools, in fact, are logical places to begin instilling feelings of acceptance for all people. Schools, however, must do more than pay lip service; effective curriculum reflects diversity, and appropriate learning materials represent all people in positive and meaningful roles. We believe wholeheartedly that multicultural education should be a total-school approach, rather than simply a unit or Multicultural Education Week approach. Although teaching about multiculturalism is an admirable concept, schools should also model acceptance and respect for cultural diversity. Schools that teach about cultural differences and celebrate diversity, but whose actions indicate racism or a lack of respect, fail in their multicultural efforts.

OUR REASONS FOR WRITING THIS BOOK

We wrote this fourth edition of *Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents* to provide preservice and in-service educators with a knowledge of the six prevalent cultural groups and to show the components of responsive multicultural education programs. The text staunchly maintains that multicultural education programs should be a total-school effort—that is, that administrators, teachers, library media specialists, special-education teachers, counselors, and communications disorder specialists have vital roles in the multicultural education program. Similarly, we believe that multicultural efforts should be comprehensive. The curriculum, instructional strategies, materials, environment, and school practices should reflect multiculturalism and should show a genuine respect for all forms of diversity.

Our Selection of Cultural Groups

After careful consideration of and reflection on the increasing cultural diversity of the United States, we decided to focus on six broad groups of people (listed alphabetically): African, American Indian, Arab, Asian, European, and Hispanic American. These groups are, and in all likelihood will continue to be, the most populous groups in elementary and secondary schools. Choosing only these groups does not negate the importance of other cultures. We hope and expect that learning about diversity in these cultures will motivate readers to explore the values, customs, and traditions of other cultures.

A Word of Caution

Any discussion focusing on characteristics of children and adolescents and their cultural backgrounds risks stereotyping and an overdependence on generalizations. The many differences resulting from cultural, intracultural, socioeconomic, geographic,

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generational, gender, sexual orientation, and individuality factors among people contribute to their diversity and to the difficulty of describing individuals of various cultures. Although we based this text on current and objective information, it remains crucial for educators to understand individual children and adolescents within a culture through conscientious study and first-hand contact. Failing to understand individuals and failing to consider crucial differences may result in assuming too much cultural homogeneity—for example, that all Hispanic cultural groups share identical values, problems, and cultural expectations or that all Asian Americans fit the "model minority" label.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents is divided into four parts and fourteen chapters. Part I introduces multicultural education as a concept and documents the increasing cultural diversity of the United States. Part II provides a cultural portrait of children and adolescents in the African, American Indian, Arab, Asian, European, and Hispanic cultures. Part III focuses on aspects that educators should consider when planning and implementing programs that teach acceptance and respect for cultural diversity. Part IV examines issues that will continue to challenge educators in the twenty-first century.

PEDAGOGICAL FEATURES

Pedagogical features of Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents include:

- *Case Studies* throughout the text show how educators have addressed the chapters' topics.
- Implementing Research boxes throughout the text provide readers with research studies that focus on children and adolescents of culturally different backgrounds and give practical suggestions for implementing the research. In an attempt to provide readers with a wide range of information and sources, we define research in its broadest sense.
- Expanding Your Horizons: Additional Journal Readings and Books, located at the end of each chapter, provides readers with resources for further study and consideration.
- Expanding Your Students' Horizons: Appropriate Books for Children and Adolescents is located at the end of Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.
- *Using Children's Literature*, located in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, provides titles and a brief annotation of developmentally appropriate children's and adolescents' literature that can help learners better understand their cultural heritages.
- For Additional Information, located in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, provides names and addresses of organizations and groups that promote cultural diversity and that act as disseminators of information about the respective cultures.

- Suggestions for Collaborative Efforts, at the end of each chapter, provides readers with opportunities to work cooperatively and collaboratively toward group goals.
- Gender Perspectives, located in selected chapters throughout the text, highlights current research and scholarly opinion on females and underscores the importance of understanding gender as well as cultural and other diversities.

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An author's only chance and hope for making a valuable contribution lies in the willingness of others to offer advice and to share their expertise. We would like to thank reviewers Gail Mosby, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Dilys Shourman, Florida Atlantic University, for their helpful comments. Our appreciation is also extended to people of all cultures who have contributed to the richness of our lives and the nation.

MLM LGB

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