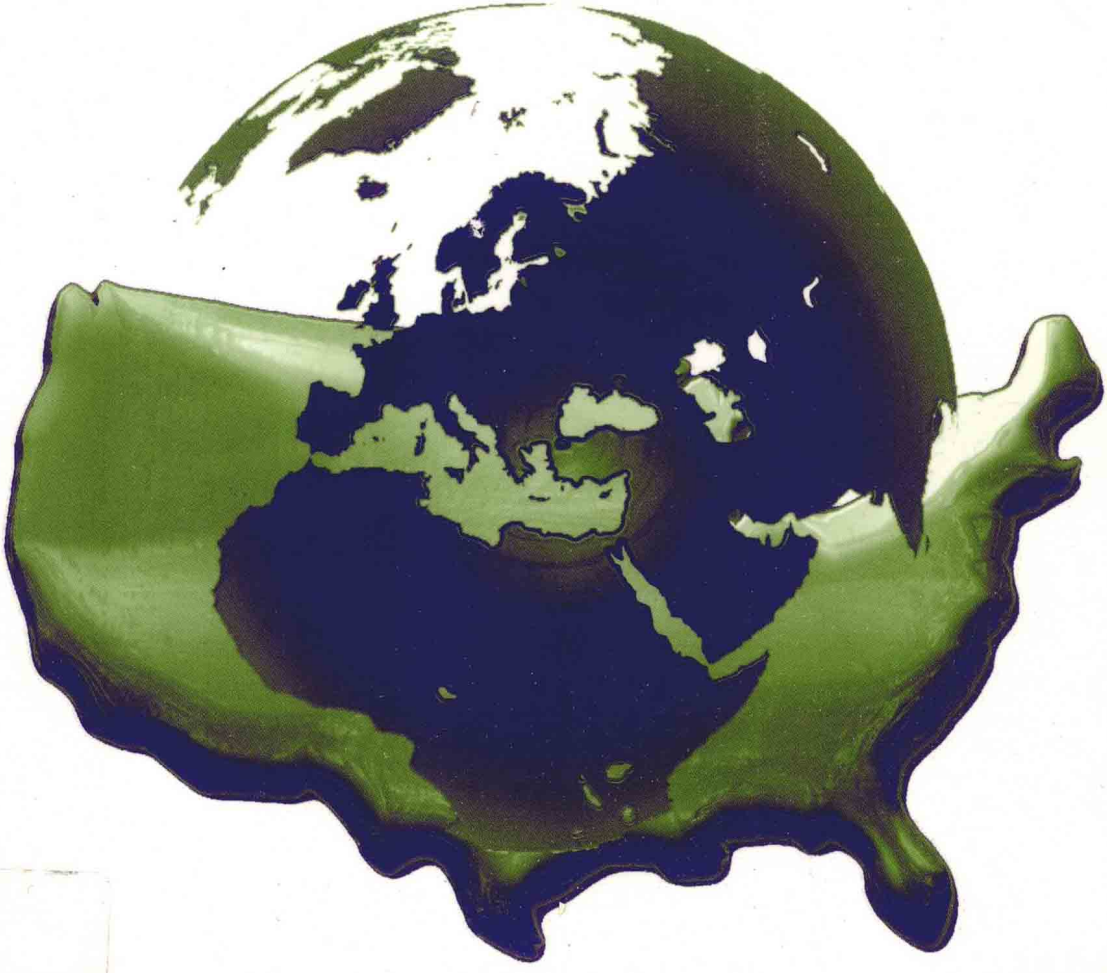
The Intersection of Cultures

Multicultural Education in the United States and the Global Economy



JOEL SPRING

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The Intersection of Cultures

Multicultural Education in the United States and the Global Economy

JOEL SPRING

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PREFACE

Multicultural education is a necessity as the speed of globalization and the mass migration of people bring into contact most of the world's population. Since ancient times, multicultural contacts have occurred along trading routes. Global trade routes developed following European contact with the Americas. Between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, European and Japanese colonialists tried to change colonized cultures. In Africa, Manchuria, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas, traditional cultures underwent forced change as a result of colonialism. In addition, colonialists moved populations and their cultures around the world using slavery, forced labor practices, and contract labor policies. With the end of colonialism in the mid-twentieth century, many people tried to restore their traditional cultures and sought equity within their new national contexts.

The legacy of colonialism is one of the challenges of multicultural education. In part, multicultural education is concerned with cultural restoration and protection of former colonized peoples. Also, multicultural education is interested in achieving economic and social equity for these previously dominated peoples. For instance, colonial powers transported enslaved Africans to the Americas, which caused massive cultural dislocations. Native Americans and other indigenous peoples are in search of lost or destroyed cultures and identities resulting from colonialism. The Maori of New Zealand and the Aborigines of Australia are seeking justice and cultural restoration after brutal British domination. Earlier generations of Koreans in Japan had been forced to leave their homes and work in Japanese factories, and now the current generation of Korean-Japanese want social and economic equity. Colonialism left a path of displaced persons and cultural destruction that must now be dealt with by multicultural education programs.

Multicultural education is concerned with the current global migration of peoples and the tension between local and global cultures. Global cultural and economic integration is rapidly occurring as a result of fast transportation systems, high-speed communications, mass media, and multinational corporations. The existence of rich and poor nations is stimulating mass migration of populations in search of better economic

conditions. Multicultural education is necessary to help these immigrants adjust to new cultural contexts. In addition, local cultures must adjust to the impact of global mass media and popular culture, the global products of multinational corporations, and the ability to rapidly communicate between the world's peoples. As technological changes bring the world's peoples into closer contact, concern to protect local cultures increases.

Multicultural education in this age of rapid globalization focuses on helping immigrants adjust to new cultures, restoring previously dominated cultures, reducing cultural conflicts, and ensuring economic and social equity. To teach multicultural education in this age of globalization, educators should understand that there are cultural differences in seeing, knowing, and interrelating with the world. They should learn about the different patterns of acculturation and problems in educating immigrant populations. Teachers should recognize the problems facing previously dominated cultures and the process of cultural restoration. They should understand the meaning of biculturalism and how it helps people interact with a global society. Teachers should know about global language issues and cross-cultural communications. They need to learn how to teach from multiple perspectives, including the perspectives of different cultures, races, ethnic groups, genders, and social classes. Teachers should know how to help immigrant children and children of previously dominated groups make the transition into a new culture or help in cultural restoration.

To achieve these goals, I have added in this fourth edition recent research findings from cross-cultural psychology and the psychology of immigration, and findings on differing methods of child rearing. An important concept in this volume is educating multicultural minds that are able to understand multiple perspectives on events and cultural differences in seeing, knowing, and interrelating with the world. To achieve these objectives, this book has been updated and the following sections and chapters were added.

NEW SECTIONS AND TABLES IN FOURTH EDITION

Chapter 1, Cultural Differences and Schooling

Individualist and Collectivist Cultures: Basic Character Traits
Individualist and Collectivist Cultures: Seeing, Knowing, and Interrelating with the World

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Universal Rules, Context, and Causality
Are You an Individualist or a Collectivist?
The Dominant American Culture and Ways of Seeing, Knowing, and Interrelating with the World
Table 1.1: Basic Character Traits in Individualist and Collectivist Cultures
Table 1.2: Seeing, Knowing, and Interrelating with the World in Individualist and Collectivist Cultures

Chapter 2, *Dominated Cultures*

Traditional and Scientific Knowledge
Indigenous Ways of Seeing, Knowing, and Interrelating with the World

Chapter 3, *Immigrant Cultures*

Patterns of Immigrant Acculturation

Chapter 4, Cultural Frames of Reference: Monoculturalism, *Biculturalism, and Ethnic Identity*

Developing Biculturalism
Biculturalism: Frame Switching
Benefits of Biculturalism

New Chapter 5, The Multicultural Mind

Chapter 6, Cultural Frames of Reference: History, Gender, and Social Class

Gender and Immigration
Social Class and Cultural Capital
Table 6.2: Child Rearing in Working and Middle Class Families

Chapter 8, Teaching about Racism

Teaching about Slavery to African Americans
Antidefamation League

Chapter 9, Teaching about Sexism

Global Concerns about Gender Equity in Education
Gender Inclusive Curricula

As a result of changes and additions, chapter 10 is now titled Teaching to Protect and Preserve Cultures

New chapter 11, The Necessity of Multicultural Education in the New Global Society

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joel Spring received his Ph.D. in educational policy studies from the University of Wisconsin. He is currently a professor at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. His great-great-grandfather was the first principal chief of the Choctaw Nation in Indian Territory, and his grandfather, Joel S. Spring, was a local district chief at the time Indian Territory became Oklahoma. Spring worked as a railroad conductor on the Illinois Central Railroad and for many years lived each summer on an island off the coast of Sitka, Alaska. His novel, *Alaskan Visions,* includes many of his Alaskan experiences.

Professor Spring's major research interests are the history of education, globalization and education, multicultural education, Native American culture, the politics of education, and human rights education. He is the author of over twenty scholarly books including *Pedagogies of Globalization: The Rise of the Educational Security State; How Educational Ideologies Are Shaping Global Society;* and *Education and the Rise of the Global Economy.* Spring's most important textbooks are *American Education* (now in its 13th edition); *American School 1642–2004* (now in its 6th edition) and *Conflict of Interests: The Politics of American Education* (now in its 5th edition). Professor Spring's most recent book is *A New Paradigm for Global School Systems Education for a Long and Happy Life* (to be published in 2007).

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PART ONE

Multiculturalism

CHAPTER 1

Cultural Differences and Schooling

In the United States and other countries, classrooms are populated by students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Students from different cultures have differing ways of seeing, knowing, and interrelating with knowledge and classroom activities. Teachers and other educational workers can also have cultural backgrounds different from their students'. As Tyrone Howard asserts, "Teachers must face the reality that they will continue to come into contact with students whose cultural, ethnic, linguistic, racial, and social class backgrounds differ from their own."[1]

"Culture" here refers to socially transmitted behavior patterns, ways of thinking and perceiving the world, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought. Besides requiring teachers to adjust instruction to differing learning styles, multiculturalism can result in social conflict and inequalities. Consequently, the three major goals for educators of multicultural education are

- To recognize in planning lessons and other classroom activities the cultural differences in how students see, know, and interrelate with knowledge and the classroom environment;
- To understand how their own culture might differ from that of their students; and
- To plan activities that will help students to understand cultural differences, the causes of cultural conflict, and the relationship between cultural differences and social inequalities.

School systems and teachers throughout the world are grappling with the problems caused by multicultural and multilinguistic populations. In *Empire,* a study of globalization, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri dramatically assert, *"A specter haunts the world and it is the specter*

of migration." The authors maintain, "Today the mobility of labor power and migratory movements is extraordinarily diffuse and difficult to grasp. Even the most significant population movements of modernity (including the black and white Atlantic migrations) constitute . . . [minor] events with respect to the enormous population transfers of our times."[2]

While global schools are facing increasing multicultural student populations, media, travel, migration, and interdependent economic systems are creating a global culture based on the production and consumption of brand-name manufactured products. Calling them the "new world teens," market researcher Elissa Moses argues, "Teens who speak different languages all speak the same language of global brand consumption. . . . Teens love brands. . . . Brands are passports to global culture." Asking teens worldwide to identify 75 brand icons, she finds the five most popular, in order, are Coca-Cola, Sony, Adidas, Nike, and Kodak.[3] Brand names and consumer desires now define the behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, and institutions of a common global culture.

Therefore, teachers, students, and all citizens now face a world of intersecting cultures. Even isolated cultures with little contact with others are penetrated by popular media and global-consumer culture. Some people are bicultural and multicultural in their ways of knowing and interacting with world. A group of social psychologists refer to this modern phenomenon as the construction of "Multicultural Minds."[4]

CHAPTER PLAN

This chapter will discuss the complexities of defining American culture in a multicultural nation and world. First I discuss American multicultural society in the context of the first goal of multicultural education, which is understanding the cultural differences in how students see, know, and interrelate with knowledge and society. This is done by comparing individualist and collectivist cultures. America is often labeled an individualistic culture in its approaches to learning. However, not all cultures in the United States are individualistic, which means that American teachers have to adapt their instruction to differing cultural styles.

I developed a model lesson that will help readers understand their own cultural values and how they might differ from the cultural values of others. This model lesson addresses the second goal of multicultural, which is to help teachers understand how their cultures might differ from that of their students.

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