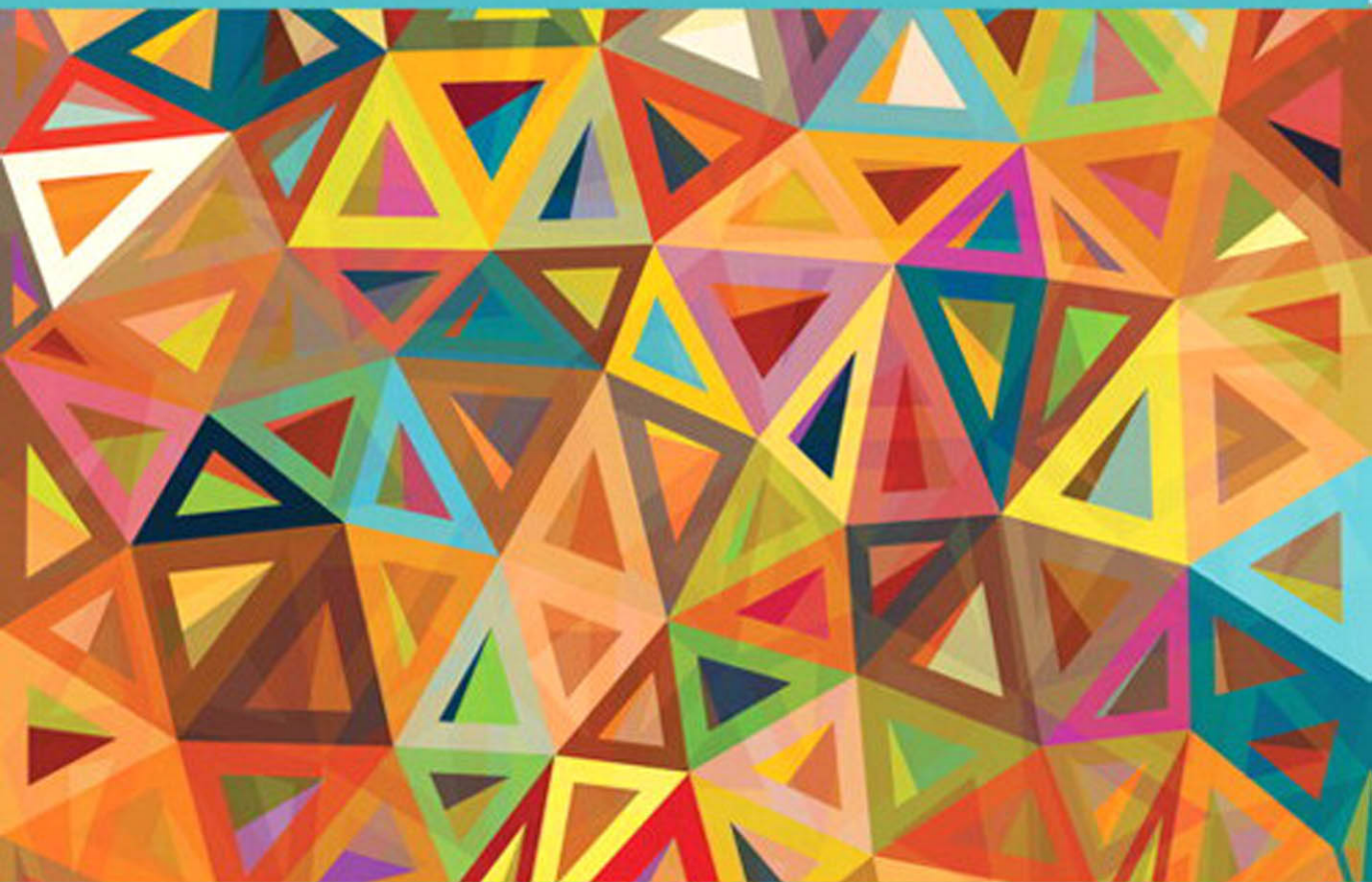


EIGHTH EDITION

COMPREHENSIVE  
*Multicultural*  
EDUCATION

THEORY AND PRACTICE



CHRISTINE I. BENNETT



# Comprehensive Multicultural Education:

*Theory and Practice*

EIGHTH EDITION

Christine I. Bennett

*Indiana University at Bloomington*

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## Preface

Our population has changed dramatically since the first edition of this text was written (more than three decades ago) due to changes in immigration policies and the influx of newcomers from Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Immigration engenders ethnicity, and today our school-age population is more diverse than ever before in terms of languages spoken at home, race, religion, and national origin. Religious pluralism is growing; more than 20 percent of our school-age population is either an immigrant or the child of immigrants, and more and more of these newcomers are moving into the heartland of America. Therefore, a major aspect of this book is to provide readers with an accessible overview of contemporary immigration, how it affects our schools and society, and how teachers can be successful in linguistically and ethno/racially diverse classrooms.

Tragic events like the Boston Marathon bombings can become an attack on diversity when the focus is on the fact that the perpetrators are from a different country or religion, especially those of the Muslim faith. These events can also remind us of basic democratic values that underlie the American Creed as well as cultural pluralism. And they remind us of the need for informed, culturally competent citizens who can help us navigate cultural conflict and misunderstanding with calmness and compassion. Culturally competent teachers have a critical role to play in the education of future citizens who affirm cultural, linguistic, religious, and racial diversity and are willing to take a stand against stereotyping and scapegoating “others.”

President Barack Obama affirmed the core values of multicultural education in his Second Inaugural Address when he reminded us of “the promise of our democracy.” He stated,

*We recall that what binds this nation together is not the colors of our skin or the tenets of our faith or the origins of our names. What makes us exceptional—what makes us American—is our allegiance to an idea articulated in a declaration made more than two centuries ago:*

*“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness....”*

*It is now our generation’s task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law—for if we*

*are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. Our journey is not complete until no citizen is forced to wait for hours to exercise the right to vote. Our journey is not complete until we find a better way to welcome the striving, hopeful immigrants who still see America as a land of opportunity—until bright young students and engineers are enlisted in our workforce rather than expelled from our country. Our journey is not complete until all our children, from the streets of Detroit to the hills of Appalachia, to the quiet lanes of Newtown, know that they are cared for and cherished and always safe from harm.*

As we face horrific global terrorism; persistent conflict in the Middle East; growing economic inequalities at home, with about 40 percent of our children living at or below the poverty level; and ongoing racial and socioeconomic inequities in our schools, there are ways future decisions can be enlightened by greater multicultural knowledge and competence. As we seek wise and compassionate decisions for the future, the ideals, knowledge base, and practices of multicultural education are essential. Classroom teachers as well as educators in college, community, and religious settings across the globe can make a difference in meeting this need. 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 thought, 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 and to recognize hidden societal structures of oppression as a foundation for action as young adults. 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. Current national and world events have only intensified these hopes and ideals.

## New to This Edition

In response to extensive reviewer feedback as well as new research and world events since writing the last edition, this eighth edition reflects the following changes and additions:

- New Chapter 4 in Part I: “Affirming Religious Pluralism in U.S. Schools and Society.”
- New Chapter 9 in Part II: “U.S. Immigrants from the Middle East: Arab American Perspectives.”
- End-of-chapter follow-up questions and activities facilitate knowledge construction and the application of theory to practice. Sample answers to Compare and Contrast items are located in Appendix A.
- New case examples at the end of Chapters 4, 9, and 11 focus on leadership and change in schools and classrooms.

- Additions to Chapter 6, “Colonialism, Involuntary Immigration, and the American Dream: American Indian and African American Perspectives” include Indian boarding schools and deculturalization, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the “long civil rights movement.”
- Reorganization of Chapter 5, “Immigration and the American Dream: European American Perspectives,” and Chapter 13, “Curriculum Transformation,” and sample lessons previously included in Chapter 13 are now located in Appendix A and are referenced at the end of appropriate chapters throughout the text.
- Expansion of and greater emphasis on migrant farm workers, Latino youth, and the DREAM Act (Chapter 7); the model minority stereotype (Chapter 8); the “achievement gap,” needs of LGBT youth, and “Race to the Top” initiatives (Chapter 11); and race as a social construction (Chapter 2).
- Substantial updates to census data, current indicators of racism, and the demographics of poverty, school achievement, and so on.
- Four case studies included in the Instructor Manual (IM): “Creating Supportive Classroom Environments for Immigrant Children,” “Creating Positive School-Family Connections,” “Implementing Principles of Social Justice,” and “Developing the Ability to Teach about Race and Racism.”

*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 more than thirty years 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; and it addresses the structural barriers (often hidden) in schools and society that keep racial injustice and oppression alive. 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 mono-cultural in scope, and who are unaware of institutional racism and/or 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.

The book's approach is unique in several ways. First, its content is comprehensive and interdisciplinary in scope and practical in focus. Key concepts from education, history, ethnic studies, 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 differentiating 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 cultural and individual differences, as well as societal contexts.

The book's conceptual framework (see Figure 1.1) integrates four dimensions that are developed throughout the chapters: (1) equity pedagogy (a focus on *classroom instruction* and an end to the achievement gap); (2) curriculum reform (focus on *content* inquiry and transformation guided by four core values: acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, respect for human dignity and universal human rights, reverence for the earth, and responsibility to a world community); (3)

multicultural competence (focus on the *individual's* ethnic identity development and reduction of all forms of prejudice and discrimination), and (4) social justice (a focus on *society*; becoming agents of change, however small the steps; and the eventual eradication of racism and other forms of oppression locally, nationally and globally).

Part I, “The Case for Multicultural Education,” includes a new chapter, “Affirming Religious Pluralism in U.S. Schools and Society.” This chapter provides an overview of the origins of religious diversity and conflict, religious freedom and the First Amendment, and religious pluralism today; discusses religious pluralism and prejudice through Jewish and Muslim American perspectives; and concludes with case examples of leadership professionals in “From Prejudice to Pluralism: What Can Teachers Do?”

Part II, “Roots of Ethnic Diversity in the United States: The Conflicting Themes of Assimilation and Pluralism,” has been expanded from four to five chapters with separate chapters for Asian Americans (Chapter 8) and immigrants from the Middle East (Chapter 9). Part II contains updated demographic data in all chapters and adds new content to further develop the theme that was introduced in the Seventh Edition—“Immigration and the American Dream”—as well as the analytic framework based on the classic (1880–1924) and contemporary (post-1965) immigration eras. Chapters 5 through 9 develop classic and contemporary immigration perspectives in light of immigration and the American dream among European Americans (a reorganized Chapter 5); colonialism, involuntary immigration, and the American Dream among American Indians and African Americans (an expanded Chapter 6); colonialism, immigration, and the American Dream among Latinos (Chapter 7); and contemporary immigration and the American dream among Asian Americans (Chapter 8) and immigrants from the Middle East (a new Chapter 9). Recent case study research by ethno-geographers provides representative examples of immigrant experiences in the heartland (e.g., Latinos and Asians) as well as on the West Coast (e.g., Ukrainians) and in the Southwest (e.g., Mexicans and Cubans). The chapter on American Indians and African Americans is expanded to include Indian boarding schools and deculturalization, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and “the long civil rights movement.” The chapter on Latinos contains new sections on migrant farm workers and Latino youth and the DREAM Act, and the chapter on Asian Americans contains a new section on the model minority stereotype. Differences within the Asian and Latino pan-ethnic groups are examined in terms of socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and assimilation issues associated with people from different nations of origin (e.g., Filipinos, Chinese, South Asian Indians, Koreans, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Hmong among Asian Americans and Latinos from the Caribbean and Mexico). The new chapter on immigrants from the Middle East provides a basic geo-political and historical context about the Middle East; discusses misconceptions about the Arab world and the legacy of Western colonialism; provides an overview of the rapidly growing immigrant population from the Middle East; and concludes with case examples focused on what educators can do to clear up misconceptions and stereotypes.

Part III is renamed “Teaching in a Multicultural Society.” It now includes the revised, shortened, and renamed final chapter, Chapter 13, “Curriculum Transformation.”

At the suggestion of several reviewers, lesson plans formerly included in this chapter are now located in Appendix B and are referenced at the end of selected chapters to help students see classroom implications of the text's historical and social science content. Part III also includes Chapter 10, "Learning Styles and Culturally Competent Teaching;" Chapter 11, "Reaching All Learners: Perspectives on Gender, Class, and Special Needs;" and Chapter 12 (written by James Damico), "Teaching in Linguistically Diverse Classrooms." Chapter 10 ties into contemporary immigration issues in schools (e.g., culture in teaching and learning and the needs of students and parents who are immigrants, including refugees), and Chapter 11 contains expanded content on the "achievement gap," poverty, and the needs of LGBT youth.

The new edition's three-part structural organization gives readers and instructors flexibility as to the order in which chapters are read or assigned in various course syllabi. Some instructors prefer to start with Chapter 11 (the achievement gap, demographics, and so on), some with Chapter 13 (multicultural curriculum decision making and sample lessons), and some with Chapter 2 (culture and the contexts of multicultural teaching), whereas many others use the book's structure as the basic outline for their course. At the request of reviewers and users, this revision includes chapter-end instructional tools (i.e., compare and contrast, questions, and follow-up activities) in the text rather than the Instructor Manual (IM). And in place of a glossary, Appendix A provides sample answers for selected compare-and-contrast items per chapter that include implications for the classroom.

### **Supplements for the Instructor**

The following ancillary materials have been developed to support instructors using this text. These instructor supplements are located on the Instructor Resource Center (IRC) at [www.pearsonhighered.com](http://www.pearsonhighered.com). Please contact your Pearson representative if you need assistance downloading them from the IRC.

### **Instructor's Resource Manual and Test Bank**

The Instructor Manual/Test Bank includes (1) chapter objectives; (2) chapter short-answer test items that could also be used as study guides to help new students comprehend chapter content; (3) sample course syllabi; (4) a range of instructional activities and simulations; (5) a multicultural "knowledge bowl"; (6) selected film discussions; (7) sample lesson plans not included in the text; and (8) selected readings.

### **PowerPoint™ Presentations**

Ideal for lecture presentations or student handouts, the PowerPoint™ Presentations for each chapter includes key concept summaries.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## About the Author



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Christine Iverson Bennett is Professor Emerita in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Indiana University (IU). During her thirty-one years at IU, Professor Bennett developed and taught graduate and undergraduate courses in multicultural education; she initiated and directed The Teacher as Decision Maker Program for career-changers, the Research Institute on Teacher Education, and Project TEAM, a program to recruit and support students from underrepresented minorities. She worked extensively with schools in and around Indianapolis during school desegregation initiatives. Bennett also served as director of Indiana University's Exchange Program with Hangzhou University and conducted seminars for faculty at Al-Ain University in the United Arab Emirates and for visiting international scholars at Indiana University. Her funded research and publications focus on the impact of multicultural social studies for African American, Anglo, and Latino youth; classroom climates in desegregated middle schools; causes of racial inequities in secondary school suspensions and expulsions; explanations of minority student attrition at predominantly White universities; and the impact of multicultural teacher education programs on preservice teachers. She earned her B.A. in Sociology at Northwestern University, her M.A. in Social Studies Education at Stanford University, and her Ph.D. in Social Science Education with specializations in Ethnic Studies at the University of Texas in Austin. Prior to her doctoral studies she taught high school social studies in San Jose and Los Angeles. She can be reached at [bennettc@indiana.edu](mailto:bennettc@indiana.edu).

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# Part I

## The Case for Multicultural Education

# CHAPTER 1

## Multicultural Schools: What, Why, and How

Envision a society where *all* the nation's schoolchildren are provided the educational opportunities and support needed to reach their fullest potential; a society where all teachers are caring and culturally competent advocates for students from all ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, family, and personal backgrounds; a society where teachers are fully supported in material and nonmaterial ways as they engage in this important work for the nation. Envision, also, an interconnected world where local, national, and global societies are working toward equity, environmental sustainability, wise innovation, economic security, and affirmation of the common good on a global scale.

Can we ever attain this vision? Whatever the answer, it is imperative that we try; the alternative is too grim to imagine. Because teachers play a crucial role in this vision, their work can be extraordinarily rewarding. However, classroom teaching in the twenty-first century is demanding and difficult work, especially given the intense national climate of educational standards, high-stakes testing, growing racial and cultural diversity within the school-age population, inadequate resources in many schools, and the ever-increasing expectations for schools to address special needs and community concerns. While recognizing the challenges teachers face, this book takes a hopeful approach that teachers *can* make a difference. It provides a foundation for multicultural teaching in any school context, a foundation developed from theory, research, and practice in multicultural education that spans nearly four decades. Advocates of multicultural education believe teachers can make a difference—locally, nationally, and globally—by preparing future world citizens who understand that without social justice there cannot be lasting peace.



### What Is Multicultural Education?<sup>1</sup>

Multicultural education is a complex approach to teaching and learning that includes the movement toward equity in schools and classrooms, the transformation of the curriculum, the process of becoming multiculturally competent, and the commitment to address societal injustices. Multicultural education originated in the United States as a hopeful and idealistic response to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and

1960s; its primary purpose was reformation of the nation's schools. The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954 reversed the legality of "separate but equal schools" and triggered rising expectations and aspirations for equal opportunity and social justice, especially in public education. Instead, disproportionately high numbers of the nation's African American, American Indian, and Latino children and youth were placed in "special" education for the handicapped or "culturally disadvantaged." Others were suspended or expelled for reasons of "teacher discretion" or attended schools where teachers and the curriculum reflected primarily Anglo-European American perspectives. In reaction, the multicultural education movement emerged quickly and passionately, drawing upon a long history of multidisciplinary inquiry, artistic and literary achievement, social action, and scholarly writing. By the early 1970s, the movement had embraced a set of core values and ideals that stand in contrast to the old "culturally disadvantaged" and assimilationist Anglo-Eurocentric perspectives that pervaded the nation's school systems. It rests upon four broad principles: (1) the theory of cultural pluralism; (2) the ideals of social justice, which would bring an end to racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression; (3) affirmations of culture in the teaching and learning process; and (4) visions of educational equity and excellence leading to high levels of academic learning and personal development for all children and youth.

In particular, the ideal of cultural pluralism is a foundational principle of multicultural education in the United States. Developed early in the twentieth century by democratic philosopher Horace Kallen at the time of the "great deluge" of immigrants from Europe, the concept of cultural pluralism affirms the democratic right of each ethnic group to retain its own heritage as the newcomers become acculturated and are integrated into society.<sup>2</sup> It envisions a society based upon core values of equity and social justice; respect for human dignity and universal human rights; and the freedom to maintain one's language and culture, provided the human dignity and rights of others are not violated. It stands as a compromise between cultural assimilation on the one hand, whereby ethnic minority groups are expected to give up their language and culture to blend into mainstream Anglo-European culture, and segregation or suppression of ethnic minorities on the other hand.<sup>3</sup> Although ethnic minorities may be expected to compromise in some areas in order to maintain societal harmony and national identity, implicit are the assumptions that every child's home culture must be affirmed and respected and opportunities must be provided for *all* children to reach their fullest potential. Although cultural pluralism was not widely accepted during Kallen's lifetime and most immigrants from past eras did assimilate, as we shall see in Part II of this book, it was revived in the 1960s and 1970s, and today this ideal is widely accepted.

A second foundational principle of multicultural education is antiracism and the elimination of structural inequities related to identity groups beyond ethnic groups, such as race, class, and gender. In particular, the redress of *racial* inequities in a society built upon and maintained by White privilege is a primary focus of multicultural education, especially societal structures rooted in deep-seated structural injustices and systematic patterns of dominance and suppression that denied people of color economic and political equality. The end of institutional and cultural racism is at the



heart of multicultural education, even when conceptions of diversity are expanded to include gender, class, disabilities, and sexual preference.

A third foundational principle is the importance of culture in teaching and learning. The concept of culture has been described as anthropology's "seminal contribution" and a "welcome palliative to existing notions of inherited, and therefore immutable, racial differences."<sup>4</sup> *Culture* refers to a people's shared knowledge, beliefs, social values, worldviews, and preferred standards of behaving, as well as the material products they create. In a culturally diverse society such as the United States, it is not possible to "individualize" or personalize instruction, an idea most teachers embrace, without considering culture.

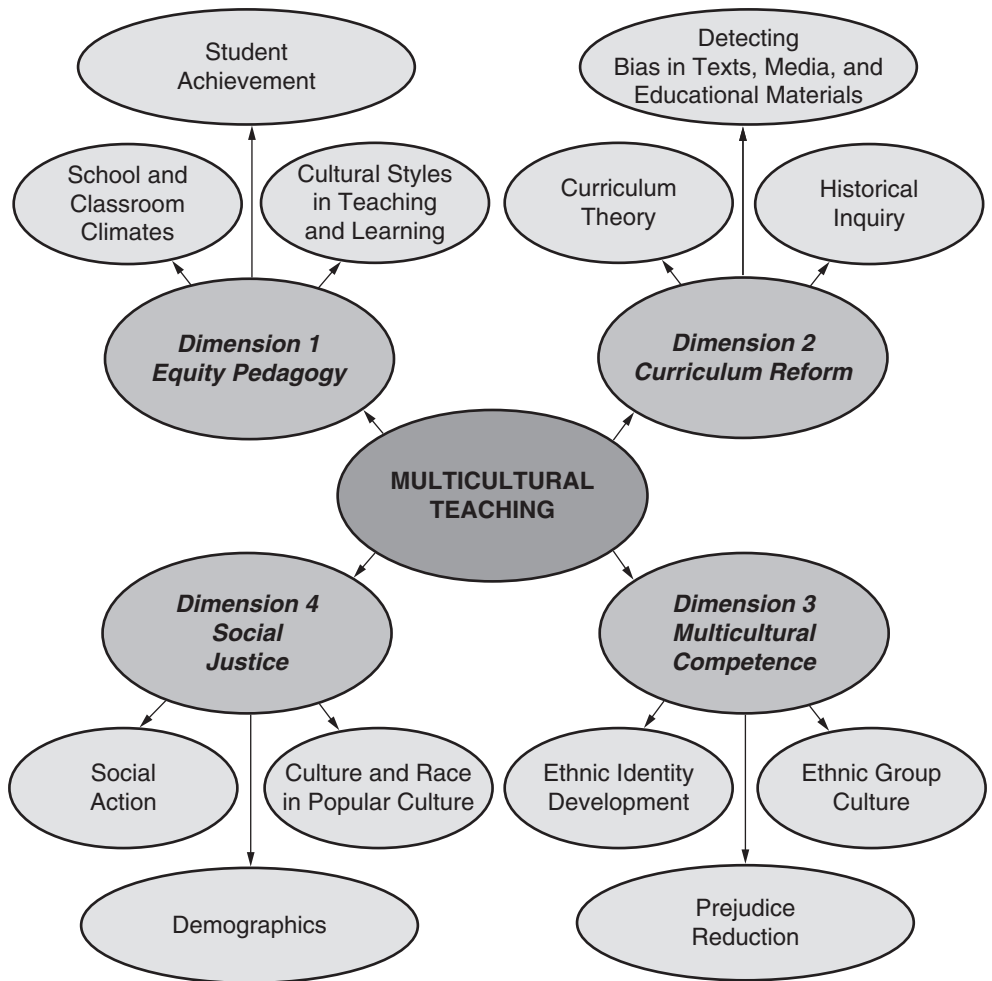
Finally, the need for academic excellence and equity is also a foundational principle of multicultural education. *Equity* in education means equal opportunities for all students to reach their fullest potential. It must not be confused with *equality* or sameness of result or even identical experiences. Student potentials may be diverse, and at times equity requires different treatment according to relevant differences, such as instruction in a language the child can understand. Achieving educational excellence requires an impartial, just education system where all students are perceived to be capable of learning at high levels and are provided opportunities to be academically successful.

These principles of cultural pluralism, eradication of racism and other forms of oppression, the importance of culture in teaching and learning, and high equitable expectations for student learning provide the basic premises and philosophy that underlie the conceptual framework proposed in Figure 1.1. The framework depicts four interactive dimensions of multicultural teaching that are developed throughout this book.

### Dimension One: Equity Pedagogy

*Equity pedagogy* envisions teachers who 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. Equity pedagogy aims at achieving fair and equal educational opportunities for all of the nation's children and youth, particularly ethnic minorities and the economically disadvantaged. It attempts to transform the total school environment, especially the hidden curriculum expressed in teacher expectations for student learning, as well as the grouping of students and instructional strategies, school disciplinary policies and practices, school and community relations, and classroom climates. Greater equity would help reverse the problems many ethnic minorities and low-income students face in our schools and ensure that they attain the highest standards of academic excellence.

Millions of children enter our schools each year with little or no proficiency in the English language. The story of Jesús Martínez, a highly intelligent Puerto Rican child, is echoed in the school experiences of many language minority children in schools across the country. His example on page 6 shows the need for equity pedagogy.



**Figure 1.1** A Conceptual Framework of Multicultural Teaching

Source: Adapted from C. I. Bennett (2001) “Genres or Research in Multicultural Education,” *Review of Education Research*, 72(2). 171–217.

### Dimension Two: Curriculum Reform

*Curriculum reform* envisions teachers who conduct inquiry to rethink and transform the traditional curriculum, which (in the United States) is primarily Anglo-European in scope. Curriculum reform expands traditional course content through inclusion of multiethnic and global perspectives. For most of us, this revision requires active inquiry and the development of new knowledge and understanding about cultural differences and the history and contributions of contemporary ethnic groups and nations, as well as of various civilizations in the past. This aspect of multicultural



## The Example of Jesús Martínez

Jesús Martínez was a bright, fine-looking six-year-old when he migrated with his family from Puerto Rico to New York City. At a time when he was ready to learn to read and write his mother tongue, Jesús was instead suddenly thrust into an English-only classroom where the only tool he possessed for oral communication (the Spanish language) was completely useless to him. Jesús and his teacher could not communicate with each other because each spoke a different language, and neither spoke the language of the other. Jesús felt stupid, or retarded; his teacher perceived him to be culturally disadvantaged and beyond her help. However, she and the school officials agreed to allow him to “sit there” because the law required that he be in school.

For the next two years Jesús “vegetated” in classes he did not understand—praying that the teacher would not call on him. She rarely did and seldom collected his papers, since she felt Jesús was not capable of what “more fortunate” children could do. Jesús’ self-concept began to deteriorate.

Another Puerto Rican boy in the classroom who spoke English was asked to teach Jesús English and help him in the process of adjustment. They were not permitted, however, to speak Spanish to each other because the teacher believed it would “confuse Jesús and prolong the period of transition” into English; also, it annoyed other people who could not understand what they were saying. The other boy, then, could not translate academic subject matter for Jesús. Jesús was expected to “break the code,” to learn English before learning his other subjects. By the time he began to understand English, he was so far behind in all his coursework that it was impossible to catch up. He was labeled “handicapped” by his teachers and taunted by his schoolmates. In fact, each time he would attempt to use his English, some of the other children would ridicule him for his imperfect grasp of the language. The teacher thought the teasing was all right because it would force Jesús to check his mistakes and provide him an incentive to learn proper English. School had become a battlefield for Jesús, and he began to find excuses to skip his classes. The situation became unbearable when, as a result of a test administered in English, Jesús was found to be academically retarded and was put in a class for the mentally retarded.

When Jesús finally dropped out of school, he had not learned English well. Today, although he is fluent in Spanish, he has never learned how to read and write his mother tongue. He is functionally illiterate in both languages.

*Source:* Based on F. Cordasco and D. Castellanos. (1973) “Teaching the Puerto Rican Experience,” in J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Teaching Ethnic Studies: Concepts and Strategies* (pp. 227–228). Washington, DC: National Council for Social Studies.

education focuses on both minority and nonminority students, in contrast to equity pedagogy, which targets primarily ethnic minorities and the poor. The importance of curriculum reform is evident in the classroom of Sam Johnson, a middle school science teacher.



## The Example of Sam Johnson's General Science Class

Sam Johnson, general science teacher in Oak Grove Middle School, leaned back in his chair and sighed. The student reports had been a disaster. It's true that technically they were terrific. The students had dutifully done extensive research, and the classroom was decorated with the results of their labor: an elaborate bulletin board on world hunger; large poster displays on nuclear weapons, the expense of toxic waste control, American technological superiority, and biological differences among races; a pictorial essay of famous scientists; an audiovisual show of how the U.S. government disposes of nuclear wastes; and another bulletin board on the AIDS epidemic throughout the world.

What bothered Johnson were the subtle (and not so subtle) expressions of attitudes, values, and beliefs that permeated the student reports. It was clear that the students felt culturally, and even biologically, superior to people from other nations, especially those from the Third World, the "undeveloped countries," as Stacey had referred to them, or the "primitive people," according to John. Sam Johnson had been chilled by Steve's remark that AIDS had originated among African Negroes, showing "a weakness among these people that makes it dangerous for us to associate with them." Margaret and Mark were concerned that nuclear wastes are indeed damaging to human health, as evident by the high rate of leukemia, sterility, and birth defects found in people who drink water from rivers that flow near the deposit sites; they were relieved that these deposits are located on barren lands where few people, mainly Indians, live. One of the bulletin board panels on world hunger explained how the infant death rate climbed in "undeveloped countries" after the United States sent huge supplies of canned formula, because the sanitary conditions were inadequate to keep the baby bottles clean. One would also conclude from this display that all the world's starving people are dark skinned and have naked children; there was no indication that millions of North American children suffer from malnutrition and poverty. Rachael's research on famous scientists showed the "superiority of modern Western Civilization"; all of her selections were White and male (with the exception of Madame Curie), and there was no recognition of the scientific developments in earlier civilizations across the globe.

Johnson was appalled, and actually a bit scared, by Steve and Peter's brilliant but uncompassionate report on nuclear weapons. The boys had glowed over the fact that "today nuclear weapons are over one million times more destructive than the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki," and they went on with statistics about the nuclear weapons various nations have stockpiled. Without questioning, they accepted the assumptions that these stockpiles are necessary to prevent a future nuclear holocaust.

What happened to these kids? Sam wondered. How had he failed them? Could anything be done? As he thought back over the school year, he remembered the students' reactions when the Japanese plant for Honda parts was set up in the county. The students reflected their parents' outrage and concern that this was unfair competition for the General Motors factory that provided a major source of employment for the townspeople. Sammy Nakamura, Johnson's only non-White student and one of a handful of Japanese Americans in a town that is over 99 percent White, was beaten on the way home from school, and his family received hate mail and taunts of "Japs go home." Then there was the time Vicki Miller was struck by a car and killed. Joshua had remarked, "That's one less mouth for the government to feed. That whole family has been on welfare for years."

Sam had let these occasions (and others) slip by without any class discussion. So much had to be covered in the eighth-grade curriculum, but he wondered, isn't there a way to do both? Couldn't he teach science in a way that would lessen his students' ethnocentrism and prejudices and deepen their awareness of human similarities and the increasing global interdependence?

The example of Mr. Johnson's science class illustrates the importance of a multicultural curriculum for students in mainstream schools and classrooms, in this case White, middle-income students from a small town that is ethnically encapsulated. Students from monocultural backgrounds must learn about multiple perspectives and worldviews in order to live harmoniously in a multicultural world. Whether a school's student population is multi-ethnic or mono-ethnic, it is essential that students become knowledgeable about increasing global interdependence and the worldviews associated with different nations, as well as attaining an awareness of the state of the planet.<sup>5</sup> In Chapter 13, we will revisit Sam Johnson's classroom and witness the transformation in his students' presentations as a result of the changes Sam made in his curriculum.

### Dimension Three: Multicultural Competence

*Multicultural competence* envisions teachers who are comfortable with and can interact well with students, families, and other teachers who are racially and culturally different from themselves. The process of becoming multicultural is one whereby a person develops competencies in multiple ways of perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing.<sup>6</sup> The focus is on understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity among nations as well as within a single nation and a single classroom. In their book *Communicating with Strangers*, for example, Gudykunst and Kim describe the multicultural person as

*... one who has achieved an advanced level in the process of becoming intercultural and whose cognitive, affective, and behavioral characteristics are not limited but are open to growth beyond the psychological parameters of any one culture.... The intercultural person possesses an intellectual and emotional commitment to the fundamental unity of all humans and, at the same time, accepts and appreciates the differences that lie between people of different cultures.*<sup>7</sup>

According to the authors, *intercultural people*:

- Have encountered experiences that challenge their own cultural assumptions (e.g., culture shock or “dynamic disequilibrium”) and provide insight into how their view of the world has been shaped by their culture
- Can serve as facilitators and catalysts for contacts between cultures
- Come to terms with the roots of their own ethnocentrism and achieve an objectivity in viewing other cultures
- Develop a Third World perspective that gives them the ability to engage in intercultural encounters with authenticity<sup>8</sup>
- Show cultural empathy and can imagine themselves living in the worldview of others<sup>9</sup>

This process of developing multicultural competence is a major goal of multicultural education. It enables students to retain their own cultural identity while functioning in a different cultural milieu; for example, the school. Furthermore, this dimension avoids divisive dichotomies between a student's home culture and mainstream culture and brings about an increased awareness of multiculturalism as "the normal human experience."<sup>10</sup>

### Dimension Four: Social Justice

*Social justice* envisions teachers who are concerned about (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. Teaching toward social justice affirms the commitment to combat racism, sexism, and classism (as well as other *isms* that degrade an individual's basic human rights and dignity) through the development of appropriate understanding, attitudes, and social action skills. This essential ingredient of multicultural education addresses the fact that when people acquire knowledge and appreciation of cultural diversity, they will not necessarily be moved to help put an end to prejudice and discrimination or to solve basic problems of inequity.

The social justice dimension might begin with clearing up myths and stereotypes associated with race, culture, and gender, as well as other identity groups. It also brings out basic human similarities, as well as the historical roots and current evidence of individual, institutional, and cultural racism, sexism, and classism in the United States and elsewhere in the world. The ultimate goal is to develop an anti-oppression orientation and antiracist, antisexist, anticlassist behavior in basic everyday life.



## The Core Values in Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has ideological overtones based on democratic ideals that are lacking in less controversial content areas of the curriculum, such as mathematics, reading, or spelling. Arguments may take place over what methods are most appropriate in these other areas, but there is little disagreement about what knowledge is true. In multicultural education, however, where there are no hard and fast rules about truth, there is disagreement about not only what the multicultural curriculum entails, but also whether it should exist at all.

Four core values provide a philosophical framework for the multicultural curriculum model described briefly at the end of this chapter and developed more fully in Chapter 13: (1) acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, (2) respect for human dignity and universal human rights, (3) responsibility to the world community, and (4) reverence for the earth.<sup>11</sup> These core values are ideals that are yet to become a reality, or even widely accepted, as seen in controversies over environmental issues, national and global inequities between the rich and the poor, terrorism, the death penalty and criminal justice system, and public support for children living in poverty. They are rooted in democratic theory and American Indian philosophy; together they illustrate the strong ethical foundations of multicultural education.