

2001

UNLV College of Education Multicultural & Diversity Newsletter

Steve McCafferty

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, mccaffes@unlv.nevada.edu

John Filler

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, john.filler@unlv.edu

Nancy P. Gallavan

University of Central Arkansas, ngallavan@uca.edu


Le Ann Putney

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, leann.putney@unlv.edu

Nancy Sileo

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/>

See next page for additional authors
[co_educ_multicultural_diversity_newsletter](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/co_educ_multicultural_diversity_newsletter)

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Disability and Equity in Education Commons](#)

Repository Citation

McCafferty, S., Filler, J., Gallavan, N. P., Putney, L. A., Sileo, N., Higgins, K., Troutman, P., Meacham, P., Giorgis, C., Govett, A., Henry, J., Bendixen, L., Fabbi, J. L., Nathanson, R. (2001). UNLV College of Education Multicultural & Diversity Newsletter. In Nancy Sileo; Kyle Higgins, , 5(4), 1-21.

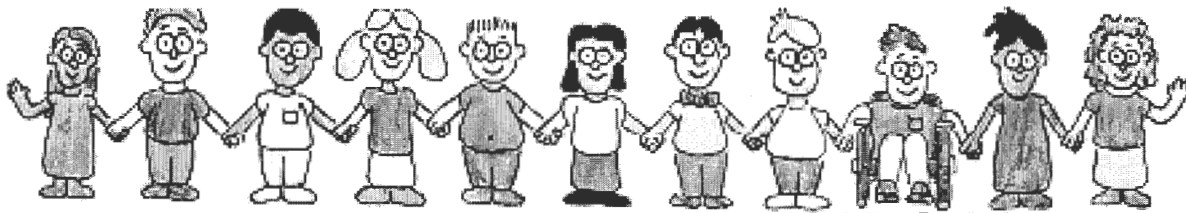
Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/co_educ_multicultural_diversity_newsletter/19

This Newsletter is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Newsletter in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Newsletter has been accepted for inclusion in Multicultural & Diversity Newsletter by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

Authors

Steve McCafferty, John Filler, Nancy P. Gallavan, Le Ann Putney, Nancy Sileo, Kyle Higgins, Porter Troutman, Paul Meacham, Cyndi Giorgis, Aimee Govett, Jean Henry, Lisa Bendixen, Jennifer L. Fabbi, and Rebecca Nathanson



UNLV COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Multicultural & Diversity Newsletter

Published by the Multicultural & Diversity Committee
Volume 5, Issue Number 4, 2001

Members of the Multicultural & Diversity Committee:

Steve McCafferty, John Filler, Nancy Gallavan (Co-chair), LeAnn Putney, Nancy Sileo, Kyle Higgins, Porter Troutman (Co-chair), Paul Meacham, Cyndi Giorgis, Aimee Govett, Jean Henry, Lisa Bendixen, Jennifer Fabbi, and Rebecca Nathanson

Nancy Sileo & Kyle Higgins, Editors

***This newsletter is published twice a semester. The articles that appear in the newsletter are based on author interest and consist of both scholarly works and opinion pieces. For further information regarding submissions contact Nancy Sileo or Kyle Higgins at higgins@nevada.edu or sileo@nevada.edu ***



National Association for Multicultural Education

NAME 2001

11th Annual International Conference

November 7-11, 2001

Riviera Hotel

Las Vegas, NV

www.nameorg.org

**NAME 2001 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
COMING TO
LAS VEGAS!!!!**

Mark your calendars and reserve these dates now for the 11th Annual International Conference of **NAME: The National Association of Multicultural Education**. This dynamic event will be held at the Las Vegas Riviera Hotel from November 7-11, 2001. The theme of this year's conference is: "High Stakes for the Multicultural Agenda: Assessment * Achievement * Accountability * Advocacy."

The 2001 **NAME** conference will feature keynote speakers, workshops, breakout sessions, networking, and vendors addressing theory, research, practices, field visits, and resources supporting five major themes:

- advocating social change in schools and communities;
- promoting academic achievement for all students through effective instructional practices;
- developing curriculum which advances multiculturalism and equity;
- building capacity to overcome the achievement gap, the digital divide, and other inequities; and
- ensuring responsive procedures for policy development and strategic planning.

The Founders of **NAME** envisioned an organization that would bring together individuals and groups with interests in multicultural education from all levels of education, different academic disciplines, and from diverse educational institutions and occupations. **NAME** today is an active, growing organization, with members from throughout the United States and several international countries. Educators from preschool through higher education and representatives from business and communities comprise **NAME**'s membership. Members in 22 states have formed **NAME** chapters, and more chapters are in the process of forming.

For more information, please contact Dr. Porter Troutman at 895-4407, email address: porter@nevada.edu or Dr. Nancy Gallavan at 895-4884, email address: gallavan@nevada.edu. See you in November!!

FEATURED GUEST COLUMN

**PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
BELIEFS ABOUT DIVERSITY
SCALES: FROM DEVELOPMENT TO
PUBLICATION (A SURVIVOR STORY
OF ANOTHER KIND)**

An interview with Cathy A. Pohan,
Ph.D., San Diego State University
By Lisa D. Bendixen

**Q. Tell Us About Your Experiences
Leading Up To Your Current Research
Interests**

As I sit at my computer and reflect back on the experiences I have had both in graduate school and during my induction years in Higher Education, I am thankful that I was completely unaware of my profound naivete about research and the publication process. Indeed, had I been cognizant of the challenges that would eventually come my way, it is likely that I would never have taken on the formidable task of developing, validating, and subsequently disseminating scales to measure educators' beliefs about diversity. Of course, my professors and co-author/mentor could have steered me in another direction and saved me much stress; however, had that taken place many of us would still be searching for valid empirical instruments to measure educators' personal and professional beliefs about diversity. And more importantly, I would have to live with the realization that I took the easy way out. But wait; let me tell you how this whole journey got started.

After teaching elementary school for nine years (most of which were in South-Central Los Angeles) and working with both preservice and first year teachers, I began to consider ways in which Colleges of Education could better prepare teachers to work successfully in settings serving students from diverse racial, ethnic, economic, linguistic, religious, and family backgrounds. Although I considered myself to be an excellent teacher, I knew that even I lacked some critical knowledge, skills, understandings, and sensitivities that would have enabled me to be more effective in meeting the diverse needs of the students with whom I had been working. Additionally, the fact that recently credentialled

teachers (this was in the 80's) didn't appear to be any more prepared than I, propelled me into graduate school. Being both an Idealist and a Realist philosophically, I believed that my experiences could help reform teacher preparation in a way that was sorely needed. And thus, my survivor story begins.

Q. Why Measure Beliefs About Diversity?

Years ago, Bandura (1982) argued that our actions (behavior/skills) are guided by what we know and believe. As a result, many scholars (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998) have investigated the impact of teachers' beliefs on classroom decision-making and practices. Many of these studies found teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations resulted in differential treatment of diverse students (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Since beliefs are said to play such an important role in determining student outcomes, I wanted to investigate how effective the new multicultural interventions were in a) preparing teachers to work more effectively in diverse settings and b) reducing educational inequities and differential outcomes. Thus, began the search for an instrument to examine teachers' beliefs about diversity and diverse students.

Existing Beliefs Measures: We found over a dozen studies examining teachers' beliefs (or attitudes) about diversity, with the majority of these studies utilizing quantitative methods. However, a thorough analysis of the quantitative studies revealed a clear absence of rigorous, empirical measures to examine a broad range of diverse issues in both personal and professional contexts (cf. Pohan & Aguilar, in press for a complete review). One of the most widely used scales in the multicultural/beliefs literature is Henry's (1986) 28-item Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI). Henry provides us with no information regarding the reliability and validity of the CDAI. Still further, several others scholars have used a modified version of the CDAI (Larke, 1990; Davis & Turner, 1993; Davis & Whitner, 1994), yet these studies also failed to provide data on the reliability and validity of the inventory. Thus, we saw a need for sound instrumentation on diversity for research and applied purposes.

Defining Diversity: My co-author and I

believe that multicultural education should be broad and inclusive of many aspects of sociocultural diversity. As such, we were interested in measuring educator's beliefs about a broad range of diversity issues. We have found that, most often, race and/or ethnicity are associated with the concept of diversity and that most existing measures of beliefs about diversity focus on these issues. However, we believe that utilizing such a narrow approach to diversity could potentially lead us to miss other important sociocultural factors (e.g., social class, gender, religion, languages other than English, and sexual orientation) associated with educational discrepancies, discrimination, or inequity. Thus, in defining diversity, we have attempted to be inclusive of all historically marginalized sociocultural groups.

Personal and Professional Beliefs:

Taking a two-dimensional (personal and professional) approach to assessing beliefs is based on the notion that a person may hold a set of personal and professional beliefs about a given issue that would, in a particular situation, be in direct conflict within a professional context. For example, in a personal context, an educator might believe that gay and lesbian individuals have the freedom to live their *personal (daily) lives* as they wish (i.e., to love whomever they choose to love) and that they should be free from harassment. Within a *professional context (i.e., schooling)*, however, the same educator might believe that it is inappropriate (or unnecessary) to add gay/lesbian households to his/her curriculum unit on families. Thus, we determined that our measures needed to a) include a broader approach to diversity than was currently available, b) address both personal and professional beliefs regarding diversity, and c) be rigorous and psychometrically sound. These three criteria guided our development and refinement of the measures throughout the six-year process. For specific information about instrument development, validation, and reliability, readers are referred to Pohan & Aguilar's upcoming publication in the American Educational Research Journal (Summer, 2001 Issue).

Q. What Were Some Of Your Challenges In Instrument Development and Validation?

As I stated at the beginning of this interview, I really had little, if any, understanding of what I was getting myself into (research-wise) when I decided to develop these two instruments. But what was more evident as time went on was how extremely naive I was about the challenges that I would have to confront during the development, validation, and dissemination process. Most shocking was the outright homophobic attitudes with which we came face to face. No issue or items on either of the scales evoked more resistance and negativism than items dealing with sexual orientation. In addition to sexual orientation, the issues of immigration, poverty, and bilingualism evoked some very strong comments. Perhaps what was most disturbing for me was the seeming narrow-mindedness and ultra-conservatism that we encountered among both educational practitioners and scholars.

Challenges During the Validation Studies: Perhaps the most vivid example I can give you is what happened during my initial field testing. Having secured the participation of several universities and school districts, I was well on my way to completing my dissertation research. However, upon receiving the packet of belief scales to be distributed, one very large school district pulled out of the study at the last minute. The reason? The school district could not distribute the materials (the scales) because they included items dealing with sexual orientation. And, since we refused to remove those items from the scales, the district would not participate in the study.

Challenges During the Dissemination Process: While I run the risk of sounding defensive, I will go ahead and say that I feel that because of the controversial nature of our content (e.g., sexual orientation, religion, gender/sexism as aspects of diversity), we had to endure manuscript reviews that were unusually long and incomplete. In addition, we had to deal with what seemed to be excuses for not accepting our work (e.g., disagreement with content rather than the rigor of the methodology).

I always thought that educational scholars would review manuscripts on the merit of the research methodology itself and try to be as objective and unbiased as possible. Perhaps the majority of reviewers do. However, our experience with one

major research journal was quite an eye opening experience. Four months after our first submission to this journal, we found out that 3 of 4 reviewers failed to review the manuscript. Thankfully, the editors reviewed the manuscript and made helpful suggestions along with those of the one reviewer. They encouraged us to conduct more validation studies and to resubmit. Although I was initially frustrated and resistant to the idea of doing more work on the scales, I eventually came around and began conducting additional studies.

Three years later, we submitted a revised manuscript that addressed all of the concerns of the initial set of editors and reviewer. Eight months passed and we still had not received any word on the status of this manuscript. After several phone calls and conversations with the new editors, they apologized for the "inordinately long delay" in responding to our manuscript. It seems that only 2 reviewers had submitted a review. The editors then agreed to review the manuscript themselves in order to provide a complete review. Although we had to wait over a year for the review process to be complete, this set of editors and reviewers provided us with some very helpful suggestions and encouraged us to revise and resubmit within 3 months.

What was most discouraging for me, however, was that even after addressing the original reviewers' very valid concerns and requests, the next set of reviewers had trouble with *different issues*. For example, one reviewer felt that since many people would get a lower overall score on our scales (indicating less openness or awareness to issues of diversity) because of a particular religious orientation (e.g., lower scores on sexual orientation items would pull down the overall score), that our scoring procedure and subsequent interpretation may be invalid or inappropriate. This reviewer questioned the "implicit value-directionality" of the scales. Still another questioned our use of Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale (1973) in a cross-validation study, arguing that people scoring extremely high on our scales (indicating openness) could be just as *dogmatic* as individuals scoring extremely low on our scales. While one might agree, this analysis was inconsistent with Rokeach's definition of dogmatism as being a general authoritarianism,

intolerance and/or closedness of one's belief system. Since the Dogmatism Scale was said to measure intolerance or closedness of one's beliefs system, we believed it was appropriate to use in a cross-validation study. Yet another reviewer/editor questioned our broad definition of diversity (especially including sexual orientation).

Confronting these challenges was extremely frustrating. However, with the help of the new editors, as well as feedback from a leading scholar in the field of measurement, we were able to tighten the manuscript and respond to the expressed concerns of the reviewers. A very helpful exercise, for example, was the critical dialogue with Dr. Barbara Plake leading to her understanding of the rationale for including sexual orientation into the concept of diversity. Furthermore, her admittedly narrow perspective on diversity (i. e., "race or ethnic minorities") caused problems in her initial interpretation of our work. When she recognized and appreciated our broader conceptualization of diversity, she was able to offer a very valuable critique of our manuscript. Her critique of methodology, writing, and organization of the manuscript was enhanced by her understanding of the broader conceptualization of diversity. Having our work critiqued by Dr. Plake helped us to better appreciate those reviewing the work. Of course, we were pleased when the manuscript was finally accepted for publication in January of 2000. However, persistence was essential to achieve acceptance. Now people in the field are able to access the scales.

Q. What Have You Taken Away From This Experience?

One could argue that I am being ultra-sensitive and that getting published in a major research journal is no easy task. In fact, many people are asked to do several revisions before a paper is finally accepted for publication in such journals. I guess I would agree if I had not had similar experiences with other journals; reviewers are frequently uncomfortable with including sexual orientation in the multicultural/diversity discussion. As a result, I am led to wonder, who are these reviewers? How do they get selected? What impact do they have on the policies and practices of the

universities and colleges of education for which they work? The conservatism and homophobia that we encountered throughout this process is not unlike what we see in teacher preparation programs across this country. Indeed, many teacher educators would like diversity issues to remain safe, non-political (if that is even possible), and/or marginalized. This is perhaps a harsh commentary, but it is no surprise that conservative reviews come from people working in our Colleges of Education.

If schools, institutions of higher education, and educational literature in this country are supposed to practice and promote the democratic way of life and teach young people democratic ideals (e.g., equity, freedom of speech and expression, etc.), civic and social responsibility, as well as nurture social consciousness, then we have much reason to be concerned. In my opinion, the very resistance that we encountered provides strong support for a) why we must take a two-dimensional approach to beliefs about diversity studies and b) the need for educational programs that promote cultural awareness, sensitivity, and social justice. Clearly, in order to end this country's long history of discrimination and bigotry, we need educators and citizens who have the knowledge, attitudes/beliefs, understandings, skills, and willingness needed to end discrimination and prejudice. Looking back, I consider myself to be a survivor because I was able to endure the heat, contribute a broader view of diversity, and ultimately provide a rigorous means to assess beliefs about diversity to the research literature. Still further, I would like to believe that our refusal to give up under the pressure has inadvertently moved the field forward and initiated some important dialogues related to who gets included in the "multi" part of multicultural.

****We wish to thank Teresita Aguilar, Ph.D. for her helpful comments on this article.**

BEANS AND TORTILLAS

By María G. Ramírez

Recent events have triggered thoughts about things we understand and acknowledge readily in others but have great difficulty

recognizing in ourselves. While some things are easy to understand even though they remain intangible to us for all of our life, other things are difficult to grasp, especially as they relate to us.

Love is one of those things we can not see or touch but that most of us develop an understanding of from the moment we open our eyes and take our first breath. Some would say that love is experienced even prior to birth, since the soothing sounds of love, or its antithesis, are felt in the womb. We are not taught to love, but we love as easily, naturally, and effortlessly as we breathe. We learn to love by being loved, by sensing the emotion, as demonstrated initially by a parent or a caregiver. We recognize its presence and dread its absence, regardless of our age or gender. As we grow and our circle of loved ones expands, we begin to develop further understandings about love, and with each new encounter, we begin to understand that love, although ethereal, can exist in many forms and be of many different types, with many different people and always transcending time and space. Thus, love is understood by young and old but understood best by those embrace it and give it freely, permitting them in turn to receive it in abundance.

How is it then that other things are not understood well or recognized only in others but not ourselves? In my formative years, I failed to understand the racism directed at me because I had always believed that if I worked hard and excelled, I would succeed, be evaluated fairly and honestly on the merit of my work, and never be the victim of racist slurs. Imagine my surprise to hear a nun say to me, "Go home and have your beans and tortillas." I was no longer a child but a colleague of the nun who was also the head of the department at the university where I was employed. To realize that racism existed in the academy and among the ecclesiastic was difficult to comprehend or accept. How could educated people and members of the church be racist? Wasn't education supposed to open people's minds, making them more tolerant and accepting of others, and weren't members of the church supposed to be loving, charitable people? The nun probably didn't think of herself as uncharitable and certainly not racist, but she did make the statement and not in jest. Would the

racist slur have been neutralized if said in jest?

More recently, a professor referred to the ethnic population in Hawaii as the "Asian flu." While some were appalled at his statement and referential term, others tried to say that the professor was referring to the economic condition in Hawaii that resulted when Asians left the island. But, the reference was made in response to a question about the ethnic composition of the students at the university. The professor's uncensored words caused one colleague to refer to the professor as a racist and prompted a call to ask me what I thought the professor meant when he made the statement. As I responded, my colleague and friend said to me, "I think Las Vegas is suffering from a Hispanic invasion but I can say it because I'm saying it to you." My response was that Las Vegas, as well as the nation, was experiencing a Hispanic explosion, as I tried to characterize the increase in the number of Hispanics attributable to births. I found myself in the uncomfortable position of trying to respond diplomatically and non-defensively but ever mindful and fearful of perpetuating rather than dispelling a stereotype, as I responded to my friend. Not all of us try to respond tactfully, and, at times, diplomacy is the last thing on our mind, particularly when the racist slurs come from "strangers."

"I served three tours of duty in Vietnam saving your white ass when you were still in your mother's belly," is the response an Asian friend made to some White men who yelled at him, "Go back to China." The incident occurred at a service station during the first weekend of the tension between China and the U. S. as my friend and colleague filled his car with gasoline. The men, angry over China's detainment of the American service men, saw a face that looked Chinese and took their best racist shot from a safe distance.

We recognize and understand racism when we see it in others, and we are appalled and enraged by it, but, often times, we fail to recognize it in ourselves. Racism is not confined to racist slurs but is comprised of many different acts and manifests itself in many different forms, evolving and changing with the perpetrators, the circumstances, and the degree of risk involved. A person can be racist about some people and not others and more racist at certain times of his or her life. It would be

wonderful to say that as we mature with age and knowledge, we grow more tolerant and less racist, but unfortunately that is not the case. Why is racism so difficult to comprehend? What keeps us from acknowledging its presence and contesting its use by others or ourselves? One possibility is that we fail to acknowledge certain racist statements or acts particularly when the perpetrators are people we know and like. After all, our friends, colleagues, and loved ones surely can not be racist. And, of course, we, too, are not racist.

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE ACROSS GENRES IN YOUNG ADULT FICTION: A REVIEW OF THE 2001- 2002 NEVADA YOUNG READERS' AWARD NOMINATIONS

By Jennifer L. Fabbi

"Goodness was sprinkling down on the porch like powdered sugar, and I wanted to make sure that it was the only thing that got tracked in the house."

— from *When Kambia Elaine Flew in From Neptune*, p. 246

Last year, I introduced myself to this newsletter with an overview of the Nevada Young Readers' Award (NYRA), a committee on which I serve and of which I am particularly fond. In that column, I expressed displeasure at the way other committee members looked at some very culturally diverse pieces of literature as those "intended for a limited audience," therefore not worthy of being nominated for the annual award. After our meeting in March 2001 at the new Lied Library, as a committee of 35 teachers, librarians, parents and educators statewide, the Young Adult subcommittee walked away having chosen six novels (from a list of over fifty titles nominated by kids statewide) that are as culturally diverse as even I could hope for...and we didn't even have to try!! Also represented in this bunch are a diversity of characters, settings, and genres that should appeal to teens across the state who will vote for a winner during the 2001-2001 school year. Please join me in celebrating these books!

"That isn't history," said Macey Clare's grandfather. "That isn't anything. It's just an

old building that isn't there anymore." When fifteen-year-old Macey is assigned a local history report at school, she decides to research a burned-out barn across from her grandparents' home. As Macey and her boyfriend Austin become more inquisitive about the barn's history, her family and friends become evasive, and her quiet, beautiful Connecticut hometown is suddenly unknown to her. In a parallel plot, Macey and Austin begin a service project at an inner-city church where they have come to know and care about its parishioners; when arson and violence strike the church, this storyline begins to intertwine with their barn-burning search. The pieces of this history-mystery begin to fit together, and Macey and Austin fear answers that rekindle fires of bigotry much too close to their own lives. While nothing can change the past, these teens show an exemplary spirit in pursuing answers to their questions and in taking responsibility for the present and the future in *Burning Up* by Caroline B. Cooney.

Hannah Ziebarth is fifteen, and since her father's death two years prior, she has taken care of her mother who has developed an agoraphobic condition. Now Hannah is pregnant, though she is sure that her older boyfriend, Milo, will take care of her and even be happy about the baby; however, this is not the case. Milo refuses to take responsibility for the situation and is furious with Hannah, striking out with violence and then shunning her. Hannah has a difficult decision to make and some long overdue grieving to do, and she finds peace in an unexpected friend. Louis Plummer, author of *A Dance for Three*, explores the topic of teen pregnancy through many perspectives: those of the young mother-to-be, her naïve best friend, and Milo's confused younger brother, as well as indirectly through the actions of others in this religious Utah community. This book addresses issues that are "close to home" for Nevada's teenagers and does so in a sensitive and authentic manner.

Deep below the streets of New York City lies the strange and secret world of the Downside. Children of the Downside are taught from birth to avoid, even fear, the sunlit world above, yet a few dare to investigate the twilight layer the separates the two—the subway tunnels. When a construction accident threatens to

destroy the Downside, it takes the courage of two new friends—Talon from the Downside and Lindsay from the Topside—to reveal the truth of this hidden world in order to save it. Neal Shusterman takes readers on an amazing journey to a highly-evolved "world" that's merely a few feet below what we think of as "normal" but is far beyond our wildest dreams in *Downsiders*. This science fiction novel is a riveting metaphor of segregation and how a society's actions may have effects unknown to it. Neal Shusterman also has a website: <http://www.storyman.com>.

Since his dad left, twelve-year-old Jordan Scott has found "family" in a gang, the Cobras. When he steals his grandfather's gold pocket watch to hock it for a gun, Jordan has no idea that he is about to make a journey back in time to the days when his ancestors were slaves and to the place where the fight for freedom is lived beneath the lash of the whip. Forced to work as a slave, he is bound to people and experiences that will change his life forever. While he is ushered through the Underground Railroad, Jordan wonders if he will ever find his way back to the freedom of his own time. Arvella Whitmore, in *Trapped Between the Lash and the Gun*, successfully spins a tale that teeters on the edge between history and reality, sure to speak to anyone who has had to make tough choices in tough times and has persevered to the end. Make sure to read the "Author's Note" for the details and circumstances that make the material in this book so personal to her.

Shayla Dubois lives in a Houston neighborhood known as the Bottom with her mother and older sister Tia. Shayla dreams of becoming a writer and fills her blue notebook with beautiful descriptions of the colorful events of her young life. When her mother kicks Tia out of the house for being "scandalous," Shayla particularly relies on her writing as a way to cope with her sister's long absence. When a new neighbor, Kambia Elaine, arrives next door, Shayla is both intrigued and frustrated with this girl and her outrageous stories of "Memory Beetles" and "Wallpaper Wolves." On top of all of this, Shayla's father, Mr. Anderson Fox, comes back for what seems like an eternity to Shayla, who can't wait for him to leave. Although Shayla is twisted up in the drama of

her own family, she has an increasing suspicion that something is very wrong with Kambia Elaine. What is Kambia trying to tell her? Told from Shayla's point of view, *When Kambia Elaine Flew in From Neptune*, by first-time author Arvella Whitmore, is an awesome story of survival and change.

As a very young girl in 13th century China, Oyuna had her foot badly crushed by a horse; to the Mongolian clan she belonged to, this supposedly crowned her with bad luck. Although this bad luck has begun to manifest itself, Oyuna hears the call from deep inside of her to overcome her physical limitations and those rendered her by her society. Through the counsel of her shamaness-grandmother and her attention to a horse who speaks to her, Oyuna pursues her dream of finding and making her own good luck. This fantastic tale, *I Rode a Horse of Milk White Jade*, by Diane Lee Wilson, depicts a strong-willed girl who resists the tradition of her clan and country to make her own desires come true.

Currently, all of these titles are either available or on order at the Curriculum Materials Library (Carlson Education Building, Room 101). Stop by to check out these and other nominated books in the categories of Picture Book, Young Reader, and Intermediate.

References

Cooney, C. B. (1999). *Burning Up*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press. 230 pp. ISBN: 0-385-32318-2.

Plummer, L. (2000). *A Dance for Three*. New York, NY: Delacorte Press. 230 pp. ISBN: 0-385-32511-8.

Shusterman, N. (1999). *Downsiders*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. 246 pp. ISBN: 0-689-80375-3.

Whitmore, A. (1999). *Trapped Between the Lash and the Gun*. New York, NY: Dial Books. 184 pp. ISBN: 0-8037-2384-9.

Williams, L.A. (2000). *When Kambia Elaine Flew in From Neptune*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. 246 pp. ISBN: 0-689-82468-8.

Wilson, D. L. (1998). *I Rode a Horse of Milk White Jade*. New York, NY: Orchard Books. 240 pp. ISBN: 0-531-30024-2.

"I AM NOT A RACIST, BUT..."

By Jennifer Stringfellow and Julie Williams

How many times have we heard, thought, or said this phrase? What do we mean when we say it? Usually the words that follow the "but" indicate a prejudiced or bigoted thought. Does that make the person who made this statement bad, evil, or just ignorant? People tend to define themselves as tolerant and non-racist. In discussions in *ESP 722, Multicultural Perspectives in Special Education*, a frequently heard statement was, "My parents raised me to be tolerant" or some variation of that phrase. If we are all tolerant of those different from ourselves and, as the title states, if we are not racist, then what is the problem? Why do we still have such difficulty accepting others as individuals?

We were curious about these issues and decided to informally question people to explore perceptions about the meanings of specific words dealing with the issues of difference, race, and tolerance. We developed a questionnaire that distinguished those participants who had taken a class or seminar on diversity and/or multicultural education from those who had not. We also asked the participants to define seven words that pertain to ethnic and cultural differences. We asked the participants to define each of the words, to the best of their ability, without the use of a dictionary. We chose the following seven words: acceptance, bigotry, culture, diversity, hate, prejudice, and racism.

The participants consisted of high school students, educators, secretaries, graduate assistants, other professionals, retirees, and a pastor. There were fifteen participants, seven who stated they had never participated in a seminar or course on multicultural education and eight who stated they had. The participants were chosen based on their willingness to complete the survey. This convenience sampling is not intended to be an exact reflection of the general population. However, we do feel it gave us a preliminary understanding of how others view multicultural awareness.

We began the evaluation of the survey by first separating the responses into those who stated they had participated in a multicultural education class or seminar and those who stated

they had not. We, then, used *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (Costello et al., 1997) to accurately define each of the chosen words. Next, we compared each of the responses to the definition according to the dictionary and then, to each other to determine any differences.

"Acceptance" is defined as "...favorable reception; approval..." (Costello et al., 1997). The responses were similar between both groups. All included some understanding of tolerance and non-judgment.

"Bigotry" is defined as "the attitude, state of mind, or behavior characteristic of a bigot..." (Costello et al., 1997). "Bigot" is defined as "one who is strongly partial to one's own group, religion, race, or politics and is intolerant of those who differ" (Costello et al., 1997). A logical combination of these definitions is that bigotry means to possess a strong attitude that one's own beliefs are correct and being intolerant of anyone who believes differently. Responses included aspects of intolerance of people and/or beliefs and were similar between both groups.

"Culture" is defined as "the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought;...intellectual and artistic activity and the works produced by it..." (Costello et al., 1997). Definitions of respondents included the idea that "culture" is about traditions, values, and beliefs being transmitted generationally. One response included the aspects of surface and deep culture.

"The fact or quality of being diverse; difference;...variety or multiformity..." is the definition of "diversity" (Costello et al., 1997). The majority of the definitions included some aspect of difference – different groups, individuals, values, and beliefs. One response was "seeing the world as a whole rather than parts/groups". There was not a noticeable difference in definition based upon having participated in a multicultural education course or not.

"To detest;...intense animosity or dislike" is the definition provided for "hate" (Costello et al., 1997). There was agreement in both groups as to the definition of "hate." One individual defined "hate" as "fear" and another included "inconsideration" as part of their

definition.

"Prejudice" is defined as "an adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts; a preconceived preference or idea..." (Costello et al., 1997). Most responses included an understanding that "prejudice" involves making a judgment based on preconceived ideas and may not include actual facts. One included the idea of making a preference and another included the idea of denial of rights.

"Racism" is defined as "the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others..." (Costello et al., 1997). Responses agreed in inclusion of the idea of superiority based on race or ethnicity and there did not appear to be a discrepancy between the two groups.

Overall, we did not find a difference in the way people defined these words based on having had training in multicultural education. Most responses seemed to demonstrate a basic understanding of what these words mean. Clearly, the reasons for persistent intolerance and discrimination include more than just an understanding of the meaning of these words.

The need for understanding and acceptance persists, however. Calloway-Thomas and Garner (2000) report that there are approximately 220 nations in the world, each one having a population represented in the United States. The attitudes of teachers and culturally relevant education becomes crucial for their students' chances for success (Groulx, 2001). Ebbeck and Baohm (1999) speak of the right children have to "...feel confident and proud of who they are and the key to achieve this is the incorporation of multicultural perspectives into every aspect of the curriculum" (p. 33). These multicultural perspectives need to include issues of gender, race, language, class, religion, age, ability (Ebbeck and Baohm, 1999), and sexual orientation.

In conclusion, we believe that although people are able to define the terms and understand them appropriately, there remains an apparent gap between that understanding and the actions of individuals. This would account for the intolerance and hatred that persists in our society and is being played out in our public schools. Educators can be instrumental in

helping to alleviate these problems by incorporating the aforementioned multicultural perspectives in their classrooms and in the entire school community.

References

- Calloway-Thomas, C., & Garner, T. (2000). A confrontation with diversity: Communication and culture in the 21st century. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*, 29, 145-154.
- Costello, R. B. (Eds.) (1997). *The American heritage college dictionary*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Ebbeck, M., & Baohm, J. (1999). Incorporating multicultural perspectives into teaching approaches. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 31, 32-39.
- Groulx, J. G. (2001). Changing preservice teacher perceptions of minority schools. *Urban Education*, 36, 60-92.

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

By Kathryn E. Konold

There has been and continues to be significant amounts of debate presented in the literature regarding multicultural education, not only as to whether or not the educational system should be multicultural but also regarding the definition of multicultural education. Before one can advocate for a multicultural educational system, he or she must understand what this means. Multicultural education can be defined as a "restructuring and transformation of the total school environment so that it reflects the racial and cultural diversity that exists with U.S. society and help(s) children from diverse groups to experience educational equality" (Banks, 1995, p. 329). Marta Cruz-Jansen (2001) stated that this means we must "enhance all aspects of individuals that foster their educational achievement and success in life" (p. 33). While these definitions are appropriate, they leave a great deal to the imagination of those attempting to determine "how" multicultural education can be accomplished. The "how" and "what" of multicultural education probably have become the most controversial aspects in this field.

Many who are new to the idea of

multicultural education and unfortunately even those who know a great deal about multicultural education conceptualize it as curriculum integration/enhancement or content inclusion (Banks, 1995; Sleeter, 1995). An example of multicultural education as only curriculum integration would be including in a traditional lesson on the civil war a discussion of how the war was viewed from the standpoint of the African-American population; or, a classroom discussion of the different types of holidays celebrated by persons of various culture while planning for the school Christmas party. Banks (1995) explains that successful implementation of multicultural education requires numerous changes to be made including changes in curriculum content, however, this is not sufficient. He adds that teaching materials must change as well as the manner in which we instruct students, the "attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of teachers and administrators and the goals, norms and culture of the school" (p. 316). Banks has outlined five major areas where reform must occur.

The first area, which has already been addressed, is content integration. The second area is knowledge construction. Students must be taught to understand how knowledge is created and how it becomes valued through culture as important for dissemination. A third area of reform is prejudice reduction for both teachers and learners. A fourth and somewhat controversial reform is equity pedagogy. Research findings have suggested that individuals from various cultures learn differently or possess different learning styles and that teachers must know and use this information to instruct these students using methods specific to their style (see Irvine & York, 1995). Other researchers (i.e. Cronbach, 1975) have found, for example that aptitude by treatment interactions cannot be validated, therefore calling into question the use of different teaching strategies based on race, gender, ethnicity, etc. The last area of necessary reform as indicated by Banks (1995) is empowering school culture and social structure. Reform in this area includes an understanding that the current tracking and labeling practices used create lower expectations for specific groups and that these practices must be changed. This area also includes the social

attitudes of those working with students and how they must reflect a feeling of equality among cultures.

Sleeter (1995) has also addressed the criticisms and concerns regarding what multicultural education should look like. It appears that some of the criticisms belonging to opponents that she has cited are based in paranoia. For example, some critics believe that the proponents of multicultural education do not represent the view of those from different cultures, but that these proponents are preparing (through multicultural education) to begin "taking over" to create new radical policies which do not reflect the desires of mainstream America. It seems these critics might think multicultural education is a method by which to brainwash all individuals to agree with these radicals. Another concern may appear to have more validity, in that continued dividing of groups by culture or label promotes dissonance among cultural groups. However, if one truly understands the definition and goals of multicultural education, they are not meant to continue to segregate individuals according to culture, but to unite individuals by celebrating culture (i.e. working to make all students feel included). It seems the type of multicultural education the critics would support is the type Banks says is not enough, that is, curriculum integration. In other words, we should continue to have our multicultural "fairs" take place one month of the school year, or mentioning a famous Hispanic writer while introducing Shakespeare, while continuing to teach students the Euro-American curriculum. One critic (as cited in Sleeter) goes so far as to say that multicultural education will lead to instruction that "all cultural practices are equally good, including apartheid in South Africa, female circumcision and Hitler's attempted genocide" (p. 84). Sleeter is quick to point out that the majority of critics are white males who tend to use works prepared by those who are culturally different, yet, out of context, in order to support their own viewpoints. She also suggests that an image of those who support multicultural education might be depicted by the critics as "a frenzied mob of anti-Americans trying to destroy the United States, joined by "ugly" feminists, and Third World immigrants, and led by angry African American men of weak

intellect" (p. 89).

Green and Perlman (1997) have also attempted to address the controversy regarding what should be taught in a school that attempts to include all students as equals. The question becomes "how can we balance American's highly valued respect for individualism with the need to define what it is to be an American?" (p. 318). There is added pressure since just as the population of this country is dynamic, so must be the educational content and techniques used to teach it. Green and Perlman analyze the views of those who believe all immigrants should be fully assimilated in terms of an analogy. They say this view is like baking a cake and the people of different cultures are the ingredients to be "baked" (p. 324) together, however, they indicate that emerging diversity is an ingredient that "resists the baking process." (p. 324).

If Americans do not expect complete assimilation, then, perhaps they should simply tolerate persons from other cultures as suggested by Vogt (1997). When referring to multicultural education, however, Vogt does agree that a true multicultural education is a celebration of diversity which implies much more than a tolerance of or "putting up with" individuals from various cultures. Instead, the focus should become more broad than simply tolerance, to include respect which in turn implies positive acceptance. This author summarizes Nieto's viewpoint, in that tolerance is only a first step to promoting multicultural education, and that after tolerance is achieved, positive acceptance can occur.

There is increasing support to foster the development of education that demands respect from both adults and children. This growing support can be seen in the actions of both federal and state legislative bodies that promote multicultural education. Gollnick (1995) indicated that many policies have been developed to "address the needs of groups who do not automatically benefit from schooling because of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, language or disability" (p. 45). Further, as noted by Gollnick, (1995), the U. S. House of Representatives has demonstrated its support by indicating that multicultural education would result in a more harmonious society. Multicultural education has also been credited

with increasing children's self-esteem when they feel part of the school climate and curriculum, thus fostering higher **achievement, and in turn, fostering higher** expectations by teachers.

Other positive effects of multicultural education have been cited by Banks (1995) including that specific types of intervention, through multicultural education, have been successful in reducing racial attitudes in children. Jackson (1995) discusses several benefits that can be expected as a result of multicultural education, such as, more equality in student outcomes, equity in expectations for all students, a better approach to assessment with students of varying culture, resulting in fair testing conditions for all, the use of multiple types of instructional methods, resulting in equal learning opportunities for all, and an obliteration of tracking as it discriminates individuals from certain cultures to gain equal opportunity, expectation and achievement. Multicultural education also promotes positive intergroup relations that will impact the ways different cultural groups interact not only in the educational setting, but also in the community (Jackson, 1995).

If multicultural education in the United States can include the conditions explained and included by authors whose views are presented here, then educators should definitely embrace it. Marta Cruz-Jansen (2001) presents one of the best arguments for multicultural education stating that "as a nation we are rendered powerless by an escalating problem caused by cultural misunderstandings, miscommunications and mistrusts embedded in generations of fear, neglect and ignorance" (p. 34). She notes that intolerance of differences seems to be increasing and that until we permit multicultural education and the same understanding and acceptance in our society, race and class structures are likely to remain the same.

References

- Banks, J. A. (1995). Multicultural education and the modification of students' racial attitudes. In W. D. Hawley & A. W. Jackson (Eds.), *Toward a common destiny* (pp. 315-339). CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1975). Beyond the two

disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist*, 30, 116-127.

Cruz-Jansen, M. 1. (2001). From our readers: Preparing preservice teacher candidates for leadership in equity. In F. Schultz (Ed.), *Multicultural education* (pp. 3239). CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.

Green, S. W. & Perlman, S. M. (1997). Education, diversity and American culture. In L. L. Naylor (Ed.), *Cultural diversity in the United States* (pp. 317-328). CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Gollnick, D. M. (1995). National and state initiatives for multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 44-64). NY: Simon & Schuster-Macmillan.

Irvine, J. J. & York, D. E. (1995). Learning styles and culturally diverse students: A literature review. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 484-497). NY: Simon & Schuster-Macmillan.

Jackson, A. W. (1995). Toward a common destiny: An agenda for further research. In W. D. Hawley & A. W. Jackson (Eds.), *Toward a common destiny* (pp. 435-453). CA: Jossey-Bass.

Sleeter, C. E. (1995). An analysis of the critiques of multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 81-94). NY: Simon & Schuster-Macmillan.

Vogt, W. P. (1997). *Tolerance in education*. CA: Sage.

A FOCUS ON POSSIBILITIES

By Kyle Higgins

“Why don’t any of the buses go through there?” he asked.

“That’s where the rich people live,” said Sister Carlotta.

“They make them all live together in one place?” he asked.

“They feel safer,” said Carlotta. “And living close together, they have a better chance of their children marrying into other rich families.”

(*Shadow of the Hegemon*, Card, 2000)

In order to cultivate what philosopher Maxine Greene calls a “consciousness of possibility” (1988, p. 28)---the ability to imagine a better state of things in a positive manner---the American public, its politicians, and its media must refocus their energies concerning public education. Instead of being seduced by the negatives, the power of the possibilities that exist in public education must be explored. After all, public education is a microcosm of the real world in which we all live and negotiate---it is the place where those of us who are products of the public schools learned much of the substance that contributes to the ‘who’ we are today.

Focusing on the possibilities of public education involves a close examination of our collective priorities. For example, what do we want the public education to *do*? Maran (2000) believes that the purpose of education in the United States has become to prepare a small group of students to own and run the country, a slightly higher number to ensure the profitability of our corporations, and to prepare the rest to flip our burgers, clean our hotel rooms, and fill our prisons. She maintains that current efforts by politicians will ensure that education in the United States becomes the primary differentiating point between people---those with money have a better education than those who do not.

However, if we want public education to mend and not perpetuate the widening gap between people of different races, ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and economic groups AND we want to produce human beings who are smart, compassionate, live next door to one another, work alongside one another, interact with one another, respect one another’s differences and similarities---then, we need to adopt an “ethics of care” (Noddings, 1986, p. 499). This involves a focus upon the development of the possibilities that exist within our public schools. It is through the recognition and cultivation of these possibilities that we, as a nation, will fulfill America’s as yet unkept promise of democracy.

Rose (1995) in his book, Possible Lives: The Promise of Public Education in America,

introduces the reader to teachers, students, administrators, and public schools who deal in possibilities daily. These stories are representative of teachers and students from around the United States and by no means are unique. These teachers and students often teach and learn in stressful situations, in schools with few materials, in schools that are isolated (physically, economically, and historically), in communities in which there is much support for public education, and in communities in which there is little support for public education. These teachers and students are as different from one another as they are alike. Here is just a sample of the teachers and students who deal in possibilities daily:

Los Angeles and the LA Basin--- Over ninety languages are spoken by students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school district covers 700 square miles and is made up of 650 schools with a population of over 640,000 students.

The community: Watts is a community that, in recent decades, has lost its economic base and experienced a rise in unemployment and crime. It is a community that is primarily made up of African American families, however, in the last 15 years Watts has become a community that is 43 percent Latino. In 1990, the average household income in Watts was \$12,700.

The school of possibility: Edwin Markham Intermediate School

The teacher: Yvonne Divans Hutchinson

The class: Ms. Hutchinson teaches ninth-grade English. Students read Ernesto Galarza's Barrio Boy, Dick Gregory's Nigger, Elie Wiesel's Night, Amy Tan's The Kitchen God's Wife, Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, John Knowles's A Separate Place, Sandra Cisneros's The House on Mango Street, and The Autobiography of Malcolm X. The district guideline for ninth grade revolves around the theme of "understanding ourselves" and Ms. Hutchinson makes sure that every year the books she selects reflects the lives of her students.

The teacher's reflection on

possibility: "Sometimes I think the teacher is a teacher AND a mother, father, psychologist, nurse, and a cafeteria worker. It takes energy, organization, and *desire*. And that's where my fight is these days--for better quality teachers and for the politicians and the public to see, in a positive way, what must be done to help us do our work."

Calexico, California

The community: Calexico is an American city that is bilingual and bi-cultural. There are 21,000 residents in Calexico and they all speak Spanish--from the native speakers to Anglos who speak so-so to fluent Spanish. Many of the families in Calexico live in poverty because income is low and seasonal in the Imperial Valley. The elementary schools in Calexico exceed the Imperial County average on statewide tests of language arts, mathematics, and science, the high schools have the lowest dropout rate of any predominantly Latino school district in California, and a significant number of high school graduates go on to two-and four-year colleges. The school district believes that this is due to their bilingual education programs and that education revolves around a respect for local history.

The school of possibility: Dool Elementary School

The teacher: Elena Castro

The class: Ms. Castro teaches a bilingual third grade. Her curriculum is structured around general themes that the children help her select every year. She structures the day around eight learning stations through which each student moves on 30-minute intervals, either independently or in a small group. Depending on the task to be completed, the children work in groups made up of only English-speakers or of Spanish-speakers---or the group might be mixed. To the outside observer unfamiliar to the synergy of the classroom, the room may appear chaotic---to the children it is an environment that nurtures them to learn, follow their own interests, and take responsibility for completing their work in a manner they think best.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: "Bilingual education is so very important to these children. It allows my students to feel the power of participation, the

power of being engaged in learning, and the power to take that learning into the world beyond the classroom. Through bilingual education my students are affirmed for who they are---it is egalitarian in that it assumes that the child has the ability to learn---it is an affirmation of their cultural and linguistic worth. All children have minds and souls and have the ability to participate fully in our society and bilingual education is a way to achieve that participation.”

Baltimore, Maryland

The community: The Old West Side is an area that was once full of small businesses, professional offices, art galleries, and jazz clubs. Because of deindustrialization, discriminatory city politics, and middle-class flight, the Old West Side is an area of Baltimore in which the overwhelming majority of the citizens live in poverty. It is also an extremely dangerous neighborhood.

The school of possibility: Duke Ellington Primary School, P.S. 117. Duke Ellington is for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students. At the base of the stairs leading up to the school are two signs---*Drug Free School Zone* and *Attack Dogs Loose In This Area From Dark to Dawn*.

The teacher: Stephanie Terry

The class: Ms. Terry’s first-grade students, all thirty of them, are African American. Ms. Terry begins every morning with the Morning Unity Circle. All children and Ms. Terry close their eyes, breathe deeply, and say, “I am a special person. My teacher knows I’m special. I can do great things. I shall do great things. I will learn all that I can to become all that I can. Everyday I become a better thinker. I am really ready for school today.” The children then turn to each other, shake hands, and say, “Good morning--I am glad you are here today.”

The teacher’s reflection on possibility: “I believe that each child is sent into this world with a unique message to share...a new song to sing...a personal act of love to bestow. My students come from the African American legacy of self-help and self-improvement. In my bones I know the brilliance of my people and I believe in the promise of these children. I incorporate the legacies of their

culture in my teaching--I am creating a place where Black life can flourish. Everyday I must challenge the assumptions about what poor, African American children can do.”

Chicago, Illinois

The community: There is a legacy of state underfunding in Chicago, Illinois. Eighty percent of the bilingual children and more than 50 percent of the poorest children in Illinois attend Chicago public schools, yet the schools in Chicago operate on less money per pupil than do schools in the suburban districts around the city (Kozol, 1991; Rose, 1995). The community of Englewood is a neighborhood in which most families live in poverty. The community has the fourth highest crime rate in the city.

The school of possibility: William Rainey Harper Senior High School, named after the first president of the University of Chicago. The name of the high school is viewed with a sense of social irony by the African American students who attend it ---William R. Harper was a eugenicist who believed in the inferiority of the Black race.

The teachers: Sarah Howard, Michelle Smith, and Kris Sieloff

The class: The program is COMETS (Communication, Education, and Technology for Success) and it is a school-within-a school in which 130 students participate in social studies, geometry, English, science, and computer science. All students, regardless of test scores or past grades, are accepted in to the program. Courses are taught in an integrative manner around common themes (e.g., Native Americans). Students in COMETS participate in discussions, present orally everyday, write daily, and conduct research--even though their library does not contain up-to-date research materials nor a complete set of encyclopedias. COMETS has as its goal the conversion of the classroom into a place where students can find meaning, develop identity, and actualize their yearning to be somebody.

The teacher’s reflection on possibility: Michelle: “These kids are very aware of what they don’t have---the inequities in this country. Imagine what that feels like. You know, these kids have to learn at a young age to wear a mask. The mask is the only thing that

protects them from going crazy. If they take it off in front of the wrong person, they'll pay for it. But, as a teacher, when you see them drop it, when they feel safe enough with you to take it off...well, it's just so important for them and you." **Sarah:** "All these reports about the decay in Chicago schools miss the *complex* truths about schools and students. There is no homogeneity among our students---all of our students come from different types of homes---some live with parents, grandparents, siblings, foster parents---some live in dire poverty and some are from working-class homes---some live in violent circumstances and fear. There is no *one* way to address these needs---our program attempts to reach out to each student where he/she is at---there are no one size fits all solutions here."

New York, New York---New York City is the largest and most complex school system in the United States. It enrolls over a million children in over a thousand schools divided. New York Public Schools employs over 125,000 people and has an operating budget of over \$7.5 billion. The New York City school system is the twelfth largest corporation in the United States (Fernandez & Underwood, 1993). The amount of money spent to educate the students of New York City varies according to where a student lives--more money is spent on the children of wealthy citizens than on children who live in poverty. For example, \$5,590 is spent per year to educate a student living in the Bronx compared to \$11,000 a year to educate a student living in Manhasset or Great Neck (Kozol, 1991).

The community: The Bronx

The school of possibility: 1199 School for Social Change focuses on the sciences, biology particularly, public policy, public health, and community organizing.

The teacher: Mary Stevens, school director.

The class: 1199 School for Social Change is a school that is the hub of its community---it provides health services, adult education for parents, and day care for parents and students. The school is based on the belief that school is the one place everyone is still connected to---all kids go to school.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: "My staff and I are trying to figure out what kids need to know in order to be powerful, in order to continue to educate themselves, in order to become agents of change. Learning is a miraculous human process. It's not something that's instituted. I think we have forgotten this,---and, so we have arrived at this monstrosity of a bureaucracy that places more value on standards and benchmarks that are outside ourselves, outside of both our individual and collective experience. Look what has happened to reading, writing, and arithmetic---we don't see them as life skills anymore---they are merely subjects to be tested, not part of our life experience."

Wheelwright, Floyd County, Kentucky

The community: Wheelwright, Kentucky is located deep in Kentucky coal country. A little coal is still mined around Wheelwright, but the town itself is an abandoned company town. The old recreation hall has been gutted, the library has been dismantled, and most houses and stores on the main street are empty or boarded up. People drive thirty-three miles to grocery shop or see a movie. The unemployment rate of Wheelwright is 70 percent and more than half the families in the town are on public assistance. The per capita income is \$10,372.

The school of possibility: Wheelwright High School

The teacher: Bud Reynolds and Delores Woody

The class: Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Woody team-teach an experimental eleventh-grade course in American Studies. It is a curriculum that combines English and social studies to produce a curriculum rich in research, writing, and collaborative student projects. Their classroom is participating in the Kentucky Telecommunications Project that networks five different grade level classrooms from five regions of the state. The students at each site develop projects related to their communities and, via email, share questions and research findings, shape their writing to different audiences, and have the opportunity to metaphorically step beyond the boundaries of their communities. The goal of the program is

for students to appreciate their hometowns, but prepare for the journey they will have to make beyond their hometowns to find employment.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: Bud: "We are really pushing the envelope here, I have never felt this hopeful. The community here believes that good teaching is when the kids are all in straight rows, listening. The change since we have gotten the kids out of their seats is dramatic! I think I work twice as hard now, but when I see them respond---well, it hits on what made me go into teaching. We see what school can mean to these kids, and we're a part of it. But we have just got to take risks, we've got to take chances. It's the perception that nothing can change that's our biggest impediment."

Tupelo, Lee County, Mississippi--- Mississippi is the lowest state in the nation in per pupil expenditure (\$3,323) and the lowest in average teacher salary (\$24, 369). In 1924 there were 1020 high schools in Mississippi for White students and three for Black students. In 1954, with the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision, there were attempts by the Mississippi legislature to stop school integration. For example, in 1957 the state repealed its compulsory school attendance law. Public schools in Mississippi were not integrated until 1970. In 1982, Governor William Winter passed his Education Reform Act. This Act established the *first* State Board of Education in Mississippi. Even with a renewed focus on education in Mississippi, the schools are still based on a history that is closed, repressive, and elitist.

The community: Tupelo is a community of 130,000 people. It is a center for light industry, medical technology, and has the largest hospital complex in Mississippi. Lee County, in which Tupelo is located, was the first county in Mississippi to attempt integration of its schools. There is a broad base of support for public education in Tupelo. Recently, the citizens of Tupelo approved a \$17 million school bond, one of the largest in Mississippi history, and a local business man gave \$3.5 million to establish an institute for teacher development.

The school of possibility: Tupelo High School

The teacher: Sharon Davis

The class: Ms. Davis teaches chemistry, advanced physics, and conceptual physics. A typical day in conceptual physics goes like this: Ms. Davis ascends a chair, then onto her desk, then onto a narrow demonstration table. She taps her heels twice on the table and opens a brown lunch bag with *Galileo* written across the front. She says, "Let's see what Galileo's mother packed him for lunch." She pulls out a bunch of rubber grapes, a sandwich in a Baggie, a plastic cup, and a note from Galileo's mother. She plucks one grape from the grapes and drops it to the floor. And, over the next few minutes, drops, a grape and a sandwich, a sandwich and a plastic cup, a single grape, the whole bunch of grapes, and each time she asks her class to record what they saw. She follows her demonstration of Galileo's gravitational experiments with a demonstration of resistance using the note from Galileo's mother.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: "My daddy always told me that I could be whatever I wanted to be. But, when it came right down to it, I didn't really believe him. The women I knew, were all married and had kids. If they worked, they worked in one of the factories. The only professional women I knew were teachers. At college, I was encouraged to go into the med-tech program, not medical school. Girls were encouraged to become nurses, not doctors; teachers, not professors. I quit school and got married. In 1987 I went back to school and became a teacher. I think it's important to have a women teaching chemistry and physics. A few weeks ago one of my former students came to visit me---she is in pre-med at Notre Dame. It made me feel so good---like I was almost there with her---it was as if I had a second chance through her."

Polaris, Montana---There are nearly 100 single-teacher elementary schools in Montana and another 60 schools that have two to four teachers.

The community: Polaris, Montana is a ghost town in the middle of the Grasshopper Valley, surrounded by the Beaverhead National Forest. Polaris, during the boom time in the mid-1880s, was a silver-mining town. The community is now a ranching community and

five generations of children/youth from these ranches have attended the one-room school located a mile from town. It is not unusual for students to miss school because of the county fair, hunting season, branding season, or family vacations.

The school of possibility: Polaris School

The teacher: Andy Bayliss

The class: Mr. Bayliss teaches 15 students daily--grade levels second through eighth. He has an organized school in which he individualizes instruction as well as provides group instruction. The ability levels of the students vary. One student has an IEP for a behavioral disability, two students receive speech/language services from an itinerant speech pathologist, and one student is struggling to learn to read. Mr. Bayliss is the school's teacher, nurse, coach, lunchroom cook, counselor, president of the PTA, music teacher, art teacher, computer teacher, janitor, and principal. He is paid \$15,500 a year, plus he lives in the teacherage free of charge.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: "I am it out here, I am all there is and I must say it does get lonely. I am the sixty-first teacher at this school---we all are on a year-by-year contract. I am sent the state curriculum guidelines and I have to meet them with what materials are here---there is not much money to purchase new materials. This school is the community's response to its needs--this community is steeped in the pioneer spirit--it is individualistic and self-reliant. This is a very locally controlled school."

Tucson, Arizona

The community: Tuba City, Arizona has a population of 7,300 people. It is located in northeastern Arizona, just inside of the Navajo Reservation. Members of the Hopi Tribe also live in Tuba City. There is a high rate of alcoholism and unemployment in Tuba City and there is a high dropout rate at Tuba High School. In tests of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and language usage, Native American students do poorly. They also score low in tests of self-concept, self-esteem, self-image, and locus of control. Typically, Native American students have lower grades than Anglo students in English, math, science, and

social studies.

The school of possibility: A four-and-a-half week intensive English summer program at the University of Arizona for students from Tuba High School. The program runs three classes--two for sophomores and one for juniors and seniors.

The teachers: Manny Begay and Michelle Taigue

The class: The program is designed to provide an opportunity for students to develop their English skills and to become familiar with a college campus. The program combines ancient and contemporary mythologies to explore the relationship between the self and imagination. Students read: Scott Momaday's The Way to Rainy Mountain, Oedipus the King, Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso's A Breeze Swept Through, a selection of coyote tails, an anthology of stories and reflections by Leslie Marmon Silko, Barbara Kingsolver's Animal Dreams, Carson McCullers' The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, and David Seals' The Powwow Highway. The students write daily journals, personal narratives, and commentaries on the books. The curriculum honors the rich particulars of the Navajo and Hopi way of life and often the program teaches in Navajo and Hopi.

The teacher's reflection on possibility: **Michelle:** "Part of the richness I see here is unclassifiable in any easy way. These students live with a sense of legacy that involves family history and tribal history that extends into past generations. We need to tap into that sense of history. For us to not focus on the historical identities and traditions of these students is to deny their existence. These are students who will have to negotiate a bicultural life and that is not easy. Our goal is to teach them that they can live in both worlds without giving up their souls."

There is 'no one size fits all' description to fit all of these stories of public education---they all differ from each other greatly. But, there is one thing all of these teachers and students have in common. Ultimately, all of these teachers and students attempt to teach and learn in a country in which negative rhetoric concerning public education is the word of the day. Rather than collude in this negativity, it is

time that society learn about the possibilities that are created daily in the public schools of the United States. These possibilities provide a plethora of insights and information into what can and should be done to foster and perpetuate public education in the United States.

References

- Card, O.S. (2000). *Shadow of the hegemon*. New York: TOR Publishers.
- Greene, M. (1988). *The dialectic of freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fernandez, J.A., & Underwood, J. (1993). *Tales out of school: Joseph Fernandez's crusade to rescue American education*. Boston: Little, Brown Publishers.
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Crown.
- Maran, M. (2000). *Class dismissed: A year in the life of an American high school, a glimpse into the heart of a nation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Noddings, N. (1986). Fidelity in teaching, teacher education, and research for teaching. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56 (4), 499.
- Rose, M. (1995). *Possible lives: The promise of public education in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

SUGGESTED MULTICULTURAL INFUSION ACTIVITIES

by Nancy P. Gallavan and Porter Lee Troutman, Jr.

Gloria Ladson-Billings tells us that if education is to realize its true mission--"to prepare students to be active, responsible participants in a democratic and multicultural society"--then teachers will need to develop more culturally relevant approaches to teaching (Ladson-Billings, in Ross, 1998, p. 135). Culturally relevant teaching describes the kind of teaching that is designed not merely "to fit the school culture to the students' culture, but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students to understand themselves and others, to structure social interactions, and to conceptualize knowledge" (p. 123-124).

The primary goal of culturally relevant teaching is "to empower students to critically examine the society in which they live and to work for social change" (p. 124). This goal applies to P-12 teachers as well as professors in higher education, especially teacher educators who are responsible for modeling culturally relevant pedagogy with their preservice and practicing teachers.

Ladson-Billings' research on culturally relevant teaching with teachers in both P-12 and higher education settings addresses three major dimensions:

(1) conceptions of self and others. P-12 teachers and teacher educators know that the learning must be meaningful to the individual learner for effective learning to occur. Learners must feel safe and included in any classroom in order to participate fully in the learning. Learners want to know and understand how the learning applies to them individually; teachers' understanding of learners' beliefs and dispositions are key to culturally relevant teaching.

(2) conceptions of social relations. Likewise, learners want to know and understand how the learning applies to them as a group, a community of learners, a professional organization, etc. P-12 teachers in particular seek guidance for establishing and facilitating effective classrooms of learners who learn together cooperatively and who co-construct new learning relevant to their space and time while developing understandings applicable to their ever-changing and unknown futures.

(3) conceptions of knowledge. Learners in P-12 classrooms and in higher education courses are expected to achieve many different outcomes and to demonstrate their acquisition of knowledge. To ensure academic success, learners must be taught in a variety of ways allowing them to apply the learning to themselves individually and as active participants in a variety of communities of learners. Learners must be invited to share their diverse backgrounds, to explore a multitude of topics supportive of the content, and to express their new knowledge in a variety of ways.

To better understand and apply these three dimensions, Ladson-Billings identifies five guidelines (pp. 133-134):

1. Culturally relevant teachers believe

that knowledge is continuously re-created, recycled, and shared by teachers and students. Learners' prior knowledge, skills, and dispositions are used as the foundations to build new knowledge. Collaboratively, teachers and learners decide what learning is needed and how learning will be accessed and shared.

2. Culturally relevant teachers view knowledge (course content) critically. Learners must be empowered to challenge the content within the context of their lives and real-life experiences. Teachers cannot simply impart knowledge discretely, unaware of what learners know, do, believe, and value.

3. Culturally relevant teachers are passionate about content. Authentic excitement about the content and the learners is contagious. Schools are concerned not only about learners' academic achievement levels, schools are seriously concerned about attendance and graduation rates. When teachers exhibit genuine interest applicable to the learners' socio-cultural contexts, attendance and completion of the grade, course, and/or program will occur. Learners will want to come to school and finish with their peers.

4. Culturally relevant teachers help students develop prerequisite knowledge and skills by building bridges and scaffolding. Teachers at all levels must relate the new learning to prior learning. Learners come to classrooms with a vast array of backgrounds and experiences; teachers must build from these events to provide effective learning of new learning. Learners are eager to see how the learning fits together and fits into their worlds.

5. Culturally relevant teachers see excellence as a complex standard that may involve some postulates but takes student diversity and individual differences into account. Learners must be provided a multitude of opportunities to explore new knowledge and to express their learning reflective of their own way of learning. Therefore, assessment must consider a variety of performances and be authentic. Ultimately, the true test of excellence will be demonstrated in how learners view themselves, interact with others, and approach knowledge.

Culturally relevant teaching transforms a classroom into one that is focused on

the learners within the context of their lives--past, present, and future. Teachers, P-12 and in higher education, must give voice and empower learners to engage authentically in their learning community and to develop learning events that reflect the diversity of our schools and learners. If educators truly strive to prepare learners "to be active, responsible participants in a democratic and multicultural society" as well as increasing the required measurements of academic achievement, attendance, and completion, then all teachers must reconsider their culturally relevant approaches to teaching and learning.

Reference

Ladson-Billings, G. (1997). Crafting a culturally relevant social studies approach. In E. W. Ross, (Ed.), *The social studies curriculum; Purposes, problems, and possibilities* (pp. 123-135), Albany: State University of New York.



Andrew
3/1/01

"Colors of my Butterfly"