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The Construction and Historical Development of Multicultural Education, 1962–2012

Developmental Editors: Patricia L. Hanna and Heather B. Hill

The field of multicultural education emerged during the 50 years in which Theory Into Practice has been published. I provide a brief historical overview of how the field developed from ethnic studies, to multiethnic education, and to multicultural education, and identify articles published in Theory Into Practice that describe and analyze trends in the field since it was founded in 1962. The Theory Into Practice articles are discussed without the broad context of the historical development of the field. The most recent manifestation of multicultural education is its global focus and

how it is implemented in nations around the world.

THE FOUNDING OF *Theory Into Practice* in 1962 occurred during a watershed decade in the African American struggle for civil rights, from which the multicultural education movement emerged. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, African Americans began a quest for their rights in the United States that was unprecedented in their history. Sometimes in strident voices and salient public action, they demanded that various institutions within American society respond to their quest for social, political, economic, and educational rights and possibilities that had been denied, lost, and betrayed for more than three centuries.

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The inequality epitomized in public schools was a visible symbol of the oppression of African Americans and consequently the school was a convenient target of protest. Although deliberate racial segregation had been declared unconstitutional by the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954, Southern White resistance to racially desegregated schools was fierce and tenacious. In my own hometown of Marianna, Arkansas, the attempt to desegregate the public schools deeply divided the Black and White communities and nearly destroyed the town. When the bitter controversy waned and normalcy prevailed, most of the students who remained in the public schools were African Americans and poor Whites. Most middle- and upper-class Whites had fled to private academies. In Prince Edward County, Virginia, the bitter struggle to desegregate the public schools resulted in the closing of the public schools for five years, from 1959 to 1964 (Brookover, 1993). During these years, many African American students received no formal schooling. Most White students attended private academies that were supported by *tuition grants* during the 5 years that the public schools were closed.

The Development of Ethnic Studies

An important outcome of the Civil Rights Movement was that African Americans demanded that their histories, struggles, contributions, and possibilities be reflected in textbooks and in the school curriculum. In subsequent years, other minoritized ethnic and racial groups—including Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans in the United States, and Asian Americans—made similar demands for inclusion into the school, college, and university curriculum. Consequently, ethnic studies were the first phase in the historical development of multicultural education. Black Studies were the first of the ethnic studies programs, which has deep historical roots.

The use of heroes and holidays became widespread in schools across the United States and a frequent way to provide what Gutmann

(2004) calls “recognition” (p. 76) and “civic equality” (p. 74) in the curriculum for racial and ethnic groups whose struggles, experiences, hopes, and dreams had been either excluded from the curriculum or marginalized within it. In future years, teachers who wanted to provide recognition and civic equality for their students of color and to help mainstream White students develop critical and diverse perspectives on the development of the United States added Mexican Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans to the list of heroes that were studied and to the holidays that the schools recognized and commemorated.

As the ethnic studies movement matured, the strengths and serious limitations of the heroes and holidays approach to curriculum reform and for providing students with recognition and critical and diverse perspectives on American history became evident. An advantage of this approach was that teachers were able to respond quickly to the demands from ethnic communities to include content about their histories and cultures into the curriculum. Ethnic content also enabled students from marginalized groups to see their experiences mirrored in the school curriculum and within the larger society. It also challenged White hegemony and enabled White students to understand the ways in which their history and the histories of other racial and ethnic groups were tightly connected.

However, several serious problems resulted from the heroes-and-holiday approach to the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum. Most frequently, ethnic content remained separate and distinct from the mainstream curriculum; consequently, the mainstream curriculum was not challenged or transformed and students were not able to see the ways in which ethnic content was an integral part of the American saga. Another problem with this approach was that the ethnic heroes chosen for study were frequently safe heroes who did not question or challenge the status quo; for example Sacajawea, who served as a guide for Lewis and Clark, was selected frequently for school lessons, whereas Geronimo—the Apache leader who fought Mexico and the United States to prevent them from taking his

people's land—was rarely chosen for study or identified as a hero.

Multiethnic Education

Teachers and cultural workers in the ethnic studies movement began to realize that reforming the school curriculum to include content about diverse ethnic and racial groups was necessary, but not sufficient to actualize educational equality and to improve the academic achievement of students from diverse groups. This realization was reflected in the pages of *Theory Into Practice* in articles by authors such as DeCosta (1984) and McCormick (1984). When this realization occurred, educational diversity reformers began to focus on all of the variables of the school environment and the ways in which these variables interacted to influence academic achievement and the social and cultural life of students. A number of authors who wrote articles for *Theory Into Practice*—including Delpit (1992), Gay (1994), and Ladson-Billings (1995)—began to identify the variables of the school that needed to be reformed to implement multicultural education thoughtfully and comprehensively. Cherry Banks and I elucidated some of them in our 1995 *Theory Into Practice* article (C. A. M. Banks and Banks, 1995). These variables are: school policy and politics, school culture and hidden curriculum, learning styles of the school, languages and dialects of the school, community participation and input, counseling programs, assessment and testing procedures, instructional materials, the formalized curriculum and course of study, teaching styles and strategies, and school staff: attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions.

The Cultural Deprivation Paradigm

The cultural deprivation paradigm was developed during the 1960s and 1970s, and became the most popular theory that influenced the development of programs and practices related to the education of low-income and minoritized students. Cultural deprivation theorists believe that characteristics such as poverty and disor-

ganized families and communities cause children from low-income communities to experience cultural deprivation and irreversible cognitive deficits (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965; Riessman, 1962). Unlike the geneticists, who believe that low-income children achieve poorly in schools because of their genetic characteristics, cultural deprivation theorists believe that the social environment influences cognition and social behaviors. They think that schools not only have a responsibility to help low-income students to learn, but that they have the ability to do so.

Cultural deprivation theorists assume that the learning problems of low-income students result primarily from the cultures in which they are socialized. They will achieve academically if the school is able to compensate for their deprived cultural environment and enable them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively in the mainstream society, including the schools. Cultural deprivation theorists see the major problem as the culture of the students, rather than the culture of the school.

Cultural deprivation theory was severely criticized during the late 1960s and the 1970s (Ginsburg, 1972; Valentine, 1968). However, it reemerged in the 1990s, which was epitomized by the success, among school practitioners, of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby K. Payne (1996). Bomer, Dworin, May, and Semingson severely criticized the truth claims made by Payne in a widely discussed article published in 2008.

Cultural Difference Theory and Research

The cultural difference theory was created to challenge the cultural deprivation theory, as well as to contest the notion that schools cannot make a difference in the opportunities and cognitive abilities of students—an interpretation that many commentators inferred from the studies by Coleman and his colleagues (1966), and Jencks and his colleagues (1972). Unlike the cultural deprivation paradigm, the cultural difference paradigm rejects the idea that students

of color have cultural deficits. Cultural difference theorists—whose views were expressed in the pages of *Theory Into Practice* by scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1995) and Moll et al. (1992)—believe that groups such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians have strong, rich, and diverse cultures. These cultures, they argue, consist of languages, values, behavioral styles, and perspectives that can enrich the lives of all students. Schools frequently fail to help ethnic minority and low-income students achieve because they ignore or try to alienate these students from their home and community cultures and languages; these perspectives were articulated in articles by Bates (1984) and López (2008) that were published in *Theory Into Practice*. Proponents of cultural difference are critical of the value assumptions underlying deficit thinking and argue that understanding cultural conflicts, rather than deficits, are the key to explaining underachievement. Delpit (1992), Gay (1994, 2003), and Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995)—proponents of the cultural difference theory—described these perspectives in the pages of *Theory Into Practice*.

Cultural difference theorists believe that the school must change in ways that will allow it to respect and reflect the rich cultural strengths of students from diverse groups and use teaching strategies that are consistent with their cultural characteristics. C. A. M. Banks and J. A. Banks (1995) called this approach to teaching “equity pedagogy” (p. 152). It is also known in the literature as “culturally relevant” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 312) and “culturally responsive” teaching (Gay, 1994, p. 149). *Theory Into Practice* published a number of articles by cultural difference theorists during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, including articles by C. A. M. Banks and J. A. Banks (1995), Delpit (1992), Gay (1994), Gay and Kirkland (2003), Howard (2003), Ladson-Billings (1992, 1995), Lipman (1995), and Tate (1995).

Studies by cultural difference theorists provide empirical support for the premise that when teachers use culturally responsive pedagogy, the academic achievement of minority students increases. Au (2011) found that if teachers used

participation structures in lessons that were similar to the Hawaiian speech event “talk story,” the reading achievement of Native Hawaiian students increased significantly. Lee’s (2007) research indicated that the achievement of African American students increases when they are taught literary interpretation with lessons that use the African American practice of signifying. Moll et al. (1992) found that when teachers gain an understanding of the “funds of knowledge” of Mexican American households and community networks—and incorporate this knowledge into their teaching—Mexican American students become more active and engaged learners (p. 132). Research by Ladson-Billings (1995) indicated that the ability to scaffold student learning by bridging home and community cultures is one of the important characteristics of effective teachers of African American students.

Multiethnic Education Expands to Multicultural Education

Ethnic studies and multiethnic education focused primarily on racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Other marginalized identity groups demanded that schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions make changes that would reflect their histories, cultures, and experiences in the United States. Consequently, multiethnic education was expanded to include gender, exceptionality, and social class (Gollnick & Chinn, 1983). This broader conception of diversity and education became known as *multicultural education*. Sleeter (1996) supported this broader conception of multicultural education in a *Theory Into Practice* article and argued that multicultural education should also include a social action component.

Although most multicultural education texts include a discussion of language diversity, *bilingual and bicultural education* was from the beginning of the multicultural movement—and remains—a separate but related area of study and concentration. During the last 3 decades, *Theory Into Practice* published a number of articles that focus on issues in bilingual/bicultural education

and second language learning, including those by Bates (1984), Kaplan and Leckie (2009), López (2008), Menken (2010), and Panferov (2010). I acknowledge the publication of these articles but do not discuss bilingual/bicultural education. Although it is a related topic, it is beyond the scope of this article as I conceptualized it—a brief history of multicultural education.

Religion is a major component of multicultural education in Europe (called *intercultural education*) and has become especially visible since the significant growth of the Muslim populations in nations such as the Netherlands, France, and England within the last 3 decades. Although religion is included within the scope of multicultural education in the United States, it is not a major focus. Exceptionality is an important component of multicultural education in the United States and focuses both on students with disabilities and those who are gifted and talented. Articles by Charrow and Wilbur (1975) and Amos and Landers (1984) in *Theory Into Practice* focus on students with disabilities. An article by Ford and Grantham (2003) describes issues related to culturally different gifted students. Multicultural education in the United States is slowly beginning to incorporate the concerns of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. In a 1994 article in *Theory Into Practice*, Uribe wrote an article titled, “The silent minority: Rethinking our commitment to gay and lesbian youth.”

An important development within multicultural education within the last decade is the importance given to the intersection of variables such as race, class, and gender. Students are members of these groups simultaneously, and they influence their behaviors in complex and dynamic ways. The concept of *intersectionality* is used to describe the ways in which race, class, and gender interact to influence the behavior of students and teachers.

The Global Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Scholars in multicultural and intercultural education, on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific

oceans, are increasingly identifying and describing ways in which diversity issues are manifested within and across nations and how viewing diversity within a nation from the perspectives of other nations and cultures enriches insights and understanding and contributes to the building of powerful explanations and theories (J. A. Banks, 2009, 2012). Although the global dimension of multicultural education is the field’s most notable recent focus, it has a history that extends back several decades. James A. Banks in the United States and James Lynch in England edited a book in 1986 that included chapters by their colleagues in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The contributors to this project identified the ways in which multicultural education was both similar and different in these Western nations.

During its 5 decades, *Theory Into Practice* has published a number of articles that have examined issues related to globalization and diversity, including those by Cole (1984), Anderson (1982), and Pike (2000; see Table 1).

Carl A. Grant at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has directed two projects on global aspects of diversity that have resulted in two edited collections with chapters by scholars in different nations. A symposium that he organized at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual conference in 1998 resulted in *Global Constructions of Multicultural Education*, which he co-edited with Joy L. Lei (Grant & Lei, 2001). Grant co-edited with Agostino Portera of the University of Verona (Italy) another collection that was published in 2011, *Intercultural and Multicultural Education: Enhancing Global Interconnectedness*.

The Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Seattle, Washington, has implemented several projects that focus on diversity and citizenship education across nations. “Ethnic Diversity and Citizenship Education in Multicultural Nation-States” was held at the Rockefeller Foundation’s Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, in 2002. The papers from this conference are published in an edited book, *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives* (J. A. Banks, 2004). A related publi-

Table 1
24 Most Relevant Articles on Multicultural Education
(of the 171 Identified as Related to the Topic)

Author(s)	Title	Year	Volume (Issue)	Issue Theme
Samora, J.	The educational status of a minority	1963	2(3)	Special issue: Education and human dignity
Rich, J. M.	Problems and Prospects for Democratic Education	1976	15(1)	Special issue: Democracy In education
Anderson, L. F.	Why should American education be globalized? It's a nonsensical question	1982	21(3)	Special issue: Global education
Tesconi, Charles	Multicultural education: A valued but problematic ideal	1984	23(2)	Special issue: Multicultural education
Bates, J.	Educational policies that support language development	1984	23(3)	Special issue: Access to meaning: Spoken and written language
McCormick, Theresa	Multiculturalism: Some principles and issues	1984	23(2)	Special issue: Multicultural education
Cole, Donna	Multicultural education and global education: A possible merger	1984	23(2)	Special issue: Multicultural Education
DeCosta, Sandra	Not all children are Anglo and middle class: A practical beginning for the elementary teacher	1984	23(2)	Special issue: Multicultural education
Pratte, R.	Schooling and society: Then and now	1987	26 (Supp 1)	Special issue: Educational perspectives, then and now
Marshall, C.	Bridging the chasm between policymakers and education	1988	27(2)	Special issue: Research, policy, practice: Where are we headed?
Murphy, J.	Equity as student opportunity to learn	1988	27(2)	Special issue: Research, policy, practice: Where are we headed?
Apple, Michael	Economics and inequality in schools	1988	27(4)	Special issue: Civic learning
Delpit, Lisa	Acquisition of literate discourse: Bowing before the master?	1992	31(4)	Special issue: Literacy and the African-American learner/The struggle between access and denial
Moll, Luis, Neff, Cathy, & Gonzalez, Norma	Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms	1992	31(2)	Special issue: Qualitative issues in educational research
Gay, Geneva	Coming of age ethnically: Teaching young adolescents of color	1994	33(3)	Special issue: Rethinking middle grades
Ladson-Billings, Gloria	But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally-relevant pedagogy	1995	34(3)	Special issue: Culturally relevant teaching

(continued)

Table 1
(Continued)

Author(s)	Title	Year	Volume (Issue)	Issue Theme
Banks, Cherry, & Banks, James	Equity pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education	1995	34(3)	Special issue: Culturally relevant teaching
Miller, J. L.	Teachers, researchers, and situated school reform: Circulations of power	1996	35(2)	Special issue: Situated pedagogies: Classroom practices in postmodern times
Sleeter, Christine	Multicultural education as a social movement	1996	35(4)	Special issue: Multicultural education: Cases and commentaries
Damarin, Suzanne	Technology and multicultural education: The question of convergence	1998	37(1)	Special issue: Technology and the culture of classrooms
Anderson, G. L.	The politics of participatory reform in education	1999	38(4)	Special issue: The politics of participation in school reform
Parker, W. C.	Educating democratic citizens: A broad view	2001	40(1)	Special issue: Rethinking the social studies
Kaplan, S., Leckie, A.	The impact of English-only legislation on teacher professional development: Shifting perspectives in Arizona	2009	48(4)	Special issue: The policies of immigrant education: Multinational perspectives
El-Haj, T. R. A.	Becoming citizens in an era of globalization and transnational migration: Reimagining citizenship as critical practice	2009	48(4)	Special issue: The policies of immigrant education: Multinational perspectives

education designed for practitioners is *Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in a Global Age* (J. A. Banks et al., 2005). *Theory Into Practice* published an article by Parker in 2001 that is an insightful discussion of educating democratic citizens; and one by El-Haj in 2009 that examines citizenship issues among immigrant students. Other articles published in *Theory Into Practice* that focus on immigrant youth include those by Rong and Fitchett (2008) and Sarroub (2008).

The Center for Multicultural Education has also sponsored two other projects that focus on the global dimensions of multicultural education: *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education* (J. A. Banks, 2009), and the *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*

(J. A. Banks, 2012), published in four volumes with a major section titled “Global Dimensions of Diversity,” that includes entries from nations around the world.

The Future of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education has evolved from ethnic studies, to multiethnic education, to multicultural education, and to multicultural education in a global context. However, it is important to keep in mind that the earlier components of multicultural education did not disappear when the new dimensions were constructed; rather multiethnic education incorporated important aspects of ethnic studies, just as multicultural education

incorporates important elements of ethnic studies and multiethnic education. The global dimensions of multicultural education also incorporate elements of each of the field's early manifestations. Multicultural education will continue to evolve and change in complex ways. Its major focus in the future will be to describe the ways in which cultural, racial, ethnic, language, and religious diversity is manifested in nations around the world and to develop powerful concepts and theories that can explain teaching and learning related to diversity across nations.

I have been a participant in, and a scholar of, the evolution of multicultural education for more than 40 of the 50-year period that *Theory Into Practice* has been published. My conceptual and professional evolution, like that of the field, became increasingly expansive as I began to grasp the ways in which race, class, and gender intersected to influence the behavior of students and teachers. My current work in global citizenship education and in examining multicultural education across nations is helping me to better grasp the complex ways that racism, classism, and cultural discrimination are significant issues around the world and how tightly interconnected the fate of humans are wherever they live on this planet. My observations of diversity issues in nations around the world gives credence to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s (1994) eloquent statement made in his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" (pp. 2–3).

Notes

1. I acknowledge with appreciation the research assistance given during the preparation of this article from these colleagues at The Ohio State University: Patty Hanna, Heather Hill, and Professor Alan Hirvela.
2. James A. Banks holds the Kerry and Linda Killinger Endowed Chair in Diversity Studies and is the founding director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, Seattle. His areas of specialization are multicultural education and citizenship education in multicultural nation-states.

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