Multicultural Education: Characteristics and Goals
James A. Banks

Banks defines multicultural education as a process-oriented educational reform that “incorporates the idea that all students—regardless of their gender, social class, and ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (p.3). As such, Banks suggests that multicultural education incorporates five dimensions: 1.) content integration; 2.) knowledge construction; 3.) prejudice reduction; 4.) empowering school culture; and 5.) equity pedagogy. Educators can address each dimension separately, however in order for multicultural education to have a lasting impact on all major components of a school, including its policy and curriculum reform efforts, all dimensions must be addressed.

Banks contextualizes the challenges that educators will face as they attempt to advocate for multicultural education in their schools. For example, No Child Left Behind’s (NCLB) emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability stifles a teacher's
creativity in the classroom and negatively effects student achievement. Likewise, multicultural education is competing with a national basic skills paradigm that does not incorporate “the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable [students] to live, interact, and make decisions with fellow citizens for different racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious groups” (p.5). Thus, educators must contend with myriad factors that have quieted educational reforms focused on including multicultural voices and current realities.

Likewise, multicultural education’s foundation is rooted in protest movements such as the Civil Rights and the Women’s Rights movements, as it is a reform effort that explores the intersectionalities of gender, race and class-based systems of oppression.

**Chapter 1 Learning Objectives**

- Place course within emerging historical perspective
- Examine the role of self-examination within the multicultural education conversation
• Understand the history of multicultural education
• Understand the components of multicultural education and how the components
This chapter establishes that culture should not be viewed as a set of identifiable group characteristics; instead, culture should be viewed as a vehicle for grappling with the social construction of culture. When teachers explore how culture is reflected in the teaching and learning process, they can make effective connections between students' social lives and their experiences in school. The authors use a primarily anthropological approach to trace the history of culture, as a concept, and then move to an analysis of education, as a vehicle for cultural transmission. The chapter continues with suggestions of ways that teachers can “put culture to work” each day by actively modeling and engaging with understanding processes related to the influences of culture.

In the concluding paragraphs, the authors explain the importance of adaptive knowledge, for today’s teacher. This understanding of a constantly changing and flexible view of cultural identity
encourages teachers to continue asking how students make sense of their lives in an ever changing world.

**Chapter 2 Learning Objectives**

- Explain that culture should be viewed as a vehicle for grappling with the social construction of identity
- Recommend that teachers “put culture to work” by engaging with understanding processes related to cultural influences
- Emphasize the importance teachers’ adaptive knowledge in relation to culture
CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 3 Race, Class, Gender, and Disability in the Classroom
Carl A. Grant and Christine E. Sleeter

Grant and Sleeter suggest the attention given to the No Child Left Behind Act diverts the awareness that should be given to creating and implementing a multicultural curriculum for our students. More specifically, educators need to observe and utilize the differences that each student brings to the classroom as they develop their curricula.

This chapter explains five different approaches to multicultural education. The first of these approaches is Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different, which posits, “that if a teacher learns to identify and build on their [students’] strengths, students will learn much more effectively than if a teacher assumes the child cannot learn very well” (p. 67). Teaching the culturally different means finding the exceptionalities that the students bring to the classroom and allowing them to excel in an individual way.
The Human Relations Approach focuses on respect and social equality in the classroom. In this approach the authors explain, “its goal is to promote a feeling of unity, tolerance, and acceptance among people” (p. 68). Ideals of moral education could be used in this approach.

The Single-Group Studies Approach to multicultural education gives students the opportunity to study different groups of people instead of the Eurocentric figures that have become the norm in the non-multicultural classroom. This approach hopes to instill qualities of respect and hope in students that they will advocate for systemic change. “The single-group studies approach is aimed toward social change. It challenges the knowledge normally taught in schools, arguing that knowledge reinforces control by wealthy White men over anyone else” (p. 70). Teachers should enter the classroom with an attitude that all students can and will be able to perform at high levels. Likewise, teachers build upon the students’ unique strengths and abilities, incorporating the worldviews within the curriculum.
The final approach the book describes is the Multicultural Social Justice Education approach. The ultimate aim is to “prepare future citizens to take action to change society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people, especially those who are of color, poor, female, or have disabilities” (p. 72). The students in this approach will be engaged in social action while building bridges across subjugated groups. This chapter ends with Ms. Julie Wilson’s approach to teaching. It gives several examples of her teaching in the classroom for the reader to dissect. The goal of this story is to help the reader pinpoint and place different pedagogy styles into the different approaches to a multicultural education.

**Chapter 3 Learning Objectives**

- Be able to define and describe the Human relations Approach, Single-Group Studies Approach, Multicultural Education Approach, and Multicultural Social Justice approach to educational reform;
- **BE ABLE TO DIAGRAM AND ARTICULATE THE WAYS IN WHICH RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND DISABILITY INTERSECT IN THE CLASSROOM.**
This chapter introduces the influence of *The Coleman Report* and later work by Christopher Jencks in demonstrating that a fundamental change in society is needed to equalize educational opportunity. Weiss explains the influence of social class on educational equity by tracing scholarly work related to the connections between schools and the maintenance of social inequalities while also identifying key areas for future inquiry. Issues of “tracking” and access to postsecondary institutions are addressed to underscore that schools do not tend to challenge social inequalities.

In the concluding paragraph, the author explains how research regarding social class needs to incorporate a global perspective. As global forces redefine the American middle class, the workforce around the world is shifting and calling for an understanding of ways that socioeconomic status is no longer merely defined by national boundaries.
CHAPTER 4 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Introduce the influence of The Coleman Report and later work by Christopher Jencks, on efforts to equalize educational opportunity
• Address “tracking” and access to postsecondary institutions to illustrate that schools do not tend to challenge social inequalities
• Explain how research regarding social class needs to incorporate global perspectives
CHAPTER SUMMARY
Chapter 5 Christian Nation or Pluralistic Culture: Religion in American Life
Charles H. Lippy

North America was settled by Protestant Christians from Great Britain, but the seeds of religious freedom did not become a part of the United State’s psyche until the Plymouth Pilgrims and other Puritans broke away from the Church of England and settled in New England to practice a “more pure form of Christianity.” Great Britain also played a role in setting the course for religious freedom in North America by ordering toleration of the different forms of Protestantism in the colonies as long as the various strains of the religion did not disturb public order and peace.

When immigration increased in North America, the Protestants sought to maintain the image of a Protestant nation by holding public office and influencing public education by using books such as the McGuffey Readers to promote and instill Protestant beliefs and morals in the nation’s children. Protestants also influenced immigration laws after World War I to restrict immigration from
non-Protestant nations, such as Japan and China, and ensured that most of the immigrants who entered the United States were Protestant. However, the level of diversity of the people living in the United States was changing and the Protestants could not maintain influence over immigration laws or illegal immigration.

Ultimately, immigration, interreligious marriage, military service, and urban sprawl connected to mobility shaped the United States into a truly ethnically and religiously diverse nation. Now, the people of the United States no longer share one religion, but they still maintain a high level of public order and peace proving the impulses and fears of the immigration-restricting Protestants was unfounded.

**CHAPTER 5 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Be able to discuss the idea of religious pluralism;
- Be able to articulate wall of separation between church and state;
- Be able to explain how court cases involving religion in the 1960’s protected the rights of religious minorities.
Sadker and Zittleman provide a historical overview of women’s struggle for educational opportunity to provide a foundation for understanding the ways that gender bias exists in today’s classrooms. From colonial America to today, women have been fighting for educational equality. Women opened their own schoolhouses and dame schools and by the 1850’s normal schools educated African American women. For women who wanted to teach, there were seminaries and during the Civil War female dollars where important in supporting the tuition needs of colleges and universities. Women could not live on campus, however, and often where placed in separate courses. The fear of female success created often-absurd assertions such as education would lead to hysteria and sterility and well-educated women are less attractive.

The authors provide a report card that outlines the cost of sexism in schools, which is alarming at best, however it provides
the foundation for understanding the various ways sexism in manifested in schools. For example, boys often view reading as “feminine” while calculus, physics, and computer science are male territories. Additionally, “as girls go through school, their self-esteem plummets, as the danger of depression increases. In the middle school, girls rate popularity as more important than academic competence or independence” (p. 141). In an analysis of gender bias in school curricula the authors found that elementary basal readers are promoting male aggressiveness and female docility. This trend is also witnessed in award-winning popular children’s books. A study of 200 books revealed twice as many male-centered stories than females and females are given traditional roles ten times more than males.

Sadker and Zittleman identify seven different forms of gender bias that emerge in school texts. When educators are better able to identify bias, they are better equipped to challenge the curriculum in a meaningful way. At the conclusion of the chapter, the authors offer strategies for creating gender-fair classrooms, which include confronting the bias in the textbooks, analyze one’s
own teaching strategies, seating charts to ensure equity in instructions and continued professional development.

**Chapter 6 Learning Objectives**

- Understand the history of women’s struggle for educational opportunity;
- Be able to identify gender bias in curricula using the authors’ seven forms provided;
- Be able to identify current trends to address gender bias in the classroom.
According to Tetreault, “feminist phase theory is a classification system of the evolution in thought about the incorporation of women’s traditions, history, and experiences into selected disciplines” (p. 159). Tetreault conceptualizes feminist phase theory as a response to a male-dominated curriculum and when incorporated fully, feminist phase theory supports a multicultural curriculum. The author’s model outlines five phases that describe how women have been treated in curricula. These phases are briefly outlined below:

**A Male-Defined Curriculum** is characterized by the universalizing of the male experience. The absence of women is inconsequential—there are no apologies for the omission of women’s live and accomplishments.

The **Contribution Curriculum** attempts to redress the absence of women’s voices by searching for “missing women within a male
framework” (p. 161) which acknowledges that women were missing, but continues to view men as the norm. As such, female authors were added to literature curricula, for example, and notable women in science were added to science curricula. Tetreault suggests the Contribution Curriculum limits women by imposing the confines of how women can contribute within male dominated spheres.

A Bifocal Curriculum or “dual vision” (p. 162) allows for the possibility of seeing a woman’s contribution alongside the contributions of men. A bifocal curriculum makes space to discuss the difference between women and men, but Tetreault shares the concerns of scholars that we must avoid the tendency to generalize to much for the “longing for women’s history instead of writing histories about women” (p. 164).

The Women’s Curriculum posits that “women’s activities, not men’s are the measure of significance” and “what was formerly devalued—the content of women’s everyday lives—assumes new value as scholars investigate female rituals” and other private and
public activities—the mundane is significant (p. 165). The women's experience is allowed to speak for itself and acknowledges the diversity within women's experiences.

*A Gender-Balanced Curriculum* weaves together women and men's experiences into a multilayered human experience. Likewise, knowledge construction is multidisciplinary in nature and is a composite of multiple viewpoints and perspectives.

**Chapter 7 Learning Objectives**

- Be able to articulate feminist phase theory and its five phases;
- Be able to apply feminist phase theory approaches to curricula.