

Seventh Edition

Affirming DIVERSITY



The
SOCIOPOLITICAL
CONTEXT *of*
MULTICULTURAL
EDUCATION



SONIA NIETO • PATTY BODE

Affirming Diversity

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EDITION

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Affirming Diversity

*The Sociopolitical Context of
Multicultural Education*

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This book is dedicated to all those teachers who teach, believe in, and love their students, and to the students in our schools today, with the gifts of curiosity, energy, resilience, determination, and awe they bring to our world. They are, after all, our future.

—S. N. and P. B.

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About the Authors



Photo credit Mark Moriarty

Sonia Nieto has dedicated her professional life to issues and social justice. With experience teaching students at all levels grades through graduate school, currently she is Professor Emerita Literacy, and Culture, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has written numerous journal articles and book chapters, she is the recipient of numerous awards for her research, advocacy, and activism, including the Educator of the Year Award from the National Association for Multicultural Education and the Social Justice in Education Award from the American Educational Research Association.

Patty Bode combines nearly 20 years in PK–12 classrooms, and a decade in higher education, to inform social justice perspectives in her current work as the principal of Amherst-Pelham Regional Middle School in Massachusetts Public Schools. Patty’s research, teacher leadership, and community collaboration focus on imaginative school structuring and curriculum reinvention. She has received numerous awards for efforts in antiracist and antibias curriculum reform and bridging theory and practice in multicultural education—including the 2017 Art Educator of the Year for Supervision and Administration of the Eastern Region by the National Art Education Association; the Massachusetts 2017 Art Educator of the Year from the Massachusetts Art Education Association; the 2016 Women’s Caucus Carrie Nordlund Award in PK–12 Feminist Pedagogy, also from NAEA; and 2005 Multicultural Educator of the Year Award from the National Association for Multicultural Education.

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Foreword

It is a privilege to be associated with this seventh edition of *Affirming Diversity*, a book that has exerted a profound impact on American schools and teacher education programs since its first edition in 1992. This is a textbook like no other. It refuses to “play it safe” by glossing over the historical and current realities of discrimination and exclusion in American and other societies. Over 25 years, it has drawn from the lives of teachers and students to illustrate the impact of overt racism and more subtle forms of institutional racism on the educational experiences of students of color. It has highlighted the challenges experienced by LGBTQ students as they negotiate their evolving identities in the face of widespread societal rejection. And it has exposed the irrationality of educational policies that encourage bilingual students to abandon their home languages despite extensive research evidence that the continued development of bilingualism and biliteracy promotes academic achievement (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006).

Affirming Diversity provides educators with a powerful set of conceptual tools to push back against these societal power relations that constrict the instructional space experienced by minoritized students. A central message throughout the book is that *teachers have choices*. Teacher agency is the key to implementing instruction that connects with students’ lives and affirms their identities. In their own classrooms, teachers *can* foster critical literacy and extend instruction to “uncomfortable” topics and issues. Many teachers, particularly in relatively affluent suburban schools, may prefer to avoid discomfort for themselves and their students. As one of the young people highlighted in this book, ninth grader Delilah Rogers insightfully observes, “Talking about race is like a ticking time bomb.” However, if we avoid talking about race, power, and multiple forms of diversity, are we simply transmitting a sanitized curriculum, rather than educating our students? Are we perpetuating and complicit with societal discourses that implicitly but clearly state that black lives *don’t* matter, that demonize immigrants and refugees, and that ignore the rapidly increasing gap between affluent and impoverished communities?

As these questions illustrate, teacher identity is central to effective instruction. Despite many constraints imposed by federal and state policies, as teachers, we always have at least some degrees of freedom in how we interact with students, how we connect with their cultural experiences and language talents, how we involve parents in their children’s learning, how we adapt content to link with students’ background knowledge and experiences, and in the levels of cognitive engagement we try to evoke through our instruction. Alternative modes of assessment (such as portfolio assessment) can also present a counter-discourse to the inaccurate and misleading account of student progress and effort often reflected in standardized test scores. In articulating our choices, both individually and collectively, we rediscover and shape our own identities as educators and we also become aware of the identity options that our instruction helps construct for our students.

Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode open up a dialogical sphere of both affirmation and resistance: affirmation of student and teacher identity and resistance to coercive and misguided top-down control. When we realize that we *do* have choices, and when we articulate these choices explicitly, we take the first steps toward *empowerment*, which can be defined as the collaborative creation of power. Disempowered teachers are not in a position to create contexts of empowerment for

their students. We need to understand, and rediscover, the power that we bring to the classroom, not as instructional technicians who simply transmit the curriculum, but as *educators* whose instructional choices exert a dramatic impact on the lives of our students.

Affirming Diversity challenges us, as educators, to make explicit the image of our students and of our society that is implied by our interactions in the school context. What kind of people do we hope our students will grow up to be? What kinds of abilities and knowledge are accessible to them in our classrooms? What kind of society do we hope they will create? The answers to all these questions are written in the daily record of our interactions with our students. Our interactions with students and communities constitute a moral enterprise, whether we define it explicitly as such or not.

Students' and teachers' voices occupy a central place in this book. They complement and illustrate the theoretical analyses and remind us that the interactions between educators and students dramatically affect not only the acquisition of knowledge and skills but also the creation of both student and teacher identity. Unfortunately, in many classrooms, the curriculum has been sanitized such that opportunities for critical reflection on personal and collective identity and on issues of social justice are minimized. The image of our students and society implied by this pedagogical orientation is an image of compliant consumers who will gratefully accept their place within the existing power structure and who can easily be manipulated to exercise their democratic rights to preserve that power structure.

A radically different image is implied by the pedagogical orientations articulated in *Affirming Diversity*. Students are viewed as critical thinkers capable of, and responsible for, creating change through action both in their own lives and in the broader society. Their interactions in school provide opportunities to collaborate across cultural and linguistic boundaries in the generation, interpretation, and application of knowledge. The curriculum orients students toward critical reflection on issues of social justice and how personal and collective identities are intertwined with historical and current societal power relations.

The term "multicultural education" does not figure prominently in the educational prescriptions of what historian Diane Ravitch (2013) has called the "corporate reformers" whose focus is increasing test scores and privatizing as much of education as possible. Multicultural education is frequently dismissed within this perspective as, at best, an off-task frill or, at worst, a radical challenge to fundamental values of American society. However, the alternative to multicultural education is monocultural education. The history of monocultural education is written in the certainties of the Crusades and the Inquisition, the smug brutalities of slavery, the casual eradication of the language, culture, and identity of generations of Native American children "educated" in boarding schools, as well as in contemporary claims of fundamentalist groups, from various religious persuasions, to have exclusive access to ultimate truths. Surely, 9/11 should have brought home to us the destructive power of monocultural fundamentalist belief systems and the need to figure out ways of living together in a global context where cross-cultural contact and population mobility are at an all-time high in human history.

Affirming Diversity not only constitutes an eloquent and forceful statement about the importance of multicultural education to our society, it also affirms the central role that individual educators play in nurturing and shaping the lives and identities of our youth. To be a teacher is to be a visionary—as we interact with our students, we envisage what contributions they will play in shaping a better society and we orchestrate our classroom interactions to enable them to realize these possibilities. The pages of this book resonate with the voices of educators whose vision of education encompasses equal opportunity for all students and whose instruction focuses on expanding minds as the primary means of attaining curriculum goals.

Affirming Diversity does not supply prescriptions or formulaic solutions, but it does present extensive empirical research and invites us to think and talk about our own identities as educators and the potential and consequences of the choices we make on a daily basis. As such, it represents a powerful source of inspiration, ideas, and solidarity for all of us who see social justice and equity as important core values within our educational systems. *Affirming Diversity* also highlights the fact that our global society can use all of the multilingual and multicultural intelligence it can get. The consequences of squandering the intellectual, linguistic, and cultural resources that our students bring to school can be seen in our domestic prisons, in our battlefields abroad, and in the spiritual malaise that afflicts our society. This book does not provide a map, but it is a powerful source of inspiration—it breathes new life into those of us who believe that education is fundamentally an ethical imperative, rather than just an economic or bureaucratic exercise.

Jim Cummins
University of Toronto

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- Ravitch, D. (2013). *Reign of error: The hoax of the privatization movement and the danger to America's public schools*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Preface

Much has changed in our society and in the world since the sixth edition of *Affirming Diversity* was published. The United States is still engaged in two long-running wars (in Iraq and Afghanistan), and most recently, the conflict in Syria, while the threat of violence and terrorism still looms large on the world stage. Interethnic, interracial, and interreligious hostility around the world, a leading cause of ever more conflicts and wars, remains rampant. As a result, the number of immigrants and refugees fleeing such conflicts is at an all-time high, and although they have been welcomed in some nations, they have been roundly rejected in others. The range of cultural and social differences in our communities, schools, and classrooms has increased tremendously over the past several decades. All of these issues have considerable consequences for our nation's classrooms. Moreover, with the election of a president in 2016 with seemingly little knowledge, or appreciation, of public education, the federal government's growing commitment to privatization, vouchers, and charter schools places public schools in a precarious position. These changes signal a dramatic shift in our nation's historic commitment to public education.

The changing landscape of our world, our nation, and our schools confirms the pressing need for interethnic understanding and cooperation, a need that is more evident than ever before. At the same time, while multicultural and social justice education are recognized by many as essential for living in today's world, many teachers and other educators are woefully unprepared to deal with the tremendous diversity they will face in their classrooms—diversity not only of race, ethnicity, and gender, but also of religion, ability, social class, life opportunities, and more. In addition, the growing inequality in our schools and society, an inequality leading to ever more alienation and anger among segments of the population who have been overlooked and underappreciated, is leading to more conflict in our streets, legislatures, courts, and, of course, our schools.

This leads us to the need for this book. It is not only about cultural diversity but also, and just as significantly, about why students succeed or fail in school. The subject of much research and debate, this topic has particular salience for students whose racial, ethnic, linguistic, or social identities differ from those of the dominant group. In this book, we consider these matters in relation to a comprehensive understanding of the current sociopolitical context. That is, rather than focus only on individual experiences or psychological responses to schooling, we explore how societal and educational structures, policies, and practices affect student learning, and we suggest some ways that teachers as well as other educators, individually and collectively, can provide high-quality education in spite of obstacles that may get in the way. For us, multicultural education needs to consider not just schooling but also the social, economic, and political context of the world in which we live.

In this seventh edition of *Affirming Diversity*, we continue to explore such matters as diversity, equity, and equality, bringing our discussion up to date by considering issues of current policy, practice, and legislation. For example, high-stakes testing, the growing standardization of the curriculum, vouchers, “choice,” charter schools, and a marketization of schooling have had a tremendous impact on public schools in the past several decades. Increasingly, education is being defined by policies far removed from daily classroom life but nevertheless having enormous consequences for teachers, students, families, and communities. The growing diversity in our nation and debates over immigration, the U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent wars in which the United States is engaged, the economic

recession and slow recovery, and its impact on many segments of the population, inter-ethnic and interracial strife here and abroad, regional wars around the world, global warming, the devastation of the environment—all of these call for a different way to interact in the world. Not coincidentally, burgeoning awareness and militancy have developed among educators who have tired of the unjustified blame they receive for many of the problems in education. Their growing militancy is evident in numerous organizations focused on calls for social justice in education and teacher empowerment, sometimes through teacher unions and many times separate from them. This, too, is a significant situation that must be considered in writing a book on education in today's world.

Given the situation briefly sketched above, we believe teachers and prospective teachers need, more than ever, to understand how the larger societal context affects students, particularly those most marginalized in schools, and in society in general. Why do some students succeed academically, while others fail? What do race/ethnicity, social class, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other differences have to do with learning? What is the real significance of the “achievement gap”? How does the societal context influence what happens in your school? Do your school's and your school system's policies and practices exacerbate and perpetuate inequality? Can teachers and other educators turn this situation around? What is your role and how can you face these challenges with hope and joy? *Affirming Diversity* is an attempt to answer these questions—and more—that both new and veteran teachers face every day in increasingly diverse classrooms and in schools that are becoming more bureaucratic and standardized.

■ About This Book

Affirming Diversity explores the meaning, necessity, and benefits of multicultural education for students from all backgrounds through an extensive review of research that explores:

- Influences on schooling and learning, such as:
 - The sociopolitical context of schools and society
 - Racism and other biases and expectations of students' achievement
 - School organization and educational policies and practices
 - Cultural and other differences, including ethnicity, race, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion, and social class
- A conceptual framework for multicultural education based on that investigation
- Case studies and snapshots—in the words of a selected group of students from a variety of backgrounds—about home, school, and community experiences and how these have influenced their school experiences
- Teaching stories that highlight specific teachers and the inspiring work they do in their classrooms to address issues of equity and diversity in a variety of settings, course content, and grade levels

The book presents data on the multicultural nature of schools and society, including information about different sociocultural groups, their experiences in schools, and the issues and challenges they face.

Affirming Diversity consists of 10 chapters organized in three parts. Part I sets the stage for understanding the sociopolitical context of multicultural education. Part II develops the conceptual framework for multicultural education, emphasizing institutional and cultural factors in schooling and individual and group responses to diversity. This section explores the multiple forces that may affect the school achievement of students from a variety of backgrounds.

To provide insights into the interrelated roles that discrimination, school policies and practices, and culture play in the education of students in the classroom,

we present 16 case studies and 7 snapshots. Incorporated throughout Parts II and III, the case studies and snapshots highlight salient issues discussed in particular chapters, and they provide a concrete means for addressing issues of diversity and success or failure in schools. We hope that the case studies and snapshots will help you more fully understand the lives and school experiences of a variety of young people who reflect our nation's growing diversity. Parts II and III also contain a number of multicultural teaching stories that epitomize what teachers can do, individually and in collaboration with one another, to put into practice some of the theories developed throughout the text.

Part III focuses on the implications of the case studies, snapshots, and teaching stories for teaching and learning in a multicultural society such as ours. We use themes that emerged from interviews with students and teachers to emphasize conditions that may affect learning for different students. In Chapter 9, three specific curriculum ideas for elementary, middle, and high schools are comprehensively described. These examples embody what the previous chapters have defined as multicultural education, that is, education that affirms diversity, encourages critical thinking, and leads to social justice and action. Chapter 10 offers suggestions for developing environments that foster high-quality education, concentrating on multicultural education as a process. In addition, in Chapter 10, we propose a model of multicultural education that affirms all students.

Each chapter concludes with (1) a series of problems or situations for you to contemplate and (2) suggestions for classroom activities and community actions. By including these, we are not implying that there are immediate or easy answers to the dilemmas you face in schools every day. The purpose of posing particular problems and proposing activities to address them is to suggest that careful attention needs to be paid to the many manifestations of inequality in our schools and that productive resolutions can be achieved when teachers, students, families, and communities reflect critically on these problems and work together to solve them.

New to This Edition

Previous readers may notice a broad range of changes in this new edition.

About Terminology

In the sixth edition, we took each section of the chapter that in previous editions was titled “About Terminology” and incorporated those sections throughout the book. In this seventh edition, we continue to include the same feature, one that clarifies what terms to use when referring to specific kinds of people, and how to identify respectful language that describes group affiliations. You will see these terms highlighted in boxes nearby case studies and snapshots when relevant to the identities of the students discussed in those features. One About Terminology box is new to this edition; titled “White Privilege,” it appears in Chapter 3.

Multicultural Teaching Stories

In the sixth edition, we introduced a new feature, multicultural teaching stories, to highlight the important role of teachers in changing classrooms and schools. In this edition, we include two new stories and update two familiar stories. The first new story, “Immigration Rights and Family Stories” in Chapter 3, focuses on the actions of a teacher, principal, and superintendent in one school district to address the needs of immigrant families within the atmosphere of anti-immigrant vitriol that has become more prevalent since the 2016 presidential campaign and election. The second new story in Chapter 8 highlights the teaching of Renee Spanos Klein, who embodies the ethic of care through what she calls “culturally relevant writing pedagogy.” In Chapter 4, we revisit the Boston Teachers Union School, a teacher-run school, five years later. In Chapter 9, we hear updates from Bill

Blatner and learn about the transformation of the math curriculum at his school that was built upon his introduction of more inclusive math classes with a “belief in every kid” to succeed.

A New Case Study

Delilah Rogers is the focus of a new case study in Chapter 3; she reflects on how schools either silence or support student voices and talks about race in school against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement.

A New Snapshot

Chapter 3 also features a new snapshot of two brothers: one a seventh grader and the other a high school senior who identify as straight White males, and they both discuss White privilege.

Thoroughly Updated References

We have gone to great lengths to thoroughly update the vast majority of the references and studies cited throughout the text.

Student Art

The updated artwork appearing on the cover as well as in all the chapter openers and part openers are portraits and self-portraits created by school students from middle and high school.

Chapter by Chapter

Chapter 1, “Understanding the Sociopolitical Context of Schooling,” has expanded its emphasis on the foundational concepts of the text. Updates include the most recent research illustrating the six significant tasks of understanding the sociopolitical context of multicultural education: (1) clarifying the goals and key terms of multicultural education; (2) dissolving myths about immigration and difference; (3) naming the social, economic, political, and ideological underpinnings that influence educational structures; (4) studying the current demographic “mosaic” of our nation; (5) using qualitative research to understand students; and (6) examining the political struggles of legislation and policy in public education.

Chapter 2, “Defining Multicultural Education for School Reform,” remains the anchor of the text, describing in detail Sonia Nieto’s definition of multicultural education, which she offered in the first edition of this book in 1992. The definition remains rooted in the seven characteristics originally named while continuing to evolve to address current conditions. Since Sonia developed this conceptual framework in the first edition, she is listed as the sole author of this chapter.

Chapter 3, “Racism, Discrimination, and Expectations of Students’ Achievement,” has been thoroughly updated with new research and insights on these topics:

- Implicit bias, discussed under the section on critical race theory
- The history of housing segregation that influences school in a contemporary context, discussed under the section on the systemic nature of discrimination
- The manifestation of racism and discrimination in statistics
- Statistics and research on teacher expectations

In addition, a new multicultural teaching story on immigration rights, a new case study, a new snapshot, and a new About Terminology box have been added to the chapter, along with a new What You Can Do: “Promoting Racial Literacy in Your Classroom and School.”

In Chapter 4, “Structural and Organizational Issues in Classrooms and Schools,” many of the topics covered have remained the same as in the sixth edition, although a great deal of new research on those issues has been included.

- The section on discipline policies has been updated with resources about restorative justice practices in schools.
- There is a new section on school climate with four subsections to reflect the multifaceted issues that schools must address with a multicultural perspective:
 - social and emotional learning;
 - anti-bullying initiatives;
 - physical violence and safety; and
 - school buildings, physical environment, school and class size.
- The chapter also includes an updated report about the Boston Teachers Union School in its multicultural teaching story.
- There are many updated resources listed in several of the What You Can Do boxes providing the most recent research to inform practice:
 - being proactive about tests;
 - using the curriculum critically;
 - creating inclusive disciplinary practices; and
 - vigorously promoting family outreach.

Chapter 5, “Culture, Identity, and Learning,” includes further explanation of theories about culture and learning than in the previous edition. Recent research is presented on culturally sustaining practices, as well as the relationship between power, poverty, and learning.

Chapter 6, “Linguistic Diversity in U.S. Classrooms,” has been updated with new definitions and cutting-edge research in the field.

Chapter 7, “Understanding Student Learning and School Achievement,” has been completely revised in this edition, reflecting new research on:

- caring relationships, hope and healing;
- teacher expectations and asset-based pedagogy;
- out-of-school factors;
- discipline disparities and restorative justice; and
- youth identities within school structures.

Chapter 8, “Learning from Students,” includes a new multicultural teaching story about a first-grade teacher’s efforts to affirm students funds of knowledge through culturally responsive writing.

Chapter 9, “Adapting Curriculum for Multicultural Classrooms,” includes an updated multicultural teaching story about Bill Blatner’s Interactive Mathematics Program (IMP). We revisit the teaching story of the sixth edition and see how Bill’s Math Department transformed the entire school math curriculum.

- Its language has been updated to include transgender identities more explicitly, especially in the discussion of LGBTQ curriculum.
- The coverage of Sara Barber-Just’s LGBTQ literature course has been updated, reflecting the new literature she has added and the change in the course’s actual title so it is more inclusive of transgender identities.
- A section has been added at the end of the unit on Cambodia, suggesting how the same approach and activities might be applied to other refugee or immigrant groups, depending on school population and location.
- The What You Can Do boxes feature the updated recommendations of recently published resources under themes such as:
 - Using technology to expand multicultural curriculum
 - Making your school a “welcoming school”

This chapter was single-authored by Patty Bode, so it bears Patty's name.

Chapter 10, "Affirming Diversity: Implications for Teachers, Schools, Families, and Communities," continues to focus on communities. It highlights the importance of working with families to promote student learning.

■ Supplements and Learning Aids

Instructor's Manual

The Instructor's Manual includes a wealth of thoughtful ideas and activities designed to help instructors teach the course. The IM contains a sample syllabus and course suggestions. Each chapter includes the following elements: overview, problem posing, response journal prompts, whole class/group work assignments, student as teacher assignments, a critical pedagogy in action assignment, instructions for projects to be included in student portfolios and used as assessments, handouts to accompany all assignments, and essay questions. (Available for download from the Instructor's Resource Center at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc>.)

PowerPoint™ Presentation

Created by Patty Bode, these PowerPoint slides outline the key points of each chapter, and are customizable so that professors may add or delete material as they see fit. Instructors may also download book-specific PowerPoint slides from the Instructor Resource Center at <http://www.pearsonhighered.com/irc>. Your local representative can provide a password and instructions for using the IRC.

We end this preface with a personal reflection from each of us.

Sonia

The first edition of *Affirming Diversity*, published over 25 years ago, helped define my professional career. It also had an enormous impact on my personal and professional life because it put into words the ideas and values about education, diversity, and social justice I had been thinking about since I was a child, and especially since I stepped into my first classroom at Junior High School 278 in Brooklyn, New York, many years ago. Just a few years ago, the Museum of Education recognized the first edition of *Affirming Diversity* as one of the 100 books in the twentieth century to help define the field of education, something for which I am both humbled and incredibly proud. I have been equally gratified by the enormous and generous response of readers to the text through its first four editions when I was the sole author, and since the fifth edition when Patty Bode accepted my invitation to become my co-author. She has helped to make subsequent editions of *Affirming Diversity* fresh, timely, and relevant to our times. Given the challenging times in which we are living—particularly with relationship to public education—it is my hope that the book will challenge you to think boldly and creatively about your role in making schools inspiring and joyful for all students. In the process, I hope that education becomes not only your profession but also a rewarding odyssey.

Patty

The first four editions of *Affirming Diversity* played a transformative role in my research, teaching, and worldview. I was honored to become co-author on the fifth, sixth, and now seventh edition and am eternally grateful to Sonia for inviting me to participate in the continual metamorphosis of this important book. The work on the text reflects the urgent calls I have heard through 18 years as a public school teacher, a decade in higher education as a teacher educator, and now in my work as a school principal to make our schools thrive as socially just places of joy and rigor. I strive to bring those voices together with educational research that combines the most

current scholarship with foundational and landmark studies in the field to point teachers toward creating meaningful, high-achieving, transformative learning communities. As a teacher, I recognize the struggle that arises from competing messages from academic, political, and popular culture about what counts as knowledge and what defines teaching. The vision we assert in this book hopes to activate antiracist critical pedagogy in classrooms. For all students and their families and teachers, I hope that this new edition of *Affirming Diversity* contributes to creating change.

Acknowledgments

We are deeply appreciative of the many individuals who helped us create the seventh edition of *Affirming Diversity*. We are particularly indebted to the students who agreed to be interviewed: Delilah Rogers for the new case study, and brothers Aiden and Daniel O’Carroll for the new snapshot. We owe thanks to Vera Stenhouse, who interviewed Daniel and Aiden. Also, we are most grateful to Renee Spanos Klein, Alicia Lopez, and Mike Morris for participating in our new multicultural teaching stories, as well as Bill Blatner, Laura Davila, and Eric Berg for their time and effort in helping us update their teaching stories. For their dedicated research assistance and overall commitment to the mission of the book, we thank Nicole Singer and Bob Moriarty. Dr. Norm Gold, bilingual educator extraordinaire, reviewed and made suggestions for the revision of Chapter 6. We also thank those who interviewed students for the case studies and snapshots throughout all the editions: Keonilrath Bun, Paula Elliott, Kristen French, Maya Gillingham, Jason Irizarry, John Raible, Stephanie Schmidt, Vera Stenhouse, Diane Sweet, and Carlie Tartakov. We are also grateful to Kristen French, the author of the Instructor’s Resource Manual, a guide characterized by both a critical edge and helpful pedagogical suggestions. We are tremendously grateful to the art teachers who submitted their students’ artwork that appears on the cover and within the part and chapter openers: Amanda Davis, Lily Friedling, Hannah Hartl, Ben Sears, Jeff Stouder, and April Wesley. We deeply appreciate the talent and generosity of the students who allowed us to reproduce their art. These art images inform each section and emphasize the role of visual culture in multicultural education.

Professional colleagues who have read and commented on the various iterations of this text have helped to strengthen it, and we are thankful to all of them. For this seventh edition, we thank the following reviewers: Jennifer L. Brown, Columbus State University; Michael Lee McDonald, NE Wesleyan University; Dr. Christopher Weiler, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania; Celeste Williams, Tennessee State University. Their detailed comments and suggestions for improving the book were enormously helpful. At Pearson Education, we are grateful for the tremendous support and encouragement we received from our editor, Julie Peters.

Once again, we owe a heartfelt thank you to Jim Cummins, a scholar of rare genius and a wonderful friend, for writing the inspiring foreword to this seventh edition. Jim has been a steadfast and enthusiastic supporter of this book since the very first edition. His continuing willingness to write the foreword means a great deal to us. And, of course, we would not be where we are without our families. Sonia particularly wants to acknowledge Angel, her partner of 50 years, for his unconditional love and support; Celso, her son-in-law; her daughters Alicia and Marisa; and her granddaughter Jazmyne, who we raised, for teaching her how to be a mother. Her other grandchildren—Corissa, Terrance, Monique, Tatiana, Celsito, Aliya, Clarita, Lucia, Mariya, Kalil, and Angela—are another source of joy and inspiration. Patty wants to thank Mark, her life partner, for his love, humor, and encouragement, and her sons, Bob, Ryan, and Keo, for revealing the adventures of life’s ongoing journey with special appreciation to her daughter-in-law Maya and granddaughter, Anju for adding joyful meaning to it all.

Sonia Nieto

Patty Bode

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Charlotte Price in Jeff Stauder's art class, Amherst-Pelham Regional High School, Amherst Massachusetts. Charcoal drawing, 2014.

Setting the Stage

Multicultural Education Within a Sociopolitical Context

"At its best, multiculturalism is an ongoing process of questioning, revising, and struggling to create greater equity in every nook and cranny of school life. . . . It is a fight for economic and social justice. . . . Such a perspective is not simply about explaining society; it is about changing it."

—Rethinking Schools

15, no. 1 (Fall 2000)

To set the stage for understanding multicultural education within a broad societal context and to help you think about the implications of this context for students of diverse backgrounds, the two chapters in Part I introduce a number of foundational concepts. In Chapter 1, we describe key assumptions that undergird this text and define what we mean by the *sociopolitical context of education* by illustrating six significant tasks of understanding. Chapter 1 also introduces other fundamental definitions and parameters of multicultural education and then presents demographic data about both the general population and the population in U.S. schools, with implications of these data for education. We briefly describe a key approach we have employed in this text, namely, the use of *case studies* and *snapshots* that reflect some of the tremendous diversity that currently exists in our schools.

Using the discussion in Chapter 1 as a foundation, Chapter 2 defines *multicultural education* and describes its essential components. Because we view multicultural education as far more than simply altering the curriculum to reflect more Brown and Black faces or adding assembly programs on diversity, Chapter 2 provides examples of what we mean by a *critical* multicultural perspective.

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1

Understanding the Sociopolitical Context of Schooling



Lexie Ephraim in Lily Friedling's art class, Amherst-Pelham Regional Middle School, Amherst, Massachusetts. Graphite self-portrait. 2017.

Decisions made about education are often viewed as if they were politically neutral. Yet as we hope to make clear in this chapter and throughout the text, such decisions are never politically neutral. Rather, they are tied to the social, political, and economic structures that frame and define our society. The *sociopolitical context* of society includes laws, regulations, policies, practices, traditions, and ideologies.

To put it another way, multicultural education, or any kind of education for that matter, cannot be understood in a vacuum. Yet in many schools, multicultural education is approached as if it were divorced from the policies and practices of schools and from the structures and ideologies of society. This kind of thinking often results in misguided practices such as a singular focus on cultural artifacts like food and dress or on ethnic celebrations that exaggerate attributes of groups and exoticize them. It can become fictional multicultural education or a tourist curriculum, disassociated from the lives of teachers, students, and communities. This is multicultural education *without* a sociopolitical context. In this book, however, we are interested in how the sociopolitical context of the United States, and indeed of our global society, shapes schools and therefore also shapes the experiences of the children and adults who inhabit schools.

■ Assumptions Underlying This Text

It is important that we begin by clarifying four major assumptions underlying the concepts described in this book. These assumptions advance our goals to (1) connect identity, difference, power, and privilege; (2) include many differences in multicultural education; (3) counter the argument of “teachers as villains”; and (4) defend quality public education.

“Desegregated schools . . . offer the single most powerful way to reach and prepare the coming generation, which will be the first to live in an America that is truly multiracial and has no racial majority group. It is imperative that we take feasible steps to foster and sustain integration and to deal with the deeply rooted harms of segregation.”

Gary Orfield,

Reviving the Goal of an Integrated Society: A 21st Century Challenge, 2009

Identity, Difference, Power, and Privilege Are All Connected

Race, ethnicity, social class, language use, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and other social and human differences are major aspects of the socio-political context that we will address in this book—that is, one’s identity frames (although it does not necessarily *determine*) how one experiences the world. Identities always carry some baggage; they are perceived in particular ways by a society and by individuals within that society. Language identity as interpreted by a spoken accent, for instance, may invoke positive or negative images, depending on one’s social class, race, country of origin, and variety of language. As a consequence, in the context of U.S. society, someone who is French and speaks with a Parisian accent, for example, is generally viewed more positively than someone from Senegal who also speaks French.

Yet multicultural education does not simply involve the affirmation of language, culture, and broader aspects of identity, but also assertively confronts issues of power and privilege in society. This means challenging racism and other biases as well as the inequitable structures, policies, and practices of schools and, ultimately, of society itself. Affirming language and culture can help students become successful and well-adjusted learners, but unless language and cultural issues are viewed critically through the lens of equity and the power structures that impede the goals of social justice, these perspectives are unlikely to have a lasting impact in promoting real change. Making explicit connections among identity, difference, power, and privilege can move education toward such transformation.

Multicultural Education Is Inclusive of Many Differences: Lenses of Race, Ethnicity, and Language

Keeping the connections among identity, difference, power, and privilege in mind, this book’s framework and approach to multicultural education are broadly inclusive: They are based on the belief that multicultural education is for *everyone* regardless of ethnicity, race, language, social class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability, or other differences. Multicultural education as a field and in practice is not directed at only one group or certain kinds of students. One book, however, cannot possibly give all of these topics the central importance they deserve. For that reason, this book uses *race, ethnicity, and language as the major lenses* to view and understand multicultural education. While we address other differences in one way or another, we give special emphasis to these. The inceptions of both multicultural and bilingual education were direct outgrowths of the civil rights movement, and they developed in response to racism (discrimination based on race), ethnocentrism (discrimination based on ethnicity and national origin), and linguisticism (language discrimination) in education. These inequities continue to exist, especially for American Indian, Latino, African American, Asian, and multiracial youngsters, and they are central to this book’s perspective and approach. Nevertheless, we believe that multicultural education includes everyone, and we have made an attempt in this text to be inclusive of many differences.

Having a broad definition of multicultural education raises another dilemma. One reason that multicultural education is such a challenging topic for some educators is that they have a hard time facing and discussing the issues of race and racism. For example, whenever we bring up racism with a group of predominantly White teachers, we find that, too often, they want to move on immediately to, say, sexism or classism without spending much time on racism. Sexism and classism are certainly worthy of study and attention—in fact, they must be part of a multicultural agenda, and many books are dedicated to those topics—but the discomfort of many White teachers in talking about race and racism is very evident and reason enough to confront it directly. Racism is an excruciatingly difficult issue for many White people. Given our nation’s history of exclusion and discrimination, this is not surprising, but it is only through a thorough exploration

of discrimination based on race that we can understand the genesis as well as the rationale for a broader framework for multicultural education that includes language, social class, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, religion, and other differences. For these reasons, this book aims to include all students and all teachers in such challenging yet hopeful discussions with a deliberate focus on race, ethnicity, and language.

Teachers Are Not the Villains

Another belief that informs this book's perspective and approach is that teachers cannot be singled out as the villains responsible for students' academic failure. Although some teachers bear responsibility for having low expectations because they are racist and elitist in their interactions with students and parents and thus provide educational environments that discourage students of some backgrounds from learning, most do not do this consciously. Most teachers are sincerely concerned about their students and want very much to provide them with the best education possible. Nonetheless, because of their own limited experiences and education, some teachers may know very little about the students they teach. As a result, their beliefs about students of diverse backgrounds may be based on spurious assumptions and stereotypes. These things are true of all teachers, not just White teachers. In fact, being from a non-White ethnic group or background does not guarantee that a teacher will be effective with students of diverse backgrounds or even with students of his or her own background.

Teachers usually have little power in their schools. They are often at the mercy of decisions made by others far removed from the classroom; they generally have little involvement in developing the policies and practices of their schools and frequently do not even question them. Teachers also are the products of educational systems that have a history of racism, exclusion, and debilitating pedagogy. As a consequence, their practices may reflect their experiences, and they may unwittingly perpetuate policies and approaches that are harmful to many of their students. We cannot separate schools from the communities they serve or from the context of society in general. Oppressive forces that limit opportunities in the schools reflect such forces in the society at large. The purpose of this book is not to point a finger, but to provide a forum for reflection and discussion so that teachers take responsibility for their own actions. The book aims to respect and support teachers in their efforts to assert their intellectual and creative prowess in challenging the actions of schools and society that affect their students' education in negative ways, and in helping bring about positive change.

Quality Public Education Is a Cause Worth Fighting For

Another key assumption of this book is that public education that ensures all students full participation in a democratic society is worth defending and fighting for. In spite of all its shortcomings, and although it has never lived up to its potential, public education remains a noble ideal because it is one of the few institutions that at least articulates the common good, even if it does not always deliver it. Public education remains the last and best hope for many young people for a better life. Yet the public schools have often been a target of scorn and disrespect in the press and among politicians. In spite of this, the public still believes in the promise of public education.

This was evident in the 45th annual poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools—the quantitative survey that Gallup conducted on behalf of Phi Delta Kappa International on the opinions of the American public about key issues facing K–12 education in this country. The findings revealed that a majority of Americans give the public schools in their community an A or B—the highest rating ever recorded by this poll. Moreover, Americans trust public school teachers and principals.¹ The National Education Association (NEA) noted that despite suffering

widespread repercussions of the economic downturn, voters across the country endorsed candidates who supported public education.² Moreover, research by Christopher A. Lubienski and Sarah Theule Lubienski compared some public schools to private and charter schools, specifically on the teaching of math. Their studies reveal the advantages and success of public schools.³ Given this unambiguous and overwhelming support for public education, it is clear that public schools can provide all children with a good education and it is within the ability of teachers, administrators, and the public at large to ensure that they do so.

■ Defining the Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education

Now that we have explained some of the assumptions underlying this text, we want to define what we mean by the *sociopolitical context of education*. As you will see in the remainder of this chapter, understanding this terminology and the research that undergirds it is crucial to the critical view of multicultural education asserted throughout our book. In what follows, we illustrate six significant tasks of understanding the sociopolitical context: (1) clarifying three goals and four key terms of multicultural education; (2) dissolving myths about immigration and difference; (3) naming the social, economic, political, and ideological underpinnings that influence educational structures; (4) studying the current demographic “mosaic” of our nation; (5) using qualitative research to understand students; and (6) examining the political struggles of legislation and policy in public education.

■ Task 1: Clarifying Three Goals and Four Key Terms of Multicultural Education

Depending on one’s conceptualization of multicultural education, different goals may be emphasized. In this book, we want to make clear from the outset how we define the goals and key terms of multicultural education, the first task of understanding the sociopolitical context. Given this text’s four major assumptions outlined above, the major premise of this book is the following: *No educational philosophy or program is worthwhile unless it focuses on the following three primary goals:*

1. Tackling inequality and promoting access to an equal education
2. Raising the achievement of all students through meaningful learning that provides them with an equitable and high-quality education
3. Providing students with an apprenticeship in the opportunity to become critical and productive members of a democratic society

Tackling Inequality and Promoting Access to an Equal Education

We believe that multicultural education must confront inequality and stratification in schools and in society. Helping students get along, teaching them to feel better about themselves, and sensitizing them to one another are worthy goals of good educational practice, including multicultural education. But if multicultural education does not tackle the far more thorny questions of stratification and inequity, and if viewed in isolation from the reality of students’ lives, these goals can turn into superficial strategies that only scratch the surface of educational failure. Simply wanting our students to get along with, and be respectful of, one another makes little difference in the life options they will have as a result of their schooling. Students’ lives are inexorably affected by economic, social, and political conditions in schools and society—that is, by the sociopolitical context in which they live and learn—and this means that we need to consider these conditions in our conceptualization and implementation of multicultural education. (Further elaboration on the terms *equality* and *equity* is provided in this section under “Defining Key Terms in Multicultural Education.”)

Raising Achievement of All Students

Learning is an equally central goal of multicultural education. *Meaningful learning through academically fertile and aesthetically rich engagement* in which students make sense of their worlds and their place in it is at the very core of a multicultural perspective. Having “feel-good” assemblies or self-concept-building classroom activities will do little to create equitable school environments for students without meaningful teaching and learning. Considering the vastly unequal learning outcomes among students of different backgrounds, it is absolutely essential that achievement of all students through an equitable and high-quality education be placed at the center of multicultural education. (See the subsequent discussion of the “achievement gap” under “Defining Key Terms in Multicultural Education.”) Otherwise, if they are not receiving a high-quality, rigorous education, too many young people will continue to face harrowing life choices.

Providing Apprenticeships as Critical and Productive Members of a Democratic Society

Learning to take tests or getting into a good university cannot be the be-all and end-all of an excellent education. A third and equally crucial goal of multicultural education is to *promote democracy by preparing students to contribute to the general well-being of society, not only to their own self-interests*. Multicultural educator Will Kymlicka has asserted that not only is multiculturalism about expanding individual horizons, and increasing personal intercultural skills, but also it is essential that it be part of the larger goals of justice and equality.⁴ (This is further discussed in the section on “Social Justice” under “Defining Key Terms in Multicultural Education.”)

Defining Key Terms in Multicultural Education

In addition to asserting these three goals, the first task of understanding the sociopolitical context also includes defining key terms. These definitions help explain the approach we use in this book and support the three primary goals listed above. These four key terms include: (1) equal and equitable, (2) social justice, (3) the “achievement gap,” and (4) deficit theories.

Defining Equal Education and Equitable Education: What’s the Difference?

Two terms often associated with multicultural education are *equality* and *equity*, which are sometimes erroneously used interchangeably. Both equal education and educational equity are fundamental to multicultural education, yet they are quite different. Educator Enid Lee has explained equity as the *process* while asserting equality as the *result* of multicultural education.⁵ That is, for many educators, *equal education* may mean simply providing the same resources and opportunities for all students. While this alone would afford a better education for a wider range of students than is currently the case, it is not enough. Actually achieving educational equality involves providing an *equitable education*. *Equity* goes beyond equality: It means that all students must be given the *real possibility of an equality of outcomes*. A high-quality education is impossible without a focus on equity. Robert Moses, who began the highly successful Algebra Project that promotes high-level math courses for urban Black and Latino middle school and high school students, has advanced the idea that quality education for all students is a civil rights issue.⁶ The work of Moses exemplifies what James Banks calls “equity pedagogy,” which he includes in his description of *five dimensions* of multicultural education. Banks explains that an equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching to include a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles and cultural groups.⁷ In summary, *equal* education implies we are giving every student the *same* resources and opportunities and an *equitable* education provides students with the resources and opportunities they *need to achieve equality*.

Defining Social Justice

Frequently invoked but rarely defined, *social justice* is another term associated with an equitable education. In this book, we define it as *a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity*. On a societal scale, this means affording each person the real—not simply a stated or codified—opportunity to achieve to her or his potential and full participation in a democratic society by giving each person access to the goods, services, and social and cultural capital of a society, while also affirming the culture and talents of each individual and the group or groups with which she or he identifies.

In terms of education, in particular, *social justice education* is not just about being nice to students, or about giving them a pat on the back. Nor does a social justice curriculum merely ask students to make posters about their “favorite social issue.” Social justice education includes four components:

1. It challenges, confronts, and disrupts misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, social class, language use, gender and gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and other social and human differences. This means that teachers with a social justice perspective consciously include topics that focus on inequality in the curriculum, and they encourage their students to work for equality and fairness both in and outside the classroom.
2. A social justice perspective means providing all students with the resources necessary to learn to their full potential. This includes *material resources* such as books, curriculum, financial support, and so on. Equally vital, but often overlooked, are *emotional resources* such as a belief in all students’ ability and worth, care for them as individuals and learners, high expectations of and rigorous demands placed on them, and the necessary social and cultural capital to negotiate the world. Providing all students with resources also includes a school environment safe from discrimination. These are not just the responsibilities of individual teachers and schools, however. Beyond the classroom level, achieving social justice requires reforming school policies and practices so that all students are provided with an equal chance to learn. This entails critically evaluating policies such as high-stakes testing, tracking, student retention, segregation, and parent and family outreach, among others.
3. Social justice in education is not just about *giving* students resources, however. A third component of a social justice perspective is *drawing on* the talents and strengths that students bring to their education. This requires embracing critical pedagogy and a rejection of the deficit perspective that has characterized much of the education of marginalized students to a shift that views all students—not just those from privileged backgrounds—as having resources that can be a foundation for their learning. These resources include their languages, cultures, and experiences.
4. A fourth essential component of social justice is creating a learning environment that *promotes critical thinking and supports agency for social change*. Creating such environments can provide students with an apprenticeship in democracy, a vital part of preparing them for the future. Much more will be said throughout the text about how to create such a meaningful learning environment.

These four components of social justice in education are woven throughout the remaining chapters of the book.

Defining the “Achievement Gap”

Another term that needs defining is *achievement gap*. This term has evolved over the past several decades to describe the circumstances in which some students, primarily those from racially, culturally, and linguistically marginalized and low-

income families, achieve less than other students. The U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) states: "Achievement gaps occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant."⁸ Although research has largely focused on Black and White students, the "achievement gap" is also evident among students of other ethnic and racial backgrounds, such as Latino and American Indian students.⁹

The problem with the term *achievement gap* is that it suggests that students alone are responsible for their learning, as if school and societal conditions and contexts did not exist. The result is that the problem is often defined as a "minority" problem rather than as a problem of unequal schooling. For all these reasons, we use the term "*achievement gap*" with caution and always in quotation marks.

Yet there is no denying that the "achievement gap" is real: In 2015, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported that White students had higher scores than Black students, on average, on all assessments. The NAEP data show that from 1971 to 2012, the White-Black and White-Hispanic score gaps in reading and mathematics narrowed as a result of Black and Hispanic students making larger gains in achievement during that period than White students. However, in reading, White students had average scores at least 21 points higher than those of Black students and 25 points higher, on average, in math, on a 0 to 500 scale.¹⁰

Reports on Hispanic student achievement are also dispiriting overall. The data from NAEP reveal that the gaps in math test scores between whites and Hispanics remained at 21 points in fourth grade and 26 points in eighth grade. Reading test gaps persisted at 25 points.¹¹ Patricia Gándara's research reveals that by fourth grade, 16 percent of Latino students are proficient in reading, compared to 41 percent of White students, with a notably similar pattern at the eighth-grade level, where only 15 percent of Latinos are proficient in reading compared to 39 percent of Whites.¹² Clearly, the gap between African American, American Indian, Hispanic, and some Asian (particularly Laotian and Cambodian) students compared to White students remains very large. Specifically, the gap is the equivalent of two grade levels or more, almost what it was in 1992. For example, while 41 percent of Whites are reading at grade level, only 15 percent of Hispanics and 13 percent of African Americans are at grade level. The gap worsens through the years: Black and Hispanic twelfth graders perform at the same level in reading and math as White eighth graders.¹³ The gap is not only deplorable, it is also an indictment of our public education system.

In spite of the fact that the "achievement gap" is a reality, sometimes this term is a misnomer because it places undue responsibility on students alone. As a result, we believe that what has become known as the *achievement gap* can also appropriately be called the *resource gap*, the *opportunity gap*, or the *expectations gap* because student achievement does not come out of the blue but is influenced by many other factors—that is, student achievement is related directly to the conditions and contexts in which students learn. For instance, because some schools are well endowed in terms of materials and resources, the students in these schools have multiple means to help them learn. On the other hand, schools that serve students living in poverty tend to have fewer resources and frequently employ more inexperienced teachers, and thus they provide fewer opportunities for robust student learning. School-related factors include low expectations, particularly in schools that serve students who are both economically disadvantaged and from ethnic and racial minority backgrounds, as well as other practices and policies that jeopardize student learning.¹⁴ Thomas B. Timar's research concurs. He reviewed the efforts to close both the Black-White and Hispanic-White achievement gap. The data pointed to some progress, but he found that the overall discouraging situation was an indicator of larger social, economic, and political difficulties. Timar underscores that schools must be held accountable for their responsibility, but the wider social conditions must be addressed as well.¹⁵ As Gloria Ladson-Billings