
Foreword to the Third Edition

As a child I quickly become aware of issues of race, cultural diversity, and equity in the early 1950s. I arrived in the United States in 1954 as a child when my immigrant Mexican parents settled in northeast Los Angeles, on the outskirts of East Los Angeles. My parents strongly impressed upon their seven children that we were all equal and had the right to receive equal access to education. In 1955, my parents moved near Ave. 43, close to Highland Park, a community that at that time was predominantly European American—the Ochoas integrated a segregated community. Placed in an elementary school that had no interventions for recently arrived immigrant children from other parts of the world, I, as a third grader, was given speech pathology for fifteen minutes a week.

Knowing how to read and write in Spanish enabled me to survive the lack of comprehensible instruction and the well-meaning teachers who constantly kept reminding me to speak English and not to associate with perceived gang members. I soon entered one of the most integrated middle schools (Nightingale Junior High) in the early 1960s with African American, Asian (multiple heritages), Latino (first, second, and third generation), and European Americans (low and middle income) placed at one school site and expected to get along. No cross-cultural education was provided, so lunch time was a living theater of survival and one of my best-lived cross-cultural experiences: learning to survive in a climate of cross-cultural tension and competition.

Upon completing junior high, I enrolled in Lincoln High School, the first school in the Los Angeles Unified School District to have student walkouts in 1968. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Mexican Americans and Chicanos across the states of the Southwest made their voices heard in a civil rights movement that would change the lives of youth forever. The walkouts were driven by Latino student concern for the quality of their education, the high death toll of Latinos in the Vietnam War, and the growing voice of the Chicano and Black Movements. I survived high school and received good grades, and with an emphasis in mathematics, but was never encouraged to apply to college. I did so because my older

brother, Jose, had enrolled in college and the Vietnam War was in my face. I applied and was accepted, while always looking for jobs to pay tuition, books, and transportation. By my late teens I was clearly aware of discriminatory practices, lack of academic rigor in my schooling, and the lack of K–12 schooling opportunity to maintain my home language with a high level of academic proficiency.

In the late 1960s, I continued to encounter racism, often harassed by police for being in the wrong communities late at night, and I became an active participant of the Chicano Movement. My drive to continue to further develop my skills and find ways to contribute to social policy, civil rights–oriented educational projects, and social initiatives led me to graduate from the university, obtain teaching credentials, receive a master’s degree in special education, and complete my doctorate in education with an emphasis on community development and nonformal education. My persistent passion for educational access over the past thirty-five years also led me to direct national, state, and local projects and research grants that have focused on equity of opportunity, language policy, community development, and professional development of biliteracy teachers—guided by respect of voice, representation, dignity, and opportunity to reclaim historical, cultural, and academic presence. This will persist until my last breath on earth.

Reflecting on my past thirty-five years of work in ethnically and linguistically diverse school communities, what do I see as the most challenging issues that we in the educational profession must address? First the changing demographics of our culturally diverse nation and world; second, the existing achievement gap that negatively impacts culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) low-income students; and third the need for transforming our schools for democratic schooling. Culturally proficient instruction is a means to that goal.

CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Under the first challenge, the changing demographics, I have witnessed radical shifts in the size and composition of the school-age population of our urban cities. An overwhelming proportion of low-income Latino and Hispanic, Asian (Chinese, Filipinos, Indians, Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and others) and English language learners are among the fastest-growing and lowest-achieving subpopulation of students in our nation (Baker, 2011). The demographic changes in our nation’s schools, most notably the growth of CLD students, require the attention of all education stakeholders. By 2050, the United States will no longer be a majority white nation—with significant implications for our economics, our politics, and our culture (Kunzig, 2011). While the demographics of our nation are changing, attitudes resulting in unequal access remain constant. CLD and low-income people on a daily basis face microaggressions in many forms. As this happens across the country, some educators dare to work collectively to actualize the concept of equal opportunity—legally, culturally, economically, socially, and politically through culturally proficient instruction.

ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Currently, low-income Latino/Hispanic and Asian students and English language learners in our largest urban cities are not acquiring the high level of academic skills necessary to access a quality education. Student preparedness to enter the workforce is quite disparate among various segments of the nation's population. Considerable attention has been called to the problem, but the enormous white and Latino/Hispanic and African American achievement gaps persist and do not appear to be narrowing (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Most alarming are the dropout rates, ranging from 22 percent to 50 percent in many parts of our nation, and the lowest enrollments in higher education among CLD students (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2006).

Imperative is the preparation of our youth who must be culturally competent to live in a culturally diverse and complex world of diverse values, cultural behaviors, and lifestyle priorities. This can only occur with culturally proficient educators. As a nation, we must develop solutions to effectively deal with the underachievement of CLD low-income students. A vibrant CLD population and economy demands a democratically flexible school system that is respectful and nurturing of its CLD participants. A culturally proficient and democratically based school system must seek to provide an academically rigorous curriculum based on the skills (reasoning, problem-solving skills, multilingualism, cross-cultural competence, computational skill, and understanding of our ever-changing science and technologies) needed to enter the careers of a global economy. Moreover, we need to ensure that education professionals perceive CLD students as a resource as opposed to a problem.

As we walk the path of the second decade of the twenty-first century, we must transform our schools from undemocratic practices that yield inequality to culturally proficient school practices where equal encouragement prevails. This implies that CLD students are included equally in the school and classroom as competent participants and learners; where all are provided the knowledge and skills needed to solve big and small problems; and all are equally prepared to be informed and skilled democratic citizens (Pearl & Knight, 1999). You can begin the journey toward the goal of a social democracy with the insights and activities provided in this book.

DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLING

In his book *The Audacity of Hope*, President Obama (2006) reminds us of an evolving U.S. Constitution, that despite its original acceptance of slavery, its core ideas of equal protection under the law, the right to due process, and equal citizenship under law have transformed our nation. Yet:

[R]acism, nativism sentiments have repeatedly undermined these ideals; the powerful and the privileged have often exploited or stirred prejudice to further their own end. But in the hands of reformers, from Tubman to Douglas

to Chavez to King, these ideals of equality have gradually shaped how we understand ourselves and allowed us to form a multicultural nation the likes of which exists nowhere else on earth. (p. 232)

Since the Supreme Court decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) decision of the separate but equal doctrine, as a nation we have entertained building a democratic pedagogy that seeks to provide equal access and benefits to all children in our nation. Among the guiding principles of this democratic pedagogy is developing critical consciousness that works to improve a more just, fair, and collaborative nation and world. In pursuit of these ideals, since the 1960s, an important question has been asked: Why were the public schools failing poor CLD students in a democratic society?

Paolo Freire (1970) says:

A democratic education equips students to engage in action and reflection . . . upon their world in order to transform it. . . . the students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher.” (pp. 66, 68)

CONCLUSION

If the nation is to respond to the economic, social, and political challenges of the twenty-first century, confronting and resolving the issues of race, prejudice, social inequality, and the underachievement of our youth will be essential to the overall national educational success in the coming decades. One important action that can quickly be acted upon is the special attention needed to eliminate deficit thinking. A teacher or administrator who believes a student cannot learn, for whatever reason, will not be much of a teacher or administrator. This book is of critical importance, as it delineates a process to achieve democratic school communities and culturally proficient schools, with a focus on investing in the support and development of all children and youth.

Democratic schooling and developing our social consciousness begins with social justice. In dreaming of a world that is less discriminatory, more just, less dehumanizing and more humane, the wisdom of Carlos Fuentes (1992) reminds us that:

[P]eople and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born and reborn in contact with other men and woman, with men and women of another culture, another creed, and another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we shall not recognize it in ourselves. (p. 245)

Thus, as a community we must be cognizant that the nature of the conversation concerning segregation, integration, equal education, and cross cultural competence

will differ depending on the particular sociopolitical context and history of each of our CLD communities. We must truly believe that all groups will benefit by participating in and contributing to the evolving conversation of a deliberate and strong democracy guided by democratic schooling—to raise our consciousness and cross-cultural competence.

We also need to question our nation's commitment to reexamine the values of social justice and democratic schooling, and their implications for the social, economic, political, and educational institutions of our society. This reexamination of values must encourage a renaissance of social justice in our country as we press forward to actualize equality, freedom, and democratic principles. In a world in which more than 80 percent of the people are non-Christian, speak a language other than English, and are not European American, our nation is truly a minority nation.

The book you are about to read will take you on a journey of democratic engagement, of reflection and action, requiring honesty and an open heart and mind. Engagement in its activities will provide strength to create school communities where dialogue, reflection, and action can be linked to educational practice and transformative change. In the process we have to be “patiently impatient” to see our dreams of a more just and humane nation and world become reality.

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