



# *A Culturally Relevant and Caring Teacher*

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# Why Multicultural Education?

## CHAPTER MAIN IDEAS

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to encourage the reader to begin thinking about the importance of multicultural education and how students arrive at school from many cultures. In addition, the chapter introduces the framework for Caring-Centered Multicultural Education based on the work of scholars such as Vygotsky, Dewey, Gay, Siddle Walker, Noddings, Nussbaum, and others.

### *How Did I Become Interested in Multicultural Education?*

My interest in Multicultural Education began many years ago when I was 20 years old. My first position was at a predominantly Black-neighborhood elementary school in a large urban district. It was March and I had just received my bachelor's

degree in education from a small private university. I felt I was ready to tackle the problems of the world. My first teaching assignment was in a school of 300 children; 93 percent of the students were Black, 3 percent were Asian and Native American, and 4 percent of the youngsters were European American. All my students were either on reduced-cost or free lunch.

Of the 14 teachers at the school, only three had more than six years of teaching experience, seventy-five percent of us were women, and many of us had been teaching for fewer than three years. The upper-grade teachers fought an underlying atmosphere of frustration and hopelessness.

Most of the staff didn't think that I, a relatively quiet, young, and barely five-foot-tall Asian American woman, would make it at this tough neighborhood school. The week after I took the job, the principal mentioned to me, "We had a knifing in the parking lot last year, so be sure to lock your car." I was definitely a greenhorn.

Right away, I realized that I knew little about the lives of the students in my first-grade class. Although my apartment was only five miles from the school, it was as if I lived in another city. The good news was that I finished the year and taught another full year at this school. The bad news was that *I wasn't prepared* to teach in a culturally diverse school. Fortunately, the students were patient and forgiving, although I made many mistakes. In those 16 months, I learned more from the children than they learned from me.

Even though I wanted to assist children in becoming the best they could be, I was unprepared to teach in a school where the life experiences of children were different from my own. I taught the way I had been taught and socialized. For example, the district had chosen reading materials that weren't suited for most of the children in my class. The students spoke Ebonics (Black English vernacular), but the district mandated the use of a highly phonetic commercial reading series for the primary grades. The basal reader was built upon the phonemes and semantic structure of standard English. The methods used at that time were mechanical and did not encourage students to make their own meaning out of the text. The stories in the texts were about a boy named Sam who carried around a ham and had little to do with the lives of my students. The reading selections used word families, but the stories did not make much sense.

Upon reflection, I realized that I was teaching students how to decode without teaching them comprehension skills. I was also asking the children to learn a new dialect of English while simultaneously trying to teach them to read standard English. The problems were my approach and the textbooks, not the kids. I had never thought about *myself* as being culturally disadvantaged. At that time, it was a common practice in education to label low-income, culturally diverse children as culturally disadvantaged. Now I know that *schools* that operated on these beliefs were culturally disadvantaged institutions because many teachers did not understand the life experiences or background of students. The deficiency was not in the students; rather the educational system was based on a mainstream way of life and teachers often saw students of color as being deficient. No one questioned the way schools were organized or the knowledge that was taught. However, thinking about the negative beliefs that were embedded in schools, I came to understand that children are children. They

come to school with a rich knowledge of their cultures and neighborhoods. They have hard-working parents. At the time, I didn't understand or value the students' shared life experiences and I didn't know how to make school meaningful.

After teaching for several months, I recognized I had little knowledge about my students or the community. I began to search out various African American community groups and read about African American and Native American history. I also knew it was important for me to earn the respect of parents and students. I hadn't grown up in the school neighborhood and the parents didn't know if they could trust me, so I visited many students at home and regularly called parents in order to get to know them. Out of 20 children in my classroom, I had three Native American students, one European American child, and 16 African American youngsters. All of the children, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, spoke Ebonics and were bright and eager to learn. I began to understand that I held misconceptions about the community and didn't know what the critical issues were in the neighborhood. Parents slowly began to trust me because I cared and was honest. I made mistakes, but the parents were very open-hearted because they knew that I was a new teacher. In fact, they were extremely accessible. Jimmy's mom told me to call her in the morning because she worked in the late afternoon. I called Lisa's mother at work at the telephone company in the evening to give her an update on Lisa's reading progress. Cecilia's grandma came in regularly to read to small groups of children in the classroom.

I wish I had been a more effective teacher. I didn't know where to begin. What did I need to learn? What changes did I need to make to be a better teacher? My early experiences taught me that I needed to understand the role culture played in learning. It was clear that I needed to learn about Multicultural Education because knowledge gained from this field would help me become a more effective teacher. I knew that a good teacher would be able to reach all students. This is how my interest in Multicultural Education began.



### *Case Study*

#### **DID WE FAIL ROSEMARY?: YEARS LATER**

Many years later my commitment to Multicultural Education was dramatically affirmed. I was an adjunct professor at a university in the same large urban city where I landed my first job as a first-grade teacher. I often took teachers on field trips. On one trip, we went to a public high school, one of only two public institutions in the nation devoted to the schooling of Native American students. As the vice principal led my class through the buildings, I noticed a female student, obviously pregnant, walking toward us. There was something familiar in her eyes.

As she passed by, I realized the student was Rosemary. I remembered her as a scrawny little six-year-old in my first-grade class 14 years ago. I asked the counselor about her. Rosemary was 20 years old and trying to earn her high school diploma. She had a toddler who attended the high school day care and another child on the way. I remembered her as a spunky, curious, loving six-year-old,

and although I didn't know what had happened during the past 14 years, I could see that life had not been easy on her. The energy and sparkle in her eyes were no longer there. The counselor was concerned because he didn't think that Rosemary would finish her high school degree before her 21st birthday. Public funding for her education would cease on that day.

I kept asking myself, "What happened to Rosemary? In first grade, she was an excited learner who looked forward to school. Did I fail Rosemary? Did schools fail Rosemary? Did society fail Rosemary? Did her parents fail Rosemary?" However, Rosemary still had the drive to get an education and that's why I saw her after so many years at that high school. She hadn't given up.

Seeing Rosemary reminded me how important our job is. I felt as if we as a community may have lost some of Rosemary's dreams and enthusiasm that I saw 14 years earlier. She was trying hard to get an education, and I believe Multicultural Education staff development for teachers could have assisted her educators in creating a more effective learning environment.

Culture was important to Rosemary, as shown by the choices she made. Rosemary was enrolled in the urban district's only high school that focused on the needs of Native Americans. She had her daughter in the Little Eaglet Daycare at the school. Rosemary obviously felt a kinship with and connection to the school community. Maybe if there had been teachers along the way who could have integrated more about Native American culture such as history, community guest speakers, and literature into the school curriculum, Rosemary would have finished her studies when she was younger. I wished I had done a better job in affirming her cultural identity and infusing the cultural knowledge she valued into the curriculum so that schooling had been more meaningful to her.

We, as a society, struggle today with providing all students with an effective and successful education. Probably a multiplicity of events that Rosemary grappled with led to her dropping out of school several times. She was not only a young Native American female, but she was also a member of a family with few financial resources. However, I think there are many other students like Rosemary who would benefit from an education that integrates culture into the curriculum and instruction.

Multicultural Education as a field rose out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s when citizens pointed to the lack of consistency between our ideals of equal educational opportunity and the reality of a severe achievement gap between students from oppressed groups and mainstream communities. Multicultural Education as a field calls for total school reform to address these inequities (Banks 2002; Grant and Sleeter 1998; Gay 2000), and many beliefs are based on the work of John Dewey, the educational philosopher.

When Rosemary was a student in schools, many teachers did not believe culture was important; however, today many districts all over the country are integrating Multicultural and Bilingual Education into their schools because of the great diversity of our national student population. The next section describes our country's diversity. ❀

## Who Are We? Diversity in Our Nation and Schools

The culturally diverse population in our schools represents a long reality of diversity in what is now known as the continental United States, even before European explorers reached the Americas. For example, in 1492 when Columbus landed in San Salvador, an island in the Bahamas, there were more than 500 Native American tribes. Today, our population is growing and is increasingly diverse, as you can see in Table 1.1 (Social Science Data Analysis Network 2001). Over 281 million people now live in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

If you have ever worked for or volunteered for the U.S. Census Bureau, you know that the process of counting all individuals in the United States is a complicated one. One of the reasons for this is that our nation covers a lot of territory. For example, some villages in Alaska are remote and surrounded by snow and ice year-round and these places are not easy to reach. The Census Bureau must hire pilots and two-seater airplanes to take census workers to count people in these areas. Another aspect that makes the census a complex undertaking is that in the 2000 count an Hispanic person could identify with any race because both race and Hispanic ethnicity were asked as different questions (Social Science Data Analysis Network 2001). Individuals see themselves in many ways, so ethnic identification can be a complex process. Therefore, it is often difficult to figure out how to ask people how they identify themselves because the census may include numerous categories. In addition, categories change as people alter the way they identify themselves. For example, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders were not counted separately until the 2000 census; therefore, persons in this category in 1990 were counted as Asians (Social Science Data Analysis Network 2001).

**TABLE 1.1 U.S. Population by Racial Group**

Growth Rate	2000 Population	Past 10-Year Growth Rate (%)
Total U.S. Population	281,421,906	13.15
Total Hispanics	35,305,818	57.94
White (non-Hispanic only)	194,552,774	3.41
Black	33,947,837	16.19
American Indian and Eskimo	2,068,883	15.34
Asian	10,123,169	45.27
Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	353,509	—
Other	467,770	87.79

Source: Census 2000 analyzed by the Social Science Data Analysis Network (SSDAN).  
<http://www.censusscope.org/>.

<sup>1</sup>In the Appendix on page A-1 there is a chart that shows the rapid growth of U.S. population from 1960 to 2000.

Which ethnic populations are increasing in the United States? From Table 1.1 you can see that most categories have seen growth in the past 20 years. The Hispanic and Asian communities have experienced some of the largest gains. In the past 10 years the Hispanic community grew at a rate of 58 percent, while the Asian community grew by 45 percent. The Black population grew by 16 percent, while the Native American population grew by a little over 15 percent. The White population increased by only 3.4 percent. In fact, Dr. Steve Murdock, a demographer for the state of Texas said at an urban education conference at Texas A&M, “Our future is tied to non-Anglo populations. Our nation’s future rests on how well diverse students do in school and the employment they secure” (Murdock 2002).

As our country becomes more diverse, the number of multiracial/multiethnic students also is rising dramatically.<sup>2</sup> About 6.8 million people (2.4 percent) in the United States marked two or more races in the 2000 census. Table A.3 in the chapter appendix shows the actual population figures. More multiracial citizens live in Hawaii and Alaska (Social Science Data Analysis Network 2001).

### National Enrollment in U.S. Public Schools and Two Examples, Dallas and Boston

As the diversity of our country continues to grow, so do the number of students of color. Statistics about all public elementary and secondary schools in 1999 show that almost 38 percent of the students came from communities of color. The number of White students fell from 70.4 percent to 62.1 percent of the total number of students from 1986 to 1999. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 show these changes. Student diversity in our schools also continues to increase due to interracial marriages and immigration. We are a nation of many peoples.

If you have visited schools in a major school district, you may have noticed the diversity of students. Table 1.3 provides the totals across the nation, but does not tell the reality of the largest districts in the country. In school districts such as Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, New Orleans, Houston, Baltimore, and Seattle, the majority of students are from communities of color. There are regional differences in the

TABLE 1.2 U.S. Public School Population (Fall 1999)

Race/Ethnicity of Student	Percentage of Population (Fall 1999)
White (non-Hispanic)	62.1
Students of Color	37.9

National Center for Education Statistics, *Mini-Digest of Educational Statistics* ©2001, Charlene Hoffman, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement NCES 2002-026, 13.

<sup>2</sup>Although the U.S. Census Bureau uses race as a category, the author of this book sees race as a sociopolitical construct and not as a biological one. Read more about race in Chapter 3.

**TABLE 1.3 U.S. Public School Population by Background (Fall 1999)**

Race/Ethnicity of Student	*Percentage of School Population
Black (non-Hispanic)	17.2
Hispanic	15.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	1.2

\*Numbers may not sum to totals due to rounding. *Mini-Digest of Educational Statistics*, 2001.

**TABLE 1.4 Boston Public Schools Enrollment (October 2001)**

	Black	Latino	White	Asian	Native American	Total
Total (Students)	30,113	17,836	9,005	5,640	264	62,858
Total (Percentages)	48	28	15	9	<1	100

Source: Facts and Figures, Boston Public Schools, Enrollment, <http://boston.k12.ma.us/bps/enrollment.asp>.

**TABLE 1.5 Dallas Independent Public School District Enrollment (October 2001)**

	Hispanic	African American	White	Asian	American Indian	Total
Total (Students)	93,065	56,220	11,766	2,131	581	163,763
Total (Percentages)	56.8	34.3	7.2	1.3	0.4	100

Source: [http://www.dallasisd.or/inside\\_disd/facts\\_stats/students.htm](http://www.dallasisd.or/inside_disd/facts_stats/students.htm).

ethnic enrollments of students in each district. For example, in Boston Public Schools in October 2001, a total of 85 percent of the students were non-White. In this district 48 percent of the students were Black and the next largest group were Latinos, who represented 28 percent of the population. In comparison, at Dallas Public Schools during the same time period, the largest group was Hispanic, followed by African Americans. See Tables 1.4 and 1.5 for the enrollment information for these districts. The group labels used in these charts are the same as those noted in each district; therefore, in one chart a population is called Black, while in another city the students are identified as African American. It is apparent from the demographics




that our students come from diverse cultural and linguistic communities. Teachers will need to understand how to build on students' strengths and address their needs.

## What Does It Mean to Be a Culturally Relevant Teacher?

Approximately 86 percent of teachers in K–12 schools are from mainstream, middle-class backgrounds. Many newer teachers will most likely find positions in urban districts that have great cultural and linguistic diversity like Boston or Dallas. Students will bring various cultural experiences and knowledge about life to the classroom. Teachers will also bring new ideas and perspectives to the school. Although the following example refers to ethnic cultural values, people adopt values from many cultures, such as family, nation-state, and religious groupings.

Let's consider, for example, a new teacher named Mrs. Andrews. In her junior high classrooms she has a student named Christine, an Asian immigrant student from the Philippines. Christine believes teachers should be respected and therefore not questioned. Mrs. Andrews's class also includes Amy, a Chinese American student who also believes teachers should be respected, yet she does not believe it is disrespectful to ask questions in class. Therefore, Amy asks questions in order to gain a clearer understanding of the concepts that Mrs. Andrews teaches. Amy was raised within a middle-class orientation, so her views are more similar to those of Mrs. Andrews in the classroom. She is more comfortable in school because her expectations and behaviors are in line with what she has learned from her family.

Mrs. Andrews is comfortable with both students, but she believes students should be active learners, so she encourages Christine to ask questions first in a one-on-one discussion during lunch recess. Mrs. Andrews understands that Christine's experiences are different from hers in many ways and so the student's behavior is not what she expects. Mrs. Andrews becomes somewhat frustrated because Christine smiles but says little in class; however, she understands that it will take time for Christine to understand the expectations of her new school. Mrs. Andrews hopes that Christine will become more comfortable raising questions in discussions later in the year after she is coached and observes the modeling of other students in the class. As a culturally relevant teacher, Mrs. Andrews learned that at home Christine was taught to be more reticent and not aggressively verbal. Therefore, she will provide opportunities for her to work in small groups where Christine can develop her verbal skills among peers and not in front of the whole class. Later, when Christine is more confident and has developed public speaking skills, she will provide many opportunities for her to contribute to class discussions. One way the teacher encourages her is by writing comments on her papers praising her for the verbal contributions she does make in class. A **culturally responsive or relevant teacher** like Mrs. Andrews is culturally affirming to her students, understands the cultures of her students who are making adjustments in the classroom, and encourages students to become self-directed thinkers.

 A culturally relevant teacher is affirming to her or his students, builds on what students bring to school, and encourages students to become self-directed thinkers within a caring and democratic society.



*Caring, culturally diverse teachers*

## *Culturally Relevant Teaching: Connecting to Student Knowledge*

Culturally relevant teachers are responsive to and affirm the many cultural backgrounds students bring to school (Ladson-Billings 1995; Larke and Carter 2002). They know how to connect the students' prior knowledge with the academic content being taught. Culturally relevant teachers understand their students' value systems and act as **cultural mediators** in situations where the behaviors and values of children conflict with mainstream expectations. Let's take two examples. In schools every day, students are given assignments to do at their desks. Gay (2000) explained that many African American and Latino students who come from traditional cultural backgrounds may be sensitive to the cultural context of the classroom, especially in doing their seatwork. So students engage in stage-setting or "getting ready" behaviors. Have you ever had a student who needed to sharpen his pencil, stretch his arms, and push his chair backward into a more comfortable position before beginning his assignment? It may have seemed as if it took forever for him to start working. Gay believes behaviors like these can be explained as "preparation before performance" or ways of centering one's attention or "setting the tone" to begin working. A culturally responsive teacher will understand these behaviors as part of some students' learning process.

Another example appears in the comic strip *Zits* on page 11. Jeremy's dad, who is a dentist, has a new patient. This patient is unhappy about needing braces because he thinks he will not look "cool." Although the dentist may or may not agree with piercing, he tells the young man not to think of the wires as braces, but as getting his "smile pierced." Piercing is an important aspect of this young person's identity, and



the young man now sees his situation in a new way. This wise dentist has become a cultural mediator. He understood that piercing was a valuable practice to the young man and created a motivating link between braces and youth culture.


Culturally relevant teaching can be a powerful force in learning. I wish I had been able to use culture in teaching Rosemary and her first-grade classmates. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the children in the class taught me that I did not make the cultural connections I should have in my teaching. I wasn't as wise as the dentist in the comic strip. I didn't know how to be a cultural mediator and make bridges in teaching new skills and information. In Chapters 3, 4, 9 and 10, I will provide more information about culturally relevant teaching.

As you have read in this chapter, culture is a critical component in my philosophy about teaching. This is one of the reasons that I believe Multicultural Education is an important field. The next section of the chapter provides the core of how I conceptualize Multicultural Education. It summarizes the beliefs that I think Multicultural Education is built on, and since one of the most important building blocks is caring, I call it Caring-Centered Multicultural Education.

## *Caring-Centered Multicultural Education*

It is important for educators to have a strong philosophy that guides their work. I have chosen three theories that form an educational framework called Caring-Centered Multicultural Education. A **framework** is an overarching belief system that can include theories, beliefs, and attitudes. The Caring-Centered Multicultural Education framework combines the concepts of caring, culture, and community in schools. The three theories used to build the framework are as follows:

- Care theory (Noddings 1984, 2002a, 2002b; Walker 1995), of which personal integrity is a component (Palmer 1998).
- Sociocultural theory of learning (Vygotsky 1978; Moll 1990).
- Education for democracy (Dewey 1916; Nussbaum 1997).

 *Caring-Centered Multicultural Education integrates three major theories: care theory, sociocultural theory of learning, and education for democracy.*

Since I am introducing my thoughts about education, I provide a limited description of the educational philosophy that guides this book. I want you to begin to think about how the Caring-Centered Multicultural Education paradigm is different from

other viewpoints. This section of the chapter is an introduction to the framework. More comprehensive discussions of the framework can be found in Chapters 7 and 8. The first component is the care theory.

## *Care Theory: The Power of a Caring-Centered Teacher*

Caring in this framework is not “touchy feely stuff.” It doesn’t mean a teacher goes around hugging every child all the time. Noddings (2002a) tells her readers that care theory “is relation-centered rather than agent-centered, and it is more concerned with caring relation than with caring as a virtue” (Noddings 2002a, 2). Care theory is one of the cornerstones of the Caring-Centered Multicultural Education framework. It directs teachers to understand that relationships are at the heart of teaching. The theory also considers ethical principles as the foundation for education (Noddings 2002a). It is important to note that Noddings (2002a) has indicated that the ethic of care can be seen like the “ethics of duty and right” and therefore implies an obligation. However, in contrast, Noddings views care theory not as a duty, but as relationship-centered in which one is moved to care for others arising out of one’s felt connections with others. Noddings wrote,

Because we (lucky ones) have been immersed in relations of care since birth, we often naturally respond as carers to others. When we need to draw on ethical caring, we turn to an ethical ideal constituted from memories of caring and being cared for. Thus the ethic of care may be regarded as a form of pragmatic naturalism. It does not posit a source of moral life beyond actual human interaction. It does not depend on gods, or eternal verities, or on essential human nature, or postulated underlying structures of human consciousness (2002a, 15).

Research has also shown that teachers who study aspects of the care theory have more positive interactions with their students because teachers move toward a more student-centered pedagogy (McAllister and Irvine 2002).

One caution that has been raised about care theory is that women have generally been seen as nurturers in society. It is important for individuals to understand it is not an oppressive belief system in which the carer gives her or his all to the cared for. Caring does not refer to a domination of another’s needs over the carer. Care theory as defined by Noddings is clearly reciprocal. The cared for responds to the carer and in this way the carer is able to evaluate her or his effectiveness (Noddings 2002b). Caring can come from women and men. A moral, caring teacher brings trust, respect, and compassion into the classroom. Her or his moral commitment to teach arises out of her or his commitment to the community. The teacher is dedicated to contributing to the betterment of the community by guiding each student

toward excellence. This teacher listens and talks with and not to her or his students. The teacher does not model a monologue orientation; rather, he or she encourages dialogue.

Another caution given by Thompson (1998) is that the care theory as described by Noddings was created within the context of a mainstream, patriarchal orientation. Although care theorists like Noddings have referred to natural caring, this has not always been historically seen. The treatment of many people from communities of color throughout U.S. history has demonstrated that caring for others who are seen as different is not automatic or natural. Therefore, it is important to reflect upon care theory along with issues of culture and oppression such as racism. Ladson-Billings (1994), Walker (1996), and Irvine (2002) broadened the discussion of the theory through their research with African American teachers. A caring teacher models the building of **kinship** and community by encouraging her or his students to work with each other through genuine listening, support, and collaboration (Walker 1996). These researchers consistently found successful African American teachers whose belief in the power of caring extended beyond the classroom and were partially defined within the context of the community. The teachers studied viewed caring as arising from the African American community notion of *helping*: The teachers were ethically committed to and believed in each student (Walker 1996). Caring for their students, in part, was an act of liberation. In addition, African American parents trusted African American teachers to care for their children. African Americans who believe that they have been called to teach have a sense of wholeness or being about teaching as a profession; they have a spiritual purpose (Irvine 2002). Therefore, a caring teacher makes an ethical commitment to reach his or her students. Within this context, a caring school is made up of students, parents, teachers, and community people who share the goal of developing ethical and self-fulfilled citizens who contribute to a just and compassionate community.

In a caring school, issues of bias must be examined and addressed. For example, teachers and their students tackle racism, ethnocentrism, gender bias, and homophobia because they understand how these biases serve to undermine integrity and respect in the school (Irvine 2002; Starratt 1994). As Starratt reminds us, “When these underside issues dominate an exchange, they block any possibility of open and trusting communication. Mistrust, manipulation, aggressive and controlling actions or language on the part of an administrator, teacher or student can lead to relationships that are hypocritical, dishonest, disloyal and dehumanizing” (1994, 83). Starratt poses that an ethical school builds more than “contractual” associations between teachers and students. In an ethical and caring school, faculty see students as unique and valued individuals who are part of a community where more than academic content is stressed (Walker 1996).

“Teaching is caring . . . Students said teachers cared when they laughed with them, trusted and respected them . . . Students defined caring teachers as those who set limits, provided structure, had high expectations, and pushed them to achieve.”  
—JACQUELINE JORDAN IRVINE 2002, 141

Like Starratt, Noddings (2002a, 2002b) believes we, as teachers, must be ethical in our behavior in schools and must teach children how to make prudent judgments. Her work is greatly influenced by the teachings of the educational philosopher, John Dewey. Noddings writes:

Dewey encourages educators to provide a social environment in which it is possible for children to be good and in which they will learn to exercise sound judgment so that the larger society to which they belong will become better through their wise participation (Noddings 2002a, 80).

Since our traditional public school curriculum is oriented towards disseminating more and more knowledge and not always expanding our students' critical thinking skills, there are disciplines in schools in which a teacher might wonder how discussions of moral ideas have a place. For example, a teacher might ask, "What can we teach in mathematics about moral issues? That is not our area." Noddings (2002a) responds with the following:

In mathematics classes, teachers can share with students the great interest of many mathematicians in theological questions: Descartes's attempt to prove God's existence, Pascal's famous wager, Newton's expressed feeling that theology is more important than mathematics, . . . the contemporary fascination of mathematicians with the infinite, mathematical arguments for a pluralistic society and possible forms of polytheism, the Platonic positioning of mathematical forms just beneath the supreme good. Beyond all this, mathematics teachers should share relevant literature (including science fiction), poetry, games, history, and biography (125).

As Noddings has shown, even mathematicians deal with issues of ethics and beliefs about life and the importance of an educator with a strong sense of integrity.



### Connection

If you are interested in reading several pieces by Nel Nodding, go to [http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/lawhead/chapter5/nel\\_noddings.htm](http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/lawhead/chapter5/nel_noddings.htm)

### Care Theory: Integration of Integrity and Identity

Competent teachers whose lives arise from care theory know who they are and how culture and ethnicity shape their beliefs (Irvine 2002). For educators to be effective, teachers must have deep personal integrity to connect with students in genuine and sincere ways (Palmer 1998). Palmer wrote, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (1996, 10). This can be challenging because, as Palmer explained, this includes the ability of educators to identify the discrepancies between their beliefs about heart-felt and connected teaching with their actual actions. They do not want to be members of schools that do nothing but blame schools as organizations. They understand



their own responsibilities to act to change schools for the better. Care theory is built upon that sense of personal integrity. Although people have the capacity to care for others, this capacity must be developed and cultivated. These teachers also know that caring for the whole child involves a clear understanding of culture. The next section is a case that describes a school where caring was at its heart.

“[G]ood teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

—PALMER 1996, 10



## Case Study

### CASWELL COUNTY TRAINING SCHOOL, A SEGREGATED BLACK SCHOOL: AN EXAMPLE OF THE CARE THEORY

What do caring schools look like? What kind of education do you think a Black segregated school in the South provided? Vanessa Siddle Walker (1996) studied a segregated Black school that exemplified principles of the care theory. The school provided excellent education within a strong community partnership. This school in North Carolina, called the Caswell County Training School, was segregated from 1934 until 1969. Legalized segregation was the norm and demonstrated deep social inequities in the United States. Segregated practices were built on socially accepted beliefs about the inherent inferiority of Black students. These schools were part of a legalized system of inequalities and oppression. Segregated schools were not dismantled until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Walker 1996). In fact school segregation in the town where the Caswell County Training School existed did not end until 1970.

The funding for Caswell County Training School was not at the same level of funding as schools for White students. However, this school provided excellent education because of the dedication of parents, faculty, and administrators who worked collaboratively as a community to provide their children with the best-quality education. The parents understood racism and resulting inequalities for their community. However, this did not limit their efforts to advocate and build strong segregated Black schools (Walker 1996). The school served as the center for the community where parents got together for both social and business affairs. The PTA sponsored many programs where children could show their talents. Principal Dillard also participated in many school programs, telling stories and jokes “reminiscent of the Brer Rabbit tales traditionally valued in the African American community” (Walker 1996, 67). The rabbit was able to triumph over more powerful enemies using his creativity and his wit. These stories were often used to teach the importance of challenging inequalities. Jokes were part of a common cultural preaching style found in many Black churches and was a way of linking the school to community norms (Walker 1996). Cultural elements were naturally integrated into all aspects of schooling. At other times, the PTA held business meetings that

focused on supplying needs of students. For example, parents were asked to raise money for a bus that could take students to sporting and music events in other local schools.

Walker found through her many data sources of interviews, PTA documents, and historical records that what stood out was that teaching was seen as much more than imparting information. Teaching was about caring for the whole child and “giving personally of oneself” (Walker 1996, 201). This included not only teaching so that each child lived up to his or her “highest potential,” but also “preparing their children to deal successfully in the ‘white man’s world’ ” and with the racism that the teachers knew existed. A former student of the school remembered that Principal Dillard told her, “The best equipment may be across the way [at the White high school], but the best minds are here in this school.”

Caring was an integral part of the school climate and philosophy; it was a way of being and permeated all aspects of school (Irvine 2002). The school arose out of a sense of community and their mission to provide equitable education to students. Caring for students was a foundational value:

*More than any particular pedagogical style or curricular content, this sense that they [students] were cared about is the component of school relationships most explicitly linked to their motivation to excel. They [students] did not want to let the teachers and principal down (Walker 1996, 202).*

Students appreciated the work of their parents and teachers. They knew Principal Dillard and his faculty believed in them and expected many to attend college. What were the characteristics of this caring school? Walker presented the following attributes:

1. Faculty worked collaboratively with parents. Teachers were encouraged to attend church functions and to seek out parents through home visits.
2. Parents were advocates for their children and raised money for their school buildings and resources. They also made numerous requests to the White school board and state representatives on behalf of the school. These were self-empowered parents.
3. Teachers and principal held the highest expectations for all students. They also cared about young people and worked with them outside the classroom.
4. Teachers and principal took time to talk with students individually and in small groups. In this way they got to know the social, academic, and personal needs of each young person.
5. The overarching school message was that all students could be what they dreamed of if they worked at it.
6. Teachers and principal were concerned with development of the whole student.

Teachers and principal in this school saw themselves as professionals who were part of a larger community dedicated to the education of young people. The educators made a moral commitment to do all they could to ensure that



each student was successful. These educators understood their critical role in supporting and building a strong community. Schooling was integrally tied to the culture of the students and their community. The next section describes the second theory of Caring-Centered Multicultural Education, the sociocultural theory of learning. ❀

## *The Sociocultural Theory of Learning: What's Culture Got to Do with Schooling?*

Culture is one of the most important components of who we are, how we define ourselves, and how we see the world. We are socialized into a group of people, usually our nuclear and/or extended families. Our cultural background arises from what the people who are close to us teach through the use of language and nonverbal communications. New ideas are interpreted in relationship to prior knowledge, how we identify ourselves, and our perspectives. The sociocultural theory of learning was developed by Vygotsky to explain how learning is socially mediated. He believed that people learn through social interactions and these interactions occur within multiple cultural contexts.

Scholars like Vygotsky believe language and social interactions are major cultural tools needed to develop brainpower, our cognition. Nussbaum, a humanist, writes: “We each have a language (in some cases more than one) in which we are at home, which we have usually known from infancy. We naturally feel a special affection for this language. It defines our possibilities of communication and expression. The works of literature that move us most deeply are those that exploit well the resources of that language” (1997, 61–62). Language is used to communicate important aspects of a culture such as values, beliefs, thoughts, norms, so it is a cultural tool. Thoughts and language are both needed in developing intelligence; they are reciprocal (Wink and Putney 2002). Research has indicated that there are cultural differences in the way people think. For example Nisbett (2003) found that Westerners have been trained to use categorization in their thinking processes “which helps them to know what rules to apply to the objects in question, and formal logic plays a role in problem solving” (xvi). In contrast, Asians view problems in a broad context, knowing that the situation is often complex, needing the consideration of a range of elements. “Formal logic plays little role in problem solving [for Asians]” and “the person who is too concerned with logic may be considered immature” (Nisbett 2003, xvi). In other words people around the world do not think in the same ways. Cultural belief systems differ because the way people understand the world and interpret what they see can be different.

How do language and social interactions shape what you think? As children we learned about what was acceptable and valued in our culture from members of our family. If your parents read to you every night before bedtime, their behavior showed you that they thought reading was important. Maybe your grandmother also told others, “She’s always got her nose in a book.” These behaviors reinforced the importance of reading. In addition, if the books your parents read held messages about the importance of family, working together, and fighting for social justice, your parents

taught you to value helping others and being fair. Another excellent example comes from a study of a Mexican American elementary-grade teacher as she taught mathematics (Gutstein, Lipman, Hernandez, and de los Reyes 1997). Although the researchers found few references to Mexican history, Mexican cultural artifacts, and other aspects of Mexican culture, they found that the teacher saw her classroom relationships as extending a sense of family. In other words, the teacher saw culture in a holistic way and to her learning in schools was an extension of learning in a family atmosphere at school. Here is what the teacher, Ms. Herrera, said about teaching in a bilingual-Spanish classroom:

I try a whole lot to connect to them, to try to understand . . . I come in here thinking from the first day, they are already a part of me, already a part of my family. That makes me want so hard to help all of them. They're part of me, my family, my culture, little bits and pieces of me . . . I know they're going to go through the same things I went through, I want to see them go beyond what's expected of them . . . it's so hard to see how a lot of Hispanics are being treated . . . I want them to stand out, be special in their own way . . . (Gutstein, Lipman, Hernandez, and de los Reyes 1997, 729).

This is another good example of how caring and culture can be intimately connected depending on the teacher's belief system.

Let's take an example from another family. What if values weren't taught by reading books, but through the oral tradition. What values might you have learned through this process? First, you might have been indirectly taught to respect and honor older members of the community. Second, you would have been taught how to listen and remember. In addition, the content of your grandparents' stories would also have taught you specific family and cultural values. Interactions in this family taught that the valuable members of the community were elders and that it was extremely important to know how to listen.



### Case Study

#### A STORY TO LIVE BY: TEACHING THROUGH ORAL TRADITION

One of the teachers in my class, Pia Parrish, a member of the Blackfoot community, shared how important the stories of her grandparents and other elders in the community were to her. As a child, she would sit and listen to stories from the elders in the evenings. This was their way of sharing cultural values. She learned as a little tyke that their stories were the foundation for her life. These stories help to guide her beliefs today. Stories are important to many Native peoples. Since many cultural traditions developed without written languages, stories are an integral way of communicating cultural values. These social interactional patterns often differed from Pia's school culture.

Here is a short sample of one of the stories she heard about change and how two people who love you may not always get along. The story may be about divorce, siblings, and/or community relationships. The story emphasizes

the importance of mutual respect. Through the social interactions Pia had with her grandparents and the carefully chosen words they used, Pia understood the lessons they were teaching.

#### The Moon and the Sun

*Long ago, the Moon and the Sun lived in a small house. They had a little girl named Earth. They were happy. But then they started to fight.*

The Moon said, “You are too hot!”

The Sun said, “You are too cold!”

“Okay,” said the Moon, “Let’s live apart. But the Earth will live with me.”

“No, she will get too cold without me,” said the Sun.

*They went to wise old Thunder. Thunder listened to the fight. Then he said, “Let the sun watch the Earth in the day. Let the Moon watch the Earth in the night.”*

*That is why the sun shines in the day, and the moon shines at night. When the Moon is busy, the stars shine on the Earth.*

Using the oral tradition of the Blackfoot culture, Pia’s elders taught her ways to look at conflicts in relationships. The story can be used to explain how children in a divorced family need both their parents to take care of them, even though they may not live in the same house. There is much symbolism in the story. The segment of the story that says “When the Moon is busy, the stars shine on the Earth” is interpreted by some Native people to symbolize the roles of aunts and uncles. Aunts and uncles can also play important roles in child-rearing. As an adult, Pia reflects back to the cultural values she was given as a child. These stories guide her life today. ❀

Like all of us, Pia learned about life within cultural contexts. The socialcultural setting of sitting in the evening and listening to her elders and the use of the oral tradition taught her much about what her family values in life. This was a familiar cultural practice. Her grandfather and other elders used language and social interaction practices as means of communicating ideas with Pia. Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, believed that language stimulates thought and is a tool for learning (Wink and Putney 2002). His work led to the development of the sociocultural theory of learning. This theory emphasizes the importance of language and social interactions. Let’s take Pia’s experiences. She learned specific cultural practices, and language was the tool that stimulated and conveyed her grandfather’s ideas and beliefs. The social situation was meaningful and relevant to Pia because her grandfather was a valued person in her family and she had been taught by her parents and culture that he had important lessons to teach. Her grandfather became a facilitator or teacher in her learning. Pia’s grandfather did not explicitly say, “This story is about divorce”; rather, he allowed her to become active in the learning process and she made sense of his stories. In this way her grandfather stimulated her thoughts by teaching her how to interpret the many stories she heard from him and other members of the Blackfoot community.

In a sociocultural orientation, the teacher takes on a role similar to Pia's grandfather's role as storyteller; the teacher is a mentor and facilitator who guides students. The teacher is sensitive to her students' cultural backgrounds, knowing what her children value and always looking for ways to connect to what her students already know. To do this, the teacher needs to have a comprehensive understanding of the cultural backgrounds of her students. The teacher sees the wholeness of culture, knowing that culture is not only composed of separate elements like food, dress, and customs, but also there are connections between the elements. Pia learned how to approach life; she also learned what to do around others, what to say, and how to respond. Culture, which is a whole system of thinking, believing, and acting, is another important component of the sociocultural theory of learning. This teacher knows that there are many cultural orientations and that these orientations differ due to aspects of society like social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity. She has seen in her classroom how different students bring different perspectives to class about many issues they discuss, from students' favorite foods to our nation's immigration policy. She knows that these perspectives have arisen from the diversity in factors like family histories, immigration experiences, weekend activities, religious beliefs, languages, careers, labor history, and childrearing practices, just to name a few (Villegas and Lucas 2002). She also understands that since language is a vehicle for culture, a person's identity is highly tied to her or his language. Therefore, the teacher builds on her students' different languages. She affirms all the languages students bring to school by encouraging them to continue to develop their home- and second-language skills (Villegas and Lucas 2002). One way to accomplish this is by providing students with an environment where they can complete assignments in both languages. For example, a child may be planning and designing a science project that includes a poster board. The board could include definitions of terms in both English and Spanish. The student could use science resource books and dictionaries written in both Spanish and English.

As Pia's experiences have shown, the creation of a strong, collaborative, and trusting community can form the foundation for lifelong learning. The next section discusses why Dewey's education for democracy and the creation of a democratic community are critical components in schools.



### *Connection*

To read more about Vygotsky, the Russian psychologist, his work, and his impact on education go to <http://www.psy.pdx.edu/PsiCafe/KeyTheorists/Vygotsky.htm>

## *Education for Democracy: Schools as Laboratories of Democracy and Community*

The third component of Caring-Centered Multicultural Education is education for democracy. John Dewey, an educational philosopher of the 20th century, was one of

the most influential scholars who saw schools as laboratories of democracy and community building. Many practices that you may take for granted in schools came from Dewey's work. For example, Dewey believed in aspects of schools such as service learning, individualized instruction, and project-based activities that are used today (Tanner 1997). These approaches are founded upon inquiry education. Inquiry learning is often difficult to include in one's curriculum today when standardized testing seems to be at the center of public schooling. Dewey did not believe in testing that emphasized rote memory of isolated and fragmented information or testing outside of a relevant context. Dewey's philosophy centered around the creation of an educated democratic citizenry.

As a firm advocate of democracy, Dewey believed that schools should be major institutions to mentor children to become active citizens who make just decisions based on the common good. Dewey proposed that schools should be laboratories of democracy where students developed communication and collaboration skills that enabled them to work with others as responsible citizens (Cremin 1988). Dewey saw democracy as a way of life and not only a form of government (Dewey 1916). In addition, he also thought that through collaborative living, racial and class bias could be broken down. Since students would be in classrooms with students of many different cultural backgrounds, they would be enriched by the many viewpoints and belief systems that they shared with each other. Dewey viewed schools not only as places where children could develop their minds and their abilities to read, write, and do mathematics, but also as places where students could learn about society and different ways of looking at the world through discussions and subject areas related to the arts, nature, and ethics (Cremin 1988).



### Connection

The John Dewey Society is an organization dedicated to expanding the ideas of liberal education.

The following is a statement from their website at <http://cuip.uchicago.edu/jds/> explaining the goal of the institution.

In the February 1936 issue of *The Social Frontier*, the name choice was explained: The new society was named for John Dewey, not because the founders wished to devote themselves to an exposition of the teachings of America's greatest educator and thinker, but rather because they felt that in his life and work he represents the soundest and most hopeful approach to the study of the problems of education. For more than a generation he has proclaimed the social nature of the educative process and emphasized the close interdependence of school and society. Presumably, without being bound by his philosophy, the John Dewey Society will work out of the tradition which John Dewey has done more than any other person to create. Such an organization is badly needed in America today.

### Citizens of a Global Society


Extending Dewey's work, Nussbaum (1997) and Merryfield (2001) believed that it is important for all of us to think and act beyond national or ethnic boundaries. They

considered it crucial for all citizens to make ethical decisions based on understanding the perspectives of people from other countries, ethnic communities, and organizations. How easy will considering multiple perspectives be? Merryfield (2001) recommended that we move away from the basic assumptions of some traditional global education programs whose aim is to educate students to continue to exert the cultural ways and political role of the United States in the world. Globalization does not mean Westernization. For example, teachers should not teach the attitude that *our* way is the best or the only way to address global problems. An important challenge for our students and ourselves is to reconsider U.S. imperialism and global control in the marketplace and on political issues. Questions that we, as educators, can ask ourselves are as follows: Will our students be able to understand the perspectives of people from Third World countries who may have different values than those found in the United States? Will students be able to work within cross-cultural situations in other countries?

In addition, as Nussbaum has argued, we should see ourselves as citizens of humanity, instead of considering only the views of a local group like an ethnic community or only our country's needs. How easy is it to really understand another's view, especially if it conflicts with our own? It can be extremely difficult to do so because placing oneself in someone else's shoes may mean giving up for a moment one's own beliefs. In addition, we may also have difficulty understanding other people's perspectives because of lack of knowledge of another group who we see as different and/or because of unconscious prejudices. However, as Socrates explained, education must be cross-cultural; we learn from others and our understanding of the world and of ourselves can be greatly expanded through exposure to diverse people, cultures, and ideas (Nussbaum 1997). This is even more important today, given our close relationships to other countries in the area of economics, politics, education, and environment. Estela Matriano, an international

education specialist, also encourages educators to create a culture of peace that is more than the lack of war. Matriano wrote, "It is positive peace rooted in mutual understanding, tolerance, economic and social develop-

ment, democracy and freedom. It should be a responsibility that each of us has towards our fellow human beings" (2000, 92).

 Globalization does not mean Westernization.

### **Building a Trusting Community in the Classroom**

Dewey believed in the importance of building a strong community by teaching students roles and responsibilities within a democratic classroom (Tanner 1997). Each child must share in the power of directing the classroom and/or school. We see teachers who foster democratic education through the use of classroom meetings in which students develop common goals and then take on various roles to address community goals (Nussbaum 1997). In these schools students are encouraged to face difficult issues. For instance, many young people face homophobia and harassment based in social class. Teachers can guide students to address prejudice. In a caring, democratic community, every person has the responsibility to treat others with

respect and to act justly. For example, in many schools across the nation, high school students say, “Our homework is gay.” These students mean that they consider the homework to be “bad” or not desirable, and they don’t want to do it. Similarly, grade school students can often be heard taunting another child who is usually male with a label like, “John is gay; John is gay.” Another common example is one child calling another child “retard” to hurt him. In caring-centered schools, teachers and students discuss the issue together and adopt strategies to eliminate prejudice and name-calling. Students, teachers, and parents know that because prejudice and harassment act as barriers to learning and to building a trusting community, issues like homophobia must be addressed and not ignored or shoved under the rug. Students may create posters that are a take-off on announcements created by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith. Their posters say, “If you really believe in America, prejudice is foul play.” Students may create new posters with pictures of students in solidarity at the school with a phrase such as “If you really believe in our country, name-calling is foul play” to convey the message to students in the entire school. In addition, teachers should periodically remind students about how hurtful name-calling is to others. In high school, students might decide to say to those who use inappropriate labels, “That’s not cool. We don’t talk that way to each other.” These are strategies students and teachers can build together.

### **The Ethic of Critique**

Many educators like Dewey, Nussbaum, and Merryfield believe schools should teach children critical thinking skills. Nussbaum (1997) wrote about the importance of students questioning authority in the tradition of Socrates. This Greek philosopher also believed that a strong democracy is one in which the common good is a foundational aspect of society. In order to develop a sense of the common good, we must develop citizens who examine their beliefs and question their actions in light of the needs of the community as a whole. This takes priority over individual needs. Since it is also important for teachers to examine the status quo and power relationships in society and schools, I think the ethic of critique (Starratt 1994) should be an essential component of schooling. One of its major goals is to develop students’ critical thinking skills so that students become ethical individuals and active participants in our democracy. Starratt has drawn the ethic of critique from the work of neo-Marxists who developed what is known as critical theory or critical pedagogy. Students will need to make difficult choices in life. Their education should prepare them by encouraging them to wrestle with questions like:

Who decides what is most important to teach?

Who makes the choices in our school?

Why are those choices made?

Who benefits from those choices?

How is the status quo reinforced?

Who will lose if changes in schools are made?





## Take a Stand

### SUBJECT AREA CONTENT: WHO DECIDES? WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT?

In this chapter, education for democracy as developed by the educational philosopher, John Dewey, strongly advocates teaching students higher-order thinking skills. A key issue that high school students and teachers should consider is who chooses what is taught in schools. Standards and testing are powerful forces in education today; however, people often do not have the opportunity to consider who chooses the content taught in schools. The following are several questions that can be used as the starting point in the development of an issues-centered unit on the content of school curriculum:

Who decides on what is taught in the public schools?

Who should decide?

What criteria should be used to decide on what is taught in schools?

Many of these questions reflect a **critical theory** orientation (Starratt 1994). Critical theory directs scholars to look at the structure of schools and/or other social institutions to see who benefits from its organization and policies. This perspective is aimed at getting individuals and groups of people to examine organizations for inequalities due to categories of class, race, language, disabilities, sexual orientation, and gender. Schools have something called the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is the implicit set of values that exists but may be found mostly by looking at behaviors and unstated practices and content. They are hidden and informal policies, but still powerful forces that reinforce what knowledge and values are taught. For example, values about a group can be taught by not teaching about them. This is often the case with Asian Americans in schools. How many heroes from the Asian American community can you identify? I don't think a teacher has said that Asian Americans are not important; however, students may interpret the lack of information about Asian American leaders in textbooks to mean that their community is not significant or they haven't made many contributions to our country. These are examples of implicit or hidden messages that can be conveyed to students.

Organizational change is more likely when groups of people work collaboratively to examine the hidden curriculum. Teachers, along with their students, can address the hidden curriculum they have been exposed to by analyzing the validity of knowledge they have been taught about various groups of people. Students need critical thinking skills in order for them to examine, to think rationally, and to question the status quo and what they have been taught. There was a comic in the newspaper that showed a young girl named April, who had heard the presentation of a Native elder, Mr. Crow. April made personal connections with the values Mr. Crow talked about such as family, respect for the earth, and respect for each other. When she went home, she asked her grandfather why folks called Natives "savages." April did not believe the stereotypes she had seen in society. Students can learn a great deal from their social interactions with others.



Education for democracy is built on the belief in our mutual humanity and the worth of each individual. A democracy becomes stronger when mutual respect forms the basis for society. Starratt has warned that a socially just society cannot be built primarily on laws. Laws do not create true equality. He placed emphasis on building trusting relationships and the use of an ethical foundation. As Nussbaum (1997, 64) explained, if you are truly living an examined life as envisioned by Socrates, you will love others “from the heart” and you will feel joy when you work for the good of the community and not because of a sense of duty. An examined life is one that is purposeful, connected to others, and one in which a rational person chooses beliefs and values that guide her or his existence (Nussbaum 1997). Oftentimes trusting relationships must be built outside of mainstream organizations when ethnic groups have been excluded. The next case presents members of ethnic collaboratives as good examples of democratic and compassionate communities who fought oppression by pooling their social and financial resources.



## Case Study

### ETHNIC COLLABORATIVES FIGHTING OPPRESSION

Members of ethnic communities have for hundreds of years, in what is now known as the United States, created strong communities in which financial, artistic, cultural, and social resources were shared and preserved. As Pia revealed about her family and members of the Blackfoot community, people worked together in order to survive, especially within a larger society that tried in many ways to destroy Native ways of living.

John Blassingame (1979) researched the life of African American enslaved people and found that a strong camaraderie and community arose from the oppression people encountered. The people from Africa brought their own cultures to the plantations and from diverse countries developed their own unique culture as a collaborative community. When the practice of slavery began in the South, most Africans retained their languages and did not learn English because their contact with Whites was minimal. In addition, for many enslaved Africans, not learning English was a way to resist the oppression they were forced to endure. The use of folk tales was a cultural element that Africans retained. African tales often were about animals like lions, elephants, and monkeys and later they were transferred into tales about rabbits. As the number of enslaved Blacks grew, Black culture in the South evolved to include folktales that showed how weaker animals could outwit larger ones, spirituals of hope and freedom, and a strong religious faith; the slave community fought their oppression through uniting. In fact, though Southern plantation owners tried to assimilate enslaved Blacks, Southerners adopted words such as Mandingo, Hausa, and Ibo from African languages. The following vocabulary

words now used in English originated in African languages: “cooter (turtle), cola, okra, goober and pinder (peanut), yam, gumbo, mumbo-jumbo, juju [a magic charm], buckra (White man), banjo, bamboula, hoodoo [voodoo], okay, and tote” (Blassingame 1979, 99). The life of Blacks in the South during enslaved times demonstrated the courage and ability of Africans to fight against oppression and build their worldview. Blassingame wrote, “The socialization process, shared expectations, ideals, and enclosed status system of the slave’s culture promoted group identification and a positive self-concept . . . Recreational activities led to cooperation, social cohesion, tighter communal bonds, and brought all classes of slaves together in common pursuits” (1979, 106).

Oppression toward African Americans was legalized and socially structured for decades. Although Asian immigrants were not enslaved, they found themselves in a hostile society often taxed because of their Asian ancestry or excluded from participating fully in society. One difficulty that Asians had was borrowing money to build businesses or purchase land. In order to support each other, Korean Americans developed a *kae*, which was a rotating-credit system in which an individual could borrow from a Korean collaborative fund (Takaki 1989, 275). Individuals paid into the fund and then took turns borrowing the resources. The borrower repaid the loan with interest. This system was also a common practice in Chinese American and Japanese American communities. For example, members of a Chinese family formed a *woi*, a resource cooperative that was like a “loan-of-the month club” (Takaki 1989, 241). Members placed a small amount of money every month into the collective fund, and through this process many Chinese Americans were able to establish businesses.

The history of many ethnic communities in the United States provides ample examples of how people worked collaboratively to support each other. Though members of many ethnic communities were often excluded from participating in mainstream society, through their persistence and strong identity as a community, they created successful ways to help each other, to establish themselves, and to fight social and cultural oppression. These communities are important role models of community and democracy. ❀

🌀 Successful ethnic communities are important examples of caring cooperatives that individuals created to support each other within an oppressive host society.

The next section takes the issue of standardized testing and examines it using the caring-centered framework. As Nussbaum carefully describes, social issues must be examined within the context of the common good and along with a commitment to cultivating humanity.

## Testing in a Caring, Socially Responsible School

How can Caring-Centered Multicultural Education assist a teacher in examining the standardized testing movement? Today, testing has become one of the most powerful forces in schools because individuals are calling for teacher accountability. However,



*A learning community of students and teachers*

various districts around the country are questioning the value of using standardized instruments such as the Stanford 9 Achievement Test, because many of their students are not Anglo or middle class. In 2002 school boards in Los Angeles and San Francisco school districts proposed looking for alternative testing measures. One reason was the diversity of student language proficiency. Many educators do not believe that a test given in English can provide the most accurate assessment of students who are learning English. In California more than 25 percent of the students arrive at school speaking a home language other than English. Although this doesn't necessarily mean that children do not have excellent English skills, many of them are English language learners. Darder (1991) pointed out that standardized testing has been a tool often used to reinforce a social hierarchy in which students of color find themselves labeled as underachievers. She has documented that these instruments have been used to legitimize the placement of underrepresented students in lower-level classes—an educational caste system.

In addition, some parents and educators argue that the goal of testing is to assist students to learn more effectively, rather than to use one score as a measure of student knowledge. Standardized testing today often implies that the tests are permanent and all-knowing evaluation measures of student abilities; however, many educators and parents know that tests are feeble attempts to measure student knowledge. These tests can often become tools of oppression and methods of power

and control of what is taught, rather than constructive methods for educators to use in teaching (Mathison 1997).

Schools receiving federal funding for “disadvantaged” students are required to test their students yearly as mandated by the No Child Left Behind legislation (Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) that was signed in January 2002. The rationale behind this requirement is to assess the effectiveness of school programs that are directed towards immigrant and low-income students. The tests are thought to measure areas needing attention by first providing a baseline level of student performance. Later, districts administer post-tests to see if students have improved after being in federally funded programs for the school year.

Some educators have argued that it is not fair to use these standardized measures with students who do not have comprehensive English skills. However, others argue that not using standardized tests would suggest that teachers have lower expectations for low-income students. Some educators point to inner-city schools, whose populations are primarily ethnically diverse students from lower-income families, where youngsters perform well on standardized instruments (*Los Angeles Times*, 2002).

Educators who use the caring-centered framework believe it is important to continually measure the academic growth of their students because effective testing provides a way to help reach students. They also understand that the measures they use to monitor that growth must be accurate and appropriate for their students. In addition, educators understand that not all children wear size 5 shoes, so there is no single measure that is accurate for all students. Some teachers are concerned that there is little concern with other aspects of the development of their students. For example, they know these assessments cannot measure how collaborative, how compassionate, or how respectful students are and these are also important elements in a school and society whose purpose is to educate citizens for a diverse democracy.



## Case Study

### LAUREN FAILS HIGH-STAKES TESTS

One of the connecting themes in Caring-Centered Multicultural Education is focusing on the education of the whole child. Educators know that one test cannot measure the multitude of student abilities. A student is a complex whole. For example, Lauren, who speaks English, Spanish, and Russian, is able to solve a physics problem, can sew a seam on a sewing machine, changes the oil in her car, shoots a basketball from 10 feet away, is Jewish, edits the high school paper, and works at the local YMCA with middle-school students after school. From looking at a short description of Lauren and observing her in class, you can see that she is community oriented, motivated, creative, and hardworking. Can a standardized test measure these aspects of her abilities? Are these characteristics important?

When Lauren was in the third grade, she moved to the United States from Russia. Although she could understand only an elementary level of English,



she was a fluent Russian and Spanish speaker. Her parents spoke both languages. When Lauren first enrolled in the third grade, she was given many tests, and since she wasn't feeling confident, she did not do well. Not only was she scared of making conversational errors in English, but she was not comfortable in her new school. Lauren developed test anxiety, especially because many of the tests were timed. Even as a senior in high school, her hands became clammy when standardized tests were handed out. As she worked feverishly through the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), she was concerned that her test scores would be too low to earn her financial aid for college. This added to her anxiety. As immigrants, her parents had to start their careers over in the United States and therefore did not have much money to help her pay for college. She also wanted to earn her own scholarships, so that college would not be a financial burden to her family. The comic above shows Jeremy, a character in the comic, who also is concerned about his performance on the SAT.

Lauren's high school math teacher was Juan Hernandez. As a caring-centered multicultural educator, he continually assesses his students' level of knowledge, and he doesn't believe in **high-stakes testing** (isolated tests used to decide life-affecting decisions of student tracking, placement, admissions, etc.). Since he believes it is important to have curriculum guidelines for teachers, he does not object to his district holding him accountable for effective teaching. However, Mr. Hernandez believes that many standardized tests emphasize the importance of one correct answer and should not be used to assess the effectiveness of teachers. In his state, the use of tests is becoming extremely rigid and regulatory. He is more concerned with how Lauren thinks through a problem and chooses her answer than he is with which answer she selects (Kohn 1999). He also wants Lauren to become engaged with issues and topics in school that motivate her to discover ideas herself and to see relationships between concepts and thoughts. Mr. Hernandez sees that many questions on standardized tests are examples of unrelated facts and believes that the instrument often does not evaluate his students within a cohesive context like the contexts his students might face in life. However, since he understands it is unlikely that tests like the SAT will be eliminated, he makes sure that he teaches

test-taking skills so that Lauren and other students will know what to expect and know how to respond to the format.

Since he knows that Lauren suffers from test anxiety, he realizes that a measure primarily consisting of questions of isolated knowledge does not give Lauren the opportunity to demonstrate her ability to perform logical analysis in the way that a test with open-ended questions would. As a caring-centered teacher, Mr. Hernandez is an advocate for his students, so he invites teachers and parents from his school who are also concerned about the issue to a meeting.

The group creates an ad hoc committee and sets up several objectives:

1. Research various standardized tests.
2. Research student performance-based assessment measures.
3. Examine what other districts are doing to address accountability.
4. Research a broad range of authentic assessment measures.

In this process, teachers are less concerned with students' providing a right answer than on the thinking and analysis processes students use to formulate their answers (Mathison 1997). In authentic assessments, students would be involved in addressing a real issue in life (Mathison 1997). This type of assessment is more localized and could be action oriented. For example, if students are concerned with racism in the school, they could take an aspect of the racism they see in school, develop a plan, and implement it. After much discussion the entire group came together and decided on performance-based measures. Several parents and teachers testified at school board meetings and proposed that a two-year moratorium on the use of standardized tests be instituted so that the issue could be studied. However, the committee knew that the **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001** requires schools to show that students are making yearly progress in math and reading. Later, there will also be requirements for measuring student achievement in science. Measures used to determine the yearly progress of students are decided by each state.

Much discussion resulted from the proposal. Some parents were concerned that students were not learning and believed standardized tests were the most efficient form of assessment. Some students were upset because universities required SAT scores to qualify them to apply for admissions and financial aid. The superintendent worried that the federal government might stop sending funding to the district. This was a complex issue. The school board decided to work together with representatives from the high school to study the issue in depth for the year.

Mr. Hernandez exemplifies the components of a caring-centered teacher. He built trusting relationships with his students and saw the anxiety and self-destruction the tests caused them. In addition, he believed in continually monitoring his students' progress and he wanted to institute the most effective measures to do this. He knew that his students, like Lauren, were extremely knowledgeable, strong thinkers; they had displayed their abilities in his classroom as peer tutors and on individual projects. He also had read a piece written about the SATs that concerned him. The National Center for Fair and Open Testing found that in 2003 "boys now average 43 points higher than girls.



Whites outscore African Americans on average by 206 points . . . [and] [t]he White-Mexican American gap is 158 points on the SAT scale” (Shaeffer 2003). He realized the importance of more research on standardized testing.

Because Mr. Hernandez was committed to a collaborative community, he initiated several discussions with his students and together they instituted a portfolio assessment project. They developed a rubric of skills collaboratively to measure student progress. Each student kept a portfolio of her or his performance-based measures and examples of her or his work. The problem that Mr. Hernandez and Lauren faced was not an isolated issue, and Mr. Hernandez felt it best to organize a community of learners to address the problem. ❀

Assessment and accountability are important aspects of teaching. Going back to the questions posed by Starrat in his ethic of critique approach, consider the following:

Who decides that students should be given standardized tests every year?

Why was that decision made?

Do children do better when they are tested every year?

Who benefits from the testing?

What impact are these tests having on children? On teachers? On schools? On districts as a whole?

All of these questions and more need to be addressed. The standardized test issue is not a simple one, especially since the federal government mandated that schools receiving federal funds must test their students. Some educators contend that large testing corporations make a lot of money by supplying these tests. Is this true? One of my concerns is that teachers do not get the results of each student’s performance, so they can’t really make any adjustments in their teaching at the end of the year. Are the tests really used to make instruction more effective? A community that believes in democratic values and that is concerned about the lives of children will address these complex questions. Many teachers like Mr. Hernandez want to comply with federal regulations; however, they feel that the law does not provide teachers with viable options, and his school does not want to lose its federal funds. This is an ethical issue that each teacher must decide on his or her own.

## *The Power of One Caring Teacher: The Story of John Leguizamo*

Many of us teach because we believe in students and hope to be a part of their learning and growing. Just think: Maybe Oprah Winfrey’s sixth-grade teacher listened to her dreams and this helped her keep them alive. What if you had been Stephen Spielberg’s third-grade teacher? You might have encouraged him to write down his daydreams and stories. Maybe you were Cesar Chavez’s teacher and you supported his quiet but firm leadership.

Teachers, we can and do make differences in our students. In Marlo Thomas’s new book, *Right Words at the Right Time*, there is a chapter written by John Leguizamo,



## Connection

For more information about testing see the following websites:

- The National Center for Fair and Open Testing at [www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org)
- The PBS website where James Popham, a leader in educational testing, is interviewed and provides important background about how tests should be developed. [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/schools/interviews/popham.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/schools/interviews/popham.html).

If you are interested in finding out more about fair testing, go to the National Center for Fair and Open Testing at [www.FairTest.org](http://www.FairTest.org). This organization argues that standardized tests are imperfect and schools often place too much emphasis on one or few scores to identify student competence. On their website they report, “Students from low-income and minority-group backgrounds are more likely to be retained in grade, placed in lower track, or put in special or remedial education programs when it is not necessary. They are more likely to be given a watered-down or “dummied-down” curriculum, based heavily on rote drill and test practice. This only ensures that they will fall further and further behind their peers.” [www.fairtest.org/facts/howharm.htm](http://www.fairtest.org/facts/howharm.htm)

*☞ We are interdependent beings and caring for others forms the foundation for principles of social justice.*

an actor and comedian. You may have seen him in movies or on Broadway. He brings laughter and enjoyment to many people. However, in junior high he hung out with students who cut class and smoked marijuana. He was an angry kid who didn’t have much

money. It wasn’t as if he didn’t have skills. In fact, one day he organized a strike and many students walked out of school in the middle of the day. He was always cracking jokes in class and students and teachers would laugh out loud.

Not everyone thought Leguizamo was doing the right thing. He explained what happened:

Anyway, one day during my junior year, I was walking down the hallway, making jokes as usual, when Mr. Zufa, my math teacher, pulled me aside. I got collared by the teachers all the time, so I didn’t think much about it . . . “Listen,” he says, “instead of being so obnoxious all the time—instead of wasting all that energy in class—why don’t you rechannel your hostility and humor into something productive? Have you ever thought about being a comedian?” . . . The big change didn’t happen overnight. Eventually, I got into New York University, where I did student films. One of the movies won a Spielberg Focus Award . . . I’ve run into Mr. Zufa a bunch of times . . . and told him how his advice turned my life around. Here’s a guy who was able to look beneath all the stuff I pulled in class and find some kind of merit in it, something worth pursuing. How cool is that?” (Leguizamo 2002).

Leguizamo was fortunate that a teacher cared enough to tell him to do something with his talents. Caring teachers support their students and (gently and sometimes a little more forcefully) push them to see their own potential. Teaching may not be the easiest career in the world, but for many of us it is the most meaningful!



# Chapter Summary

## Working Hard May Not Be Working Smart: Using the Caring-Centered Framework

Why Multicultural Education? At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed how my lack of knowledge about my students motivated me to become a better teacher. It was difficult to teach children whose lives were quite different from mine. They all spoke Ebonics and I did not. They were from the school neighborhood and I was not. They knew Black culture and I had little knowledge of the behaviors and history of African Americans.

One of the students was Rosemary, a student whose background included multiple cultures. I think I could have been a much better teacher for Rosemary if I had known about her Black American neighborhood and Native American cultures. However, I hadn't even thought about it when I first arrived at the school. **Culture** was the farthest topic from my mind. I was so concerned about learning to teach the reading method that all the other teachers were using. Of course, reading pedagogy was important, but what I really lacked was knowledge of Rosemary, her life, her goals, her family, and cultures. I don't remember ever meeting or talking to Rosemary's mom or dad. I don't think anyone came to her parent-teacher conference.

I enjoyed Rosemary and made an ethical commitment to reach her as presented in the **care theory**. I worked hard, but working hard doesn't mean working smart. I didn't include aspects of her life and cultural background into the curriculum. I didn't use what she knew as a bridge in teaching her new concepts. I could have benefited from these principles if I had known about Vygotsky's **sociocultural theory of learning**. Rosemary did respond to me and we had positive interactions. However, I didn't develop a partnership with her parents or with other members of her family. I still remember skinny Rosemary hunched over her

desk trying to figure out why Sam had a pan and a fan. The story in her reader didn't make sense. It wasn't very meaningful but did present a word family (pan, fan, man, tan, ran). Yes, she knew the man in the story had a frying pan, but what was he doing with it? He just seemed to be waving it around like a fan. The story lacked cultural context and content and it never occurred to me that this would be an obstacle to Rosemary's learning to read.

I was able to create some sense of a learning community in the classroom. The students and I did talk to each other about personal responsibility, and I tried to be democratic; but for the most part I was probably more authoritarian than I should have been. **Education for democracy** wasn't really one of my goals then. I believed that I had to be the person in control, and unfortunately, I gave students few opportunities to develop self-discipline. I was so busy teaching the alphabet, word families, how to add, and how to print that I wasn't teaching the whole child or the skills the students would need. I did not realize that the children would soon leave me and part of my job was to prepare them to make sound and rational decisions in life and to work well with others after they left my classroom.

I don't think I was a bad teacher, but I know now I could have been a better one. The caring-centered framework would have helped to guide me. Carefully choose your theoretical framework because that will serve as your rudder on your journey with many wonderful and enriching students and parents. As Socrates has advised, an examined life is one in which we continually look at our personal values and actions in hopes of creating a better world for humanity.



## Chapter Review

Go to the Online Learning Center at [www.mhhe.com/pang2e](http://www.mhhe.com/pang2e) to review important content from the chapter, practice with key terms, take a chapter quiz, and find the Web links listed in this chapter.

## Key Terms

culturally responsive or relevant teacher, 9	critical theory, 24	care theory, 33
cultural mediators, 10	high-stakes testing, 29	sociocultural theory of learning, 33
framework, 11	No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 30	education for democracy, 33
kinship, 13	culture, 33	

## Reflection Activities

I suggest that you create or buy a journal to keep track of your responses to chapter questions and to provide a place for you to write other reflections about topics and issues raised in this text. The questions are designed to assist you in reflecting upon your own perspectives and to think about some of the issues presented in Chapter 1.

1. How do you care for your students now? If you are not a teacher in the classroom, what caring practices have you seen other teachers implement? How would you describe a caring teacher?
2. Observe several students and try to identify their cultural backgrounds. Can you provide characteristics of their family cultures, neighborhood cultures, or youth culture? How do these multiple cultures intersect within the student? In some students religion is easily seen. Maybe a young woman wears a veil because she is Muslim and this is a sign of modesty. How do other students respond to her cultural behaviors and values?
3. Developing students for a democracy is a critical goal. What are skills that students in the grade you are teaching or observing should have? What citizenship skills do the students think are the most important for them to develop? How are your ideas and theirs different? Why are they different? Have students prioritized their skills? Now develop a plan to teach them at least three skills that they practice throughout the year.
4. Skills may include the following: ability to identify the main issue or theme; ability to identify causes, limitations, economic, and social elements that have influenced the issue; ability to design a plan to collect data about an issue and analyze the information. Have students make a decision about what should be done and have them create a plan of action to solve the issue.
5. Begin thinking about choosing an educational framework. What goals do you have for yourself as a teacher? What goals do you hold for your students? What is your overarching philosophy about teaching? As you read through this book, you will get ideas. I encourage you to read the work of John Dewey, James Banks, Jackie Irvine, Martha Nussbaum, Merry Merryfield, Pat Larke, Pauline Lipman, Joyce King, Asa Hilliard, Geneva Gay, Nel Noddings, Jessica Gordon Nembhard, Luis Moll, Alan Singer, and many others. Their work will provide many more critical thoughts for you to consider. Have fun reading their works!

What do you know about Multicultural Education? List at least five components of the field. Have you learned anything new from the discussion in this chapter? If so, list new insights and why you think they are important. Do you have other ideas that were not included? You can also write about what you would add to your philosophy.