

# Comment And Opinion



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### The Changing Racial Dynamics of the War on Drugs

**Marc Mauer**

*Executive Director, The Sentencing Project*

For more than a quarter century the 'War on Drugs' has exerted a profound impact on the structure and scale of the criminal justice system. The inception of the 'war' in the 1980s has been a major contributing factor to the historic rise in the prison population during this period. From a figure of about 40,000 people incarcerated in prison or jail for a drug offence in 1980, there has since been an 1100% increase to a total of 500,000 today. To place some perspective on that change, the number of people incarcerated for a drug offence is now greater than the number incarcerated for all offences in 1980.

The increase in incarceration for drug offences has been fueled by sharply escalated law enforcement targeting of drug law violations, often accompanied by enhanced penalties for such offences. Many of the mandatory sentencing provisions adopted in both state and federal law have been focused on drug offences. At the federal level, the most notorious of these are the penalties for crack cocaine violations, whereby crack offences are punished far more severely than powder cocaine offences, even though the two substances are pharmacologically identical. Despite changes in federal sentencing guidelines, the mandatory provisions still in place require that anyone convicted of possessing as little as five grams of crack cocaine (the weight of two sugar packets) receive a five-year prison term for a first-time offence.

At the state level, the most longstanding of the current generation of harsh drug laws are New York's "Rockefeller" drug laws. Adopted in 1973, these laws call for a 15-year prison term for possession of four ounces of narcotics or sale of two ounces. After decades of advocacy the laws were scaled back substantially in 2009, to permit judges to sentence with enhanced discretion in many drug cases.

The dramatic escalation of incarceration for drug offences has been accompanied by profound racial/ethnic disparities. Overall, two-thirds of persons incarcerated for a drug offence in state prison are African American or Latino. These figures are far out of proportion to the degree that these groups use or sell drugs. A wealth of research demonstrates that much of this disparity is fueled by disparate law enforcement practices. In effect, police agencies have frequently targeted drug law violations in low-income communities of color for enforcement operations, while substance abuse in communities with substantial resources is more likely to be addressed as a family or public health problem.

In recent years, there is emerging evidence of potentially significant change in the approach and effects of national drug policy. First, there is increasing public and policymaker recognition of the value of drug treatment as a more appropriate response to substance abuse than incarceration in many instances. In this regard, we can trace the rapid expansion of drug courts. From the inception of the first treatment-oriented courts in 1989, these programs have now grown to more than 1,600 nationally. There is ongoing debate regarding the extent to which these approaches divert defendants from incarceration, but in any case they represent broad support for less punitive policies in regard to substance abuse.

Within the prison system we have seen the beginnings of change as well. In state prisons, from 1999-2005 (most recent data) there was virtually no change in the number of people incarcerated for a drug offence, rising less than 1% from 251,200 to 253,500 during this time. Without exaggerating

the impact of these figures – still record highs – there is nonetheless a stabilizing of these numbers in state prisons, a far different trend than was seen in the 1980s and early 1990s.

This stability in the number of drug offence incarcerations is intriguing, but hides an even more dramatic change – a significant shift in the racial composition of people incarcerated for a drug offence. Our analysis below documents these striking trends:

The number of African Americans in state prisons for a drug offence declined by 21.6% from 1999-2005, a reduction of more than 31,000 persons. The number of Whites incarcerated for a drug offence rose significantly during this period, an increase of 42.6%, representing an additional 21,000 persons in prison.

This report examines these shifting dynamics in the context of the criminal justice system to explore possible explanations for these changes. We then assess the implications of these changes for both substance abuse policy and considerations of racial justice.

**Changing Racial Dynamics of Incarceration for Drug Offences**

Since the inception of the war on drugs, African American communities have been subject to high levels of arrest and incarceration for drug offences. As of 2005, African Americans represented 12% of the total population of drug users, but 34% of those arrested for drug offences, and 45% of those in state prison for a drug offence. Many of these disparate rates of supervision in the criminal justice system still persist, but within state prisons there is clearly a change taking place in recent years. We can see this in Table 1 below, examining the number of persons incarcerated for a drug offence by race and ethnicity for 1999-2005.

**TABLE 1: DRUG OFFENDERS IN STATE PRISON BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 1999-2005**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change, 99-05
All Drug Offenders	251,200	251,100	246,100	265,000	250,900	249,400	253,300	0.8%
White #	50,700	58,200	57,300	64,500	64,800	65,900	72,300	42.6%
White %	20.2%	23.2%	23.3%	24.3%	25.9%	26.4%	28.5%	
Black #	144,700	145,300	139,700	126,000	133,100	112,500	113,500	-21.6%
Black %	57.6%	57.9%	56.8%	47.5%	53%	45.1%	44.8%	
Hispanic #	52,100	43,300	47,000	61,700	50,100	51,800	51,100	-1.9%
Hispanic %	20.7%	17.2%	19.1%	23.3%	20%	20.8%	20.2%	

Several trends are striking in this period:

- First, the number of people serving prison time for a drug offence is virtually unchanged, increasing by less than 1% over the six-year time frame. While this may not appear dramatic, it needs to be considered in the context of the 1200% growth in the state prison population for drug offences from 1980 to 1999.
- Second, while the overall number of persons serving time for a drug offence has not changed, the racial composition has shifted significantly. The number of African Americans declined by more than 31,000 during this period, a 21.6% drop. In 1999, African Americans had constituted 57.6% of

those serving time in prison for a drug offence; by 2005 this figure had declined to 44.8%.

- Conversely, the number of Whites serving time for a drug offence rose substantially during this period, a 42.6% increase from 50,700 in 1999 to 72,300 in 2005. As a result, the White share of drug offence incarceration rose from 20.2% to 28.5%. The Hispanic figures were virtually unchanged during this time, with a modest 1.9% drop overall. (Figures do not add to 100 percent due to other race categories.)

**Assessing the Decling Black Proportion of Drug Offences**

In looking at trends in state incarceration, clearly we are seeing the end result of 50 state law enforcement and sentencing systems that cumulatively produce these figures. Therefore, one needs to be cautious about interpreting trends. But in order to understand these dynamics we can look at a series of indicators to try to identify causal factors, both within and outside the criminal justice system.

**Tradeoff with Federal Prison Population**

We begin by looking at the composition of the federal prison population. A simple explanation for the declining Black population in state prisons might be that federal prosecutors had enhanced drug prosecutions disproportionately among African Americans, and therefore merely shifted the location of imprisonment. Table 2 below displays data on the racial/ethnic dynamics of incarceration in federal prisons for drug offences from 1999-2005.

**TABLE 2: DRUG OFFENDERS IN FEDERAL PRISON BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 1999-2005**

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Change, 99-05
All Drug Offenders	71,757	76,041	80,888	84,674	89,325	91,646	95,211	32.7%
White #	16,492	17,547	18,303	19,346	20,539	21,176	22,251	34.9%
White %	23%	23.1%	22.6%	22.9%	23%	23.1%	23.4%	
Black #	31,097	33,068	35,537	36,718	38,341	39,353	40,812	31.2%
Black %	43.3%	43.5%	43.9%	43.4%	42.9%	42.9%	42.9%	
Hispanic #	23,095	24,337	25,939	27,388	29,010	29,493	30,279	31.1%
Hispanic %	32.2%	32%	32.1%	32.4%	32.5%	32.2%	31.8%	

As we can see, there was a significant increase – just under 10,000 – in the number of African Americans incarcerated for drug offences during this time. But this 31.2% increase was virtually identical to the increase for Latinos and slightly less than that for Whites. This increase, therefore, represents an overall expansion of federal resources for drug prosecutions, but not one with enhanced differential effects on African Americans. The only change of significance was a modest rise in 2001 which included the absorption of incarcerated persons in the Washington, D.C. prison system, into the federal system, but the overall increased number of drug offenders of all races from Washington, D.C. was just an additional 455 persons that year. So, there is no obvious change in the relative proportion of state and federal incarcerations that would explain the decline in the number of African Americans in state prisons for a drug offence.

**Rates of Drug Use**

A second area of inquiry relates to drug use. If, for example, African American drug use declined

during this time period, then that might ultimately result in reduced incarceration for drug offences. But as seen below in Table 3, there is little change in this regard. Data on regular drug users, compiled in household surveys conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services, has consistently shown over many years that the number of drug users generally reflects the relative racial/ethnic proportion of the national population. That is, Whites, Blacks, and Latinos use drugs at relatively similar rates. African Americans constitute about 12% of the national population, and from 1999-2005 comprised between 11.5-14.0% of all regular drug users. Similar stability can be seen in the White and Hispanic proportions of drug users during this time. So in this case as well, there are no changes that are significant enough to explain the declining African American figures in state imprisonment.

TABLE 3: RACIAL/ETHNIC PROPORTION OF REGULAR DRUG USERS, 1999-2005

Year	White %	Black %	Hispanic %
1999	72.1	13.4	10.2
2000	74.8	11.5	9.1
2001	74.2	11.9	9.9
2002	71.8	13.3	10.7
2003	71.0	12.3	12.2
2004	70.7	12.7	11.7
2005	69.2	14.0	12.4

It is important to note, though, that data on drug use is limited for two key reasons. First, it is much more likely that drug sellers, rather than users, will receive prison sentences. But measuring drug selling is challenging, as there are no reliable surveys that provide data. Persons who use drugs, though, generally report that they purchased their drugs from someone of their own race. Therefore, if drug use is roughly proportional to the overall population, drug selling rates are likely to be in that range as well.

A second limitation of using data on drug use is that it has been widely documented that drug arrests are far from responsive to actual rates of drug use. As a result of a variety of law enforcement policies and practices, people of color are far more likely to be subject to drug arrests than are Whites who use or sell drugs. Nonetheless, the available data at least convey that there are no changes in rates of drug use overall that contribute to the prison data trends.

**Trends in Arrest Rates**

Following the trajectory of the criminal justice system, we can then examine trends in drug arrest rates that might offer an explanation for the change in Black incarceration. Overall, we see in Table 4 that in the 1999-2005 period, drug arrests continued to rise for all but one year, an overall increase of 19% during this time. This trend continues a pattern that has been virtually unabated since the mid 1980s.

In looking at the potential impact of drug arrests on incarceration, though, it is important to disaggregate the arrest totals. In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of arrests for marijuana offences, which now total more than 40% of all drug arrests. The vast majority of marijuana arrests, more than 80%, have been for possession offences. Since an arrest for marijuana possession rarely results in a prison term, it is more useful for these purposes to analyse arrest patterns without these offences, which lowers the arrest figures by nearly 40%.

TABLE 4: DRUG ARRESTS, 1999-2005

Year	Black %
1999	40.1
2000	39.3
2001	39.1
2002	35.8
2003	33.8
2004	33.1
2005	33.2

TABLE 5: BLACK PROPORTION OF DRUG ARRESTS, EXCLUDING MARIJUANA POSSESSION, 1999-2005

Year	Number of Drug Arrests
1999	1,557,100
2000	1,579,566
2001	1,586,902
2002	1,538,813
2003	1,678,192
2004	1,746,570
2005	1,846,351

If we then examine drug arrests by race, excluding those for marijuana possession, we see a significant shift. As seen in Table 5 the proportion of adult African Americans arrested for one of these drug offences declined from 40.1% in 1999 to 33.2% in 2005, for an overall decline of 17.2% during this period. (FBI arrest data provide breakdowns by race, but not ethnicity. Therefore there is no means of tracking changes for Latino arrestees, most of whom are incorporated in the White category.) The 17.2% decline in the Black proportion of arrests approaches the scale of the 21.6% decline in the number of African Americans in state prison for a drug offence during this period.

**Trends in Drug Offence Convictions**

Following the changes in patterns of drug arrests we then examine data on felony drug convictions by race. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics are analyzed every two years, as seen in Table 6. In this area, from 1998-2004 we can see a significant decline in the black proportion of drug convictions, 13% overall (from 53% to 46%) and 17% (from 57% to 47%) for drug trafficking offences, which are the drug charges most likely to result in a prison term. The decline in convictions for trafficking offences is almost identical to the proportional decline in drug arrests for African Americans. All other things being equal, a declining proportion of Black drug convictions should lead to similar reductions in Black incarceration for drug offences. The decline in the conviction rate is not quite as large as the overall drop in incarceration for African Americans, but clearly represents a substantial

portion of that change. (As with data on arrests, drug conviction data do not record ethnicity, so there is no means of tracking convictions for Latinos.)

**Factors Contributing to the Decline in African American Drug Offence Incarceration**

The trends we are observing are relatively recent and therefore will need to be assessed over time in order to draw firm conclusions regarding the driving forces contributing to the prison declines we have documented. But there are several possible systemic changes that may provide parts of the explanation.

**Changes in Drug Use Patterns**

While the overall racial distribution of drug users has not changed substantially during this period, there have been some changes in the degree to which various drugs are used. In particular, the use of crack cocaine has declined substantially since the peak years of the late 1980s. An analysis published by the National Institute of Justice documented that crack use had become much less popular,

TABLE 6: PROPORTION OF DRUG CONVICTIONS BY RACE, 1998-2004

WHITE	1998	2000	2002	2004
All Drug Convictions	46%	46%	55%	52%
Possession Convictions	55%	49%	61%	54%
Trafficking Convictions	42%	44%	51%	51%
BLACK	1998	2000	2002	2004
All Drug Convictions	53%	53%	43%	46%
Possession Convictions	44%	50%	36%	44%
Trafficking Convictions	57%	55%	47%	47%

particularly among young people, by the 1990s.

As has been true of other new drug phenomena over many years, the peak years of the crack cocaine “epidemic” were in retrospect relatively short-lived. As historian David Musto has documented, drug epidemics often begin with a new drug becoming rapidly embraced by young people and others. After a few years, the novelty of the drug wears off and the harmful nature of the substance becomes increasingly well understood. This generally results in a change in community norms to produce negative associations with the drug and hence, declining use among potential new initiates.

### **Changes in Drug Selling Patterns**

As use of crack cocaine was declining in the 1990s, so too were the methods of its sale in many cases. In criminologist Richard Curtis’ ethnographic studies in Brooklyn, New York, he found that by the late 1990s many drug sellers had shifted their transactions to indoor locations as well as limited their sales to people known to them. Regardless of the level of drug selling, such a shift had consequences for communities and the court system. During the early years of the war on drugs, law enforcement activity had been heavily focused on urban crack markets. This was a contentious strategy. Police officials generally argued that the open-air drug markets that were common in many disadvantaged communities were disruptive to community life and needed to be challenged. Civil rights advocates and others countered that the drug war was unfairly targeting drug activity in communities of color, as well as underemphasizing approaches involving prevention and treatment. Regardless of which position one may have supported, the decline in crack use, along with changes in patterns of distribution, made it both more difficult and arguably less necessary for law enforcement to exert such a heavy presence in these communities.

### **Changes in Arrest Patterns**

As we have seen, there has been a steady decline in the Black proportion of drug arrests (excluding marijuana possession) during the period 1999-2005. Unfortunately, FBI arrest data categories are too broad to permit an analysis of changes in arrest by specific type of drug, so there is no means by which to assess whether changes in relative rates of use of crack cocaine or other drugs are driving these trends. But given the changes in rates of crack cocaine use and distribution patterns we have observed, it seems likely that at least part of the declining African American share of drug arrests is related to these developments.

### **Impact of Drug Courts or other Diversion Programs**

Since the inception of drug courts in 1989 there has been a broad expansion of interest and programming in this area. These courts vary significantly in many ways, including criteria for admission, type of treatment programming, and impact on sentencing. There remains debate regarding the degree to which these courts may have a “net-widening” effect; that is, do they divert people from a term of incarceration or bring under court supervision people who might otherwise not be processed in the

court system? There are not yet definitive findings in this regard, but it is likely that at least in some jurisdictions there are people charged with a drug offence who are diverted from a prison term due to drug court programming. Whether such an outcome disproportionately benefits African Americans is in part a function of the location of such diversion programs. To the extent that they are located in urban areas with heavy concentrations of people of color as defendants, this may be the case. In Brooklyn, New York, for example, the longstanding Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison program operated by the District Attorney's office reports that 46% of its defendant population is African American and 46% Hispanic. Scholars such as Michael O'Hear, though, contend that the eligibility criteria for drug court programs and length of prison terms for unsuccessful participants may actually disadvantage African American defendants.

### **Impact of Sentencing Policies**

The 21.6% decline in the number of African Americans incarcerated for a drug offence is clearly consistent with declines of that magnitude in the Black rate of arrest and conviction during this period. In addition, to the extent that some portion of this decline was related to declining arrests for crack cocaine offences, this factor may have contributed disproportionately to the decline. At the federal level there has been a great deal of attention to the broad sentencing disparity between punishments for crack cocaine compared to powder cocaine offences. But 13 states also maintain a distinction in sentencing between the two drugs, albeit not as extreme as in the federal system. Therefore, to the extent that African Americans have been disproportionately charged with crack cocaine offences in the past, it is likely that their sentences in these states were more severe than for persons convicted of other drug charges.

It is important to note as well that despite the apparent declining impact of crack cocaine on arrests and incarceration at the state level, there has been no corresponding decline at the federal level. The number of federal prosecutions for crack offences remains substantial, and as we have seen, the overall number of people in federal prison for a drug offence rose by 32.7% from 1999 to 2005. Racial disparities persist as well, with African Americans constituting more than 80% of the people convicted of a federal crack cocaine offence.

### **The Rising White Proportion of Drug Offence Prison Terms**

As we have seen, the decline in Black incarcerations for drug offences has been matched by a substantial rise in Whites behind bars for drug offences. Several possible explanations may be at play in this regard.

First, we have seen over time that drug offence arrest rates are largely a function of law enforcement practices, rather than absolute levels of drug use or selling. That is, police agencies have in many cases concentrated resources on stemming drug traffic in low-income communities of color. This is often justified by arguments that drug selling in such neighborhoods is more likely to be disruptive to the community due to open-air drug markets and therefore requires a law enforcement response. Such an assertion is challenged by the argument that drug selling in many White communities can be harmful to individuals and families as well, and that a heavy emphasis on law enforcement diverts resources from prevention and community-building services that would be more beneficial.

Regardless of how one sees these issues, there is little doubt that law enforcement practices for many years disproportionately targeted minority neighborhoods. But as noted above regarding the changing composition of (non-marijuana possession) drug arrests, it is possible that Whites are increasingly comprising a larger share of the drug arrests that are more likely to result in a prison term.

Another possibility is that with the rise of methamphetamine in some states – a drug used more by Whites and Latinos than African Americans – increasing prosecutions and prison terms are contributing

to the White rise in imprisonment. While there is some data to suggest that there are increasing numbers of persons serving prison sentences for meth offences, it is not clear what proportion of the overall increase is due to this factor.

Looking at data from states with reported high rates of methamphetamine use, we find some significant increases in imprisonment during the years covered in this analysis. In Minnesota, an analysis produced by the Department of Corrections documented a substantial increase in the number of people incarcerated for a meth offence, rising from 230 in 2001 to 1,127 in 2005, although there is no published data on the racial composition of this population. This increase accounted for almost 90% of the growth of drug offence incarceration during this period.

In Iowa, a state with reported significant rates of meth use, the growth in incarceration began prior to this time frame but continued throughout. Methamphetamine offences as a proportion of drug admissions increased from 31% in 1995 to 68% by 2000, but then remained fairly steady through 2005 (66%), although the overall number of persons admitted for a drug offence continued to rise. Extrapolating data from the Iowa report suggests that meth offences accounted for about three-fourths of the 395 person rise in drug admissions for the period 1999-2005. Note, though, that admissions data are not necessarily representative of the offence distribution of people incarcerated in prison, due to differing lengths of stay for various offences.

While the data from these states lends support to the idea that increased imprisonment for methamphetamine offences is likely to have been responsible for some portion of the overall White increase in incarceration, the relatively modest number of states with a significant methamphetamine-using population also suggests that it is probably not the only explanatory factor in this regard.

As with the examination of African Americans in prison for a drug offence, assessing the rise in the number of Whites in prison is a complex undertaking and one that reflects criminal justice processing in all 50 states. Gaining an understanding of these dynamics will require a sustained examination in a variety of jurisdictions to observe trends in programming and decision-making.

## **Conclusion**

The decline in the number of African Americans incarcerated for drug offences is a significant development, coming as it does after several decades of unprecedented expansion in incarceration of people of color. As we have seen in this analysis, available data only suggest some of the factors that may have produced this outcome, and it behooves policymakers and researchers to examine these trends in greater detail.

While these trends are welcome as a possible indication of a change in policy and practice, they need to be tempered by an assessment of the overall scale of incarceration and punishment. Even with the declines noted here, there are still 900,000 African Americans incarcerated in the nation's prisons and jails. To place this in context, at the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, that figure was 100,000. So despite a half century of advances in social and economic opportunity, the role of incarceration in the lives of African Americans persists to a degree that was unimaginable just a few decades ago.

Many of the driving forces that have contributed to these record numbers still remain very much in place. The high level of drug arrests, widespread adoption of mandatory sentencing policies, increase in length of prison terms, and other policies continue to drive the prison population even as crime rates have generally declined for more than a decade. And despite the decline in the number of African Americans incarcerated for a drug offence, the overall record number of people in prison for a drug offence still persists. While the racial dynamics of incarceration for drug offences have shifted,

there remains the question of whether massive imprisonment for drug problems is either an effective or compassionate strategy. If we are to see any sustained reduction in incarceration there will need to be a broad scale re-examination of these policies.

Elements of such a change are beginning to take shape. In recent years many states have begun to reconsider the wisdom of some of their overly punitive sentencing policies and have moved to scale these back or promote a greater array of diversionary programmes. Increasingly, these initiatives are propelled by fiscal concerns, as policymakers recognize that skyrocketing corrections costs cut into public support for higher education and other vital services. At the federal level, the US Sentencing Commission has enacted changes in the sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine offences, and members of Congress are considering proposals to reform the mandatory penalties for crack offences. Legislative action at the federal level is particularly critical since, as we have seen, the number of persons incarcerated for a drug offence continues to rise even as the state figures have stabilized.

It remains to be seen whether these initiatives represent the beginnings of substantial change in the approach to substance abuse and public safety, or are merely modest reforms with little long-term impact. At a time when the nation is considering broad scale change in a host of areas, this is an appropriate moment to reconsider our public safety policy as well.

***Marc Mauer is the Executive Director of The Sentencing Project in Washington, D.C. He is the author of Race to Incarcerate and the co-editor of Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment, both published by The New Press. This analysis was previously published by The Sentencing Project.***

## **Crossing Borders, Breaking Barriers: How Teachers Can Transcend Race, Class and Cultural Differences to Promote Academic Achievement and Engagement for All**

*Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.*  
*New York University*

The need to provide teachers with the skills required to teach effectively across differences related to race, class and culture is now widely recognized as an imperative in most teacher education programs. Clear and consistent evidence has emerged over the years that when teachers lack such skills, students are less likely to achieve and classrooms are more likely to be disruptive and disorderly (Lipman 1995; Irvine 2003; Sleeter 2001). The reason for these problems is also clear – students learn through relationships, and when educators experience difficulty establishing respectful, caring and mutually beneficial relationships and rapport with the students they teach, it is often difficult to create an atmosphere that is supportive of teaching and learning (Bryk and Schnieder 2003).

In the United States, it has taken some time for teacher educators and school districts to recognize what is now widely referred to as 'cultural competence' as a core skill set for teachers. For the longest time, two views on matters pertaining to race and class differences and teaching prevailed. The first and most traditional view held that teachers were in effect emissaries of the dominant culture and as such, their job was to deliberately facilitate the assimilation of students from culturally different backgrounds (Fass 1989; Katznelson and Weir 1994; Cremmin 1988). Under this educational paradigm schools were expected to impart the values, norms and, most importantly, the language – English, of the dominant culture to the immigrant, poor and minority students they taught (Jibou 1988). This was seen as an essential part of preparing disadvantaged and culturally different students for citizenship and integration into mainstream American society. No apologies were offered for such an approach, nor was it common to hear complaints from those who were expected to carry it out. Eliminating cultural differences was typically equated with providing students with the social skills they would need to enter the workforce and assume adult roles in American society (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). 'Americanization' as the process was frequently called in reference to immigrant students, and assimilation generally, was regarded as the price that those whose backgrounds placed them outside (beneath) the dominant classes, had to pay for mobility (Fass 2007).

Though never fully repudiated, and in fact still widely practiced in many schools throughout the United States today, the assimilationist approach to education has been gradually replaced in some schools by what could best be described as the "color blind" approach. Unlike its predecessor, the 'color blind' approach grew out of liberal sensibilities that led educators to assume that the best way to educate all children was to essentially ignore differences related to race, class and culture, and to strive to treat all children the same regardless of their backgrounds (Sleeter 2001; Fine, Weis, and Powell 1997). By ignoring differences it was assumed that teachers could minimize the possibility that prejudice and bias would influence their perceptions of students and interfere with their ability to teach. Advocates of the 'color blind' approach envisioned it as a way to insure that teacher expectations would not be determined by the backgrounds of their students, and saw it as linked epistemologically to the civil rights goal of creating a society where race no longer determined a persons status or social standing (Kirp 1982; Delpitt 1995).

Before explaining why both approaches to teaching across social differences have come under attack and gradually been replaced by new approaches to teaching across cultural differences, it is important to at least acknowledge their merits. The assimilationist approach is after all based upon a certain degree of realism – students who do not learn English, who do not become conversant in

standard English and who fail to adopt mainstream social norms, are less likely to be successful in higher education and the workforce. As Lareua (1989) has shown through her important research on the ways in which class differences affect the ways in which children and parents are treated by schools, education is not a neutral process; it occurs in social settings that are necessarily influenced by the hierarchical arrangements that exist in society. Those who do not acquire the cultural capital of the dominant classes are invariably regarded as less suitable for inclusion in mainstream roles in society (Olsen 2000; Garcia 1995). Though critics may regard it is unfair that the onus for change and acculturation is on subordinate groups, it is nonetheless the reality. In a controversial and seminal article entitled: *'The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children'* (1988), noted educator Lisa Delpitt argues that students who do not acquire what she refers to as the 'tools of power', tend to be less successful in school and often find their future options for employment adversely affected. While Delpitt does not endorse the eradication of cultural differences she does recognise, as do a number of language educators and linguists (Ogbu 1988; Fordham 1988) that acquiring the ability to 'code switch' (i.e. knowing when the use of standardized English is expected) is an essential requisite for educational success. According to Delpitt, teachers who fail to impart such skills to their minority students and do not provide them with a critical understanding related to how and when they are to be used, end up short-changing them.

Similarly, advocates of the 'color blind' approach to teaching frequently point out that there is a slippery slope between acknowledging differences related to race, class and culture and lowering ones' expectations to accommodate these differences. While it may be true that adopting a 'color blind' stance is nearly impossible in a society where racism, ethnocentrism and class snobbery are rooted in historical and contemporary social relations (Fredrickson 1981), acknowledging difference does not guarantee that teachers will not be influenced by biases that continue to be pervasive in American society (Hacker 1992). According to this view, when teachers strive to adopt a stance of neutrality on matters related to race, class and culture they may be more likely to strive for fairness in the way they treat students and to avoid practices that give certain groups of students advantages over others. Of course, critics of the 'color blind' approach frequently point out that such striving rarely occurs; even if they refuse to acknowledge the ways in which their biases may influence their teaching, invariably they do (Sleeter 2000; King 1991). According to the critics, when teachers recognize that differences in student backgrounds may influence their academic needs and possibly even their style and approach to learning, and when they acknowledge the likelihood that personal biases may influence their interactions and their expectations, they will be more likely to take measures to address these issues.

Beginning in the 1980s, a new approach to preparing teachers to teach in ethnically and socio-economically diverse classrooms began gaining credibility and adherents. Advocates of multicultural education argued that the only way to effectively prepare teachers to teach effectively across differences was to expose them to a curriculum that made it possible for them to understand the history of race and class oppression in the United States, and that forced them to recognize and unlearn their biases. According to Enid Lee, one of the leading proponents of multicultural education, multicultural education is essential because 'it provides teachers, students and parents with the tools needed to combat racism and ethnic discrimination, and to find ways to build a society that includes all people on equal footing' (1995).

For the most part, the critics of both the assimilationist and the 'color blind' approach to teacher education and the advocates of multicultural education have won. In most teacher education programmes based in universities throughout the United States, courses on multiculturalism and courses that attempt to prepare teachers to teach effectively across race, class and cultural differences are common (Gay 2000; Davidman and Davidman 1994). There are, of course, colleges that have not embraced this change, but it is now increasingly widely accepted that teachers must receive special

training to enter classrooms filled with students from ethnically diverse backgrounds. This is especially true in programmes designed to prepare teachers for urban public schools, but as the demographic changes caused by immigration and suburbanization have transformed the composition of suburban and rural schools, teacher education programs throughout the country have adopted similar courses (Banks 1981).

Unfortunately, winning the struggle over how to prepare teachers has not guaranteed that teachers who graduate from programmes where multiculturalism has been embraced are fully prepared or more effective in teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Though numerous studies of such programmes have been conducted, there is no clear evidence that exposure to multicultural approaches to teaching actually results in teachers being either more prepared or more effective in classrooms comprised of children of color and children from low-income backgrounds generally. Courses in multiculturalism do not inoculate those who take them from the influence of bias nor do they provide them with the social and emotional skills required to relate and establish rapport with students from diverse backgrounds. The same is true of the various cultural sensitivity and unlearning racism programmes that some schools and school districts have implemented. Like the pre-service courses offered at colleges and universities, training seminars offered by noted diversity experts such as Glen Singleton (*Courageous Conversations*) and Ruby Payne (*A framework for Understanding Poverty*), do little to impact that practice of teachers in the classroom even when they do show some degree of success in raising awareness.

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## Culturally Responsive Education

In the abstracts that follow, some of the latest research on the challenges experienced by teachers in multicultural classrooms are reviewed. In some cases, successful practices are featured while in others old problems and challenges are re-visited. Close examination of these abstracts combined with even a cursory familiarity with existing research related to patterns of student achievement and the persistence of the so-called achievement gap, makes it clear that further research on teacher preparation is needed. Perhaps even more important, new approaches to preparing teachers for the classrooms of today and the future must be found if the increasingly diverse population of students in the United States will receive an education that enables them to be prepared to solve the problems they will inherit and the adult roles they must fill. The abstracts are grouped by author.

**Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D.**  
*New York University*

### **Reviews by Justin Bennett**

**Dultro, E. et al (2008). "What Are You and Where Are You From?" Race, Identity, and the Vicissitudes of Cultural Relevance. *Urban Education*, 43(3), pp. 69-300.**

A teacher's attempt to enact cultural relevance in her very diverse classroom produced some unforeseen questions among the students. The specific questions - "Where are you from?" and "What are you?" - posed by one of the students, served as a catalyst for the complex identity work that occurred when students were asked to bring both their home experiences and cultural backgrounds into a classroom where various racial and cultural identities converged. The data collected, which was part of a larger study of children's experiences across subject areas in this particular classroom, demonstrates how the teacher's interpretation and enactment of cultural relevance helped children to review their ideas and assumptions about their own and others' cultural and racial identities.

**Gilliar, J.L. & Moore, R.A. (2007). An Investigation of How Culture Shapes Curriculum in Early Care and Education Programmes on a Native American Reservation. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34 (4), pp. 252-258.**

The presence of family and community culture in the curriculum of three tribal early care and education programmes was the focus of this study. Classroom observations and open-ended interview questions with eight early childhood teachers were conducted at three early learning programmes, two infant and toddler programmes, and one toddler and preschool programme on a Native American Reservation. Four pre-service early childhood teachers collected data as a culminating field experience for a special topic university course called 'Cultures and Communities,' in which the pre-service teachers were enrolled. Culture and education in the three tribal early learning programmes were explored in this study through teacher responses to interview questions, field notes taken during classroom observations, and journals written by the pre-service teachers who collected the data. The research question which guided the study was: 'How does the culture of the family and community shape curriculum?'. The study's findings highlight the value of respecting and honoring parents' beliefs and wishes in a way that transforms curriculum and building belongingness through authentic school participation in family and community cultural rituals for connecting school or classroom culture with student home and community culture.

**Stairs, A.J. (2007). Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Harlem Renaissance in an Urban English Class. *English Journal*, 96 (6), pp. 37-42.**

The article focuses on a lesson taught by two former student teachers of Stairs in a Boston high school - a school comprised of mostly African-American and Hispanic students from low-income households. The teachers, both White females, had taken an urban methods course in which they learned about culturally responsive teaching. This pedagogical approach is defined by the author as

'particularly suited to urban schools educating linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse students' and is based on the assumption that 'diversity is an asset that enriches the learning of all students, not a deficit to overcome.' The student teachers taught a lesson titled 'Metaphor and Poetry in the Harlem Renaissance,' incorporating the following: rap lyrics to discuss figurative language, a mini-lesson on the Harlem Renaissance and Hughes' poetry, and the playing of jazz and blues music. This culturally responsive pedagogy helped students recognise and discuss elements of racism and prejudice while learning about figurative language.

### **Reviews by Fernando Camberos**

**Lipka, J. et al. (2005). Math in a Cultural Context: Two Case Studies of a Successful Culturally Based Math Project. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(4), pp. 367-385.**

Lipka et al. look how teachers' own cultural identification affects indigenous education and empowerment within the Yup'ik population of Alaska. The researchers survey two novice math teachers in the area, one who comes from a similar cultural background to her students and one who does not. The study then asks them to implement Math in a Cultural Context (MCC) in their classrooms. MCC, Lipka explains, incorporates aspects of Yup'ik culture. The teachers were observed before and after they were asked to deliver the MCC curriculum. When they were first recorded teaching without the MCC curriculum, the teacher who shared her students' culture was more effective, and strong differences were observed between the two teachers, especially with regards to how the two incorporated student-home culture. Once teachers began incorporating MCC, the gap between the two was reduced and the teacher from the different background found it easier to teach because she faced less student resistance. The authors demonstrate the power of culturally cohesive pedagogy by showing impressive gains in student comprehension and buy-in from something as simple as one class period and one particular lesson. These effects could be replicated by curriculum choices and multicultural teaching strategies in other places.

**Skerrett, A. & Hargreaves, A. (2008). Student Diversity and Secondary School Change in a Context of Increasingly Standardized Reform. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(4), pp. 913-945.**

This article discusses curriculum and testing standardization and the constraints they levy on school systems that wish to respond to diverse student populations. It focuses on four schools (two American and two Canadian) and their responses to changing student populations as standardization encroached differently upon their options. The four schools vary drastically. One US school is a neighborhood school, while the other is a magnet high school. One of the Canadian schools is an elite collegiate academy, while the other is a traditional, rural, secondary school. The authors conducted interviews with 186 teachers to study the effects of standardization on the increasingly diverse student populations of the different schools. Standardization affected all four schools; however, the effects were different for each school. The authors conclude that standardization reinforces monocultural values and practices and creates barriers for culturally responsive teaching. They recommend allowing teachers more options as research continues to highlight the importance of responding to diverse student populations. This increased flexibility is slowly becoming the norm in parts of Canada.

**Trumbull, E., & Rothstein-Fisch, C. (2008). Cultures in Harmony. *Educational Leadership*, 66(1), pp. 63-67.**

In this article, the authors examine teaching styles that differ in culturally cohesive instructional practices. The authors discuss classroom practices implemented in 'Bridging Cultures Classrooms.' Most of the classrooms in the study were culturally mixed with Latino immigrant student majorities. The authors use an individualism-collectivism framework to describe the differences between students. They argue that students from Mexican societies tend to value the collective over the individual, and students from US mainstream culture value the individual over the collective. With those differences in mind, the authors suggest that teachers should work on capitalizing the cultural

skills in order to make all cultures present in the classroom assets to its students. In this case, where the main cultural distinction amongst students is summarised as individualism/collectivism, some of the observed classroom strategies were collaborating to learn (eg. group work) and student management (e.g. students taking on teaching responsibilities). The authors conclude the article with a call to teachers and researchers to consider understanding and incorporating cultural differences as an integral part of teaching. They suggest that teachers visit their students' neighborhoods, speak to their families, and work closely with parent volunteers.

### **Reviews by Larry Daffin**

**Cooper, R., & Jordan, W. J. (2003). Cultural Issues in Comprehensive School Reform. *Urban Education*, 38(4), pp. 380-397.**

This article provides an overview of past and current reforms in education and their inability to positively impact the overall outcome of African-American male students. They discuss the problems of color blind, mono-cultural approaches to education, which frequently ignore the substantial social challenges facing African-American males. The authors contend that before any large scale improvements in achievement can occur, reformers must acknowledge the impact of cultural norms on student success. They make a case for the concerted and strategic effort to recruit highly qualified African-American males to teach and mentor African-American boys.

**Tyler, K. M. et al. (2008). Cultural Discontinuity: Toward a Quantitative Investigation of a Major Hypothesis in Education. *Educational Researcher*, 37(5), pp. 280-297.**

The misalignment of cultural norms is often cited as a factor in the academic performance of minority students; yet little empirical evidence exists on this topic. The authors summarize several generic characteristics associated with various ethnic groups and discuss the process by which those ethnic norms are discontinued in the public school setting. Asserting that cultural discontinuity precedes academic performance, the authors propose a methodology by which future researchers may empirically assess the impact of cultural discontinuity on the academic performance of minority students.

**Ware, F. (2006). Warm Demander Pedagogy: Culturally Responsive Teaching that Supports a Culture of Achievement for African-American students. *Urban Education*, 41(4), 427-456.**

This article extends the literature on successful African-American teachers by providing a case analysis of two distinct, yet similar teaching strategies. Their inquiry addresses the following questions: (1) How did each teacher describe her instructional practices and beliefs? (2) What similarities and differences existed between the teachers' practices and her beliefs? (3) Was there evidence that the shared cultural/ethnic background of teachers and students influenced instructional practices? The study proposes to identify an exceptional African-American teaching style that transcends generations. At the core of this culturally transmitted pedagogy is the teachers' strong cultural/racial identity that compels them to embrace African-American children. Thus African-American teachers with a strong sense of cultural/racial identity are able to take advantage of culturally responsive pedagogy and a warm demander teaching style to establish an achievement-oriented culture of success.

### **Reviews by Christine James**

**Bazron, B., et al. (2005). Creating Culturally Responsive Schools. *Educational Leadership*, 63(1), pp. 83-84.**

This short article gives a brief description of what the research says about the issues regarding educating students of color. They mention a few programmes that exist that help to address these issues. The authors then go into a brief discussion about culturally responsive education as defined by Geniva Gay. The second portion of the article gives a bulleted outline of what educators can do to reform their schools to be more culturally responsive. Main points include: align classroom instruction with cultural norms; adjust wait time; be sensitive to cultural shifts students and families may have

to make when moving to a new place; help parents gain cultural capital; and use culturally responsive and respectful approaches in character education, social skill instruction, and discipline.

**Johnson, R. & Bush, L. (2004). Leading the School through Culturally Responsive Inquiry. In G. Anderson, & F. W. English (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Education Leadership: Advances in Theory, Research, and Practice*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.**

The authors provide the reader a step-by-step guide to what a culturally responsive school is. They begin by providing a brief history and explanation of theories on culturally responsive pedagogy as they seek to answer the question: What does a culturally responsive school look like? The authors disaggregate data to examine school scheduling, placement, and other factors that do not promote a culturally responsive environment. This data should enable school staff to look at their school practices while examining which beliefs/values may hinder creating a culturally responsive school environment. The authors suggest that getting to the root of the problem is a key element in changing school practices. This article provides school administrators and teachers with the tools - including surveys and assessment tools - to change the school environment into one that is more culturally responsive.

**Johnson, L. S. (2003). The Diversity Imperative: Building a Culturally Responsive School Ethos. *Intercultural Education*, 14(1), p. 17.**

This article discusses the importance of providing students with a diverse school environment. Johnson suggests examining the following areas in terms of the authenticity and effectiveness of their diversity efforts: school management, the teaching faculty, curriculum and instruction, pastoral care, and student development. To change school management, Johnson suggests that all stake holders take part in the school reform effort. She suggests creating a diversity task force that would initiate and monitor diversity policies for the school. She also suggests that the school embrace diversity and make it a whole-school effort, thus promoting the value of diversity. The school must also ensure that they are enrolling diverse students and providing the students with adequate support once they get there. Johnson argues that the teachers need to have several professional development sessions that address the changing policies, demographics, and challenges they will face with a diverse student population. These sessions would improve their teaching practices and provide them with an opportunity to examine their own biases and cultural assumptions. The curriculum and instruction portion discusses the importance of meeting the needs of all of the students through rich and diverse curriculum. Johnson also discusses how important it is to have parents as involved as possible, to share their insight on the lives of the students. Parents and students would then feel empowered in response to the school supporting their needs.

**Le Roux, J. (2001). Effective Schooling is Being Culturally Responsive. *Intercultural Education*, 12(1), p. 41.**

The purpose of this article is to argue the need for a philosophy and practice shift in schools to be culturally responsive regardless if the school is mono-or multicultural. The author begins with a discussion of effective education and what it is to be effective. Within this discussion, the author focuses on what the purpose of education is and aligns this purpose with what needs to change. The article then provides the distinction between 'culturally responsive' and 'multicultural' education. This discussion argues that 'multicultural' education is a vague term that has several different definitions, therefore creating too much ambiguity. The meaning of 'culturally responsive' education - while having several different names - is clearer. The final section of this article addresses teacher preparation and culturally responsive pedagogy.

### **Reviews by Sarah Klevan**

**Godley, A. J., & Minnici, A. (2008). Critical Language Pedagogy in an Urban High School English Class. *Urban Education*, 43(3), pp. 319-346.**

In their article, Godley and Minnici report the results of a language variation unit that they designed,

implemented, and analysed. The unit emerges from critical language pedagogy, a pedagogy which draws heavily upon the concepts of conscientization, dialogic methodology, and the importance of connecting to students' backgrounds, outlined by Paulo Freire. The unit was implemented in three classrooms of 10th grade bidialectal students who spoke both African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and 'privileged' dialects of English. The unit was designed to increase consciousness around the diversity of language dialects as well as dominant language ideologies, and to raise student awareness of code-switching behavior. The unit included a variety of activities such as introducing students to linguistic terms (dialect, accent, etc.), translating sentences from privileged English dialects into AAVE, viewing a documentary about language diversity, and classroom discussions about language use in students' home communities. The authors employed a variety of qualitative methods (surveys, interviews, observation, and field notes) in order to analyse the effect of the unit on the study participants. The authors found that the majority of students in their study held conflicting viewpoints about AAVE, demonstrated by their beliefs that AAVE is just as good as privileged English dialects but that the learning of privileged English dialects is necessary to be successful in academic and professional settings. The authors also report that the unit resulted in increased student awareness of issues surrounding language use and code-switching. Additionally, they report that connecting the unit's content to students' backgrounds and experiences was necessary in order for students to digest the complex concepts covered within the language variation unit.

**Rogers, C. (2008). Confronting Coyote: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in an Era of Standardization. *Democracy & Education*, 17(3), pp. 46-50.**

Rogers discusses some of the primary challenges that she faced as a public school teacher during what she calls the 'era of standardization.' She describes the difficult decisions she had to make regarding curriculum content. She presents the example of an internal struggle she faced when forced to decide between critically engaging her students with a text that was culturally relevant, or using instead a canonical text that was a more appropriate fit with the standardized curriculum. She uses this example to highlight the ways in which the 'era of standardization' causes many inspired teachers to choose a path of least resistance in their classrooms which can be detrimental to their students. She further explores the theme by discussing her experience working with pre-service teachers. Rogers ends the article with three considerations for teachers who struggle to teach for social justice while meeting the requirements of standardized educational programming. She recommends that they build confidence in the abilities of all their students, become active in their school communities, and engage proactively in professional development opportunities.

**Snyder, C. et al. (2008). Combining Human Diversity and Social Justice Education: A Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 44(1), pp. 145-161.**

In this article, Snyder, Peeler, and May outline an educational framework that they developed for a Human Behavior and Social Environment course offered as part of their social work programme. The goal of the framework is to use the social work classroom in order to develop student consciousness and motivate students to engage in social justice action. The framework has been in use for the past three years and its success has merited the reframing of their programme's mission in order to centralize the emphasis upon social justice. The framework is discussed in six phases. The first phase is an introduction in which students are shown key concepts and develop a common vocabulary for discussing social justice issues. The second phase is focused on increasing social consciousness about the causes of oppression. The third phase focuses on introspection and incorporates activities that encourage students to reflect upon their own role in the social world. The fourth phase is designed for students to connect with other students of different backgrounds through structured dialogue. The fifth phase introduces students to the concept of alliance building. The framework culminates in the sixth phase, which actually asks students to take some sort of social justice action. The authors assert that their framework is successful because it rests within the tension of pushing students to engage in challenging introspective work while offering structured support along the way.

### **Reviews by Kristen Lee**

**Patchen, T. & Cox-Petersen, A. (2008). Constructing Cultural Relevance in Science: A Case Study of Two Elementary Teachers. *Science Education*, 92(6), pp. 994-1014.**

In this article, the authors evaluate two White, female classroom teachers of primarily low-income students of color in order to better understand the progression from constructivism to culturally relevant pedagogy in science classes. The authors believe that science is a subject area that resonates with White, middle class students and alienates students from other backgrounds, and that this alienation has economic repercussions. While constructivism and culturally relevant pedagogy share some goals and practices, culturally relevant pedagogy works to address unequal power relations, more explicitly supports the use of students' native language in instruction, and is seen by the authors as more successful in empowering marginalised students. The teachers were evaluated on three themes identified as common to both constructivist and culturally relevant pedagogy: authority, or support of student participation; achievement, or integration of students' prior knowledge; and affiliation, or the connection of classroom work with outside realities. The study found a gap between teachers' goals and conceptual understanding of the importance of bringing students' lives into the classroom and manifesting these goals in a substantive way. The authors propose that to better meet the needs of students and to begin to shift authority in the classroom, teachers need to diversify strategies, seating arrangements, and student responsibilities to allow students to construct their own knowledge.

**Prater, M. A. et al. (2008). Shaping One Traditional Special Educator Preparation Programme toward More Cultural competence. *Teaching Education*, 19(2), pp. 137-51**

This article documents the attempts of one special education teacher education programme to both increase the number of diverse candidates enrolled, and to increase the cultural competence of students and faculty members. The authors attempt to resolve what they see as a glaring imbalance between the ethnicity of special education students and their predominantly white teachers. The school initiated a post-Baccalaureate special education/English as Second Language (ESL) programme in fall 2004. They recruited a diverse group of students using targeted outreach and providing financial assistance and academic support. Additionally, the school offered professional development for faculty, so that all faculty members would be facile with the five standards of effective pedagogy from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, and able to design their curriculum and field work around these standards. Professional development also taught skills, such as ESL evaluations, that faculty members identified as important. While the programme has been considered generally successful, there were challenges in the form of faculty resistance and a lack of resources. The school has begun recruiting diverse faculty interested in forwarding the mission of the programme to meet existing challenges.

**Szente, J. (2008). Preparing Pre-service Teachers to Work with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children: A Service Learning Experience. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 29(2) pp. 140-45.**

This article is a description of a service learning component of an Early Childhood Education class instituted by a professor in Central Florida. The programme pairs pre-service teachers with culturally and linguistically diverse children as one-on-one tutors. The programme includes key components of successful service-learning experiences as defined by existing literature: providing opportunities for quality reflections, active participation, and activities that address a real community need. The pre-service teachers completed journal entries after each visit and wrote a final paper detailing their teaching strategies and describing how the experience changed their perspective on teaching diverse learners. They reported that they appreciated the opportunity provided by the tutoring experience to apply classroom theories to an early childhood situation, as well as to reflect on what they bring to classroom experiences. Ultimately, Szente recommends that other professors implement service learning to enhance teacher learning and maintain connections with local schools and communities.

**Reviews by Marguerite Lukes**

**Blanco-Vega, C. et al. (2008). Social-Emotional Needs of Latino Immigrant Adolescents: A Sociocultural Model for Development and Implementation of Culturally Specific Interventions. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 7(1), pp. 43-61.**

The 'social-emotional' needs of adolescents have not been the focus of much literature, though they differ markedly from those of adults. The authors contend that one way to break down the disproportional representation of Latinos in lower socio-economic and educational levels is the delivery of culturally responsive education and mental health services. The authors propose an ecological model based on Bronfenbrenner that addresses the development and social and academic outcomes of Latino immigrant adolescents. Factors to be considered include migration circumstances, socio-economic levels, acculturation levels and accompanying stress, family acculturation, previous education, and host culture context, among others. Within the ecological systems model, the authors posit that 'acculturative stress' is an ecologically embedded issue, not a solely individual one. The authors propose a sociocultural model that indicates risk factors within ecological systems and the zone of intervention in which schools have the opportunity to prevent negative outcomes, primarily because schools play such an important role in acculturation and students spend so much time there. The first few years are critical in promoting and cultivating positive outcomes and preventing immigrant students from dropping out later on. Ecological risks are outlined alongside factors that promote resiliency, and the authors emphasize that a focus on the protective factors of parental involvement, positive school/community involvement, and positive self concept can be foundational in helping health and education service providers design effective interventions.

**Fernsten, Linda (2008). Writer Identity and ESL Learners. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(1), pp. 44-52.**

'*Writer identity and ESL learners*' lays bare the common tendency of those who teach writing to English Language Learners (ELLs) and former ELLs to focus solely on what is 'broken' in students' writing (as in 'broken English') and the impact this has on students' development of an authentic voice. Fernsten discusses the way in which a negative emphasis can in the long run impact students' self-esteem, and undermines their creativity and desire to express themselves through writing. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Fernsten examines one student's awareness of how characteristics of first language interference undermine her 'academic writing' and the perception in the minds of her teachers that because her writing is not 'native-like,' that she is less intelligent than her peers. ELLs and former ELLs are often marginalised in the context of academic writing, and 'write at a site of conflict.' CDA is a means of exploring how the complexities of identity, voice, correctness, and first language interference create competing discourses. Writer identity, especially for multilingual immigrant students, is not only personal, but also racial, political, and social. Fernsten stresses that the CDA approach is not a causal equation, and through three microanalyses makes clear the power relations in language and the complex development of second language writer identity. CDA can help students understand their own positioning vis-à-vis social written discourse. Fernsten goes on to discuss specific classroom strategies that can help students not only become 'better writers', but also change their writer identities from negative to positive.

**Kenner, C., Gregory, E., Ruby, M., & Al-Azami, S. (2008). Bilingual Learning for Second and Third Generation Children. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 21(2), pp. 120-137.**

The authors explore the impact of bilingual schooling and the vast potential of bilingual classroom practices on second and third generation British Bangladeshi children. Most commonly, second and third generation bilingual children are educated in monolingual classrooms with no access or reinforcement of the mother tongue in instruction. Building upon the research on first generation bilingual learners and the proven positive impacts that use of the native language has on learning, this study sought to determine how second and third generation immigrant students, who tend to be more English dominant, might benefit from bilingual instructional practices in mainstream

classrooms. Participants in the study were second and third generation British Bangladeshi elementary school children who had received Bangla instruction in community-based after school programmes but were instructed solely in English during the regular school day. Their teachers, for the most part, were not bilingual. Once bilingual Bangla/English classroom practices in literacy and numeracy were incorporated into the school day, students expressed initial discomfort at using Bangla in the school setting, a space they had internalized to be a monolingual one. Nonetheless, all students in the study expressed that they would prefer to learn in both languages, and welcomed the opportunity to use their native language at school. Strategies including conceptual transfer, translation, meta-linguistic awareness, use of cultural knowledge, and transliteration aided the learning process. An analysis of performance and interviews with students provided strong evidence of the benefits of bilingual instruction for second and third generation immigrant children for whom English is the dominant language. The school use of the native language helped to develop deeper conceptual understanding, activate meta-linguistic skills, and generate new ideas to help students build academic knowledge lacking in their native language, despite the fact that they had used it extensively in social situations in their community.

### **Reviews by Nicole Simon**

**Bakari, R. (2003). Preservice Teachers' Attitudes toward Teaching African American Students: Contemporary Research. *Urban Education*, 38(6); pp. 640-654.**

This article analyses the effectiveness of multicultural education training programmes for pre-service teachers. The author surveys 415 pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes at six universities. Participants are divided into three categories: students at a public, mostly White university that do not require coursework related to teaching culturally diverse students; students from historically Black colleges and universities; and, students from private, predominantly White universities that require coursework related to teaching culturally diverse students. Pre-service teachers were assessed in four areas, all pertaining to teaching African Americans: (1) willingness to teach (2) teaching efficacy (3) teacher expectations (4) sensitivity towards student needs. Results demonstrated that all groups, including students at historically Black colleges and universities, were less culturally sensitive towards teaching African American students than they were willing to teach African American students. The study demonstrated what the author refers to as a "boomerang effect:" pre-service teachers from the white universities that required training about teaching culturally diverse students were the least willing to teach African American students and to expend effort cultivating diversity as a resource in their classrooms.

**Lynn, M., (2006). Education for the Community: Exploring Culturally Relevant Practices of Black Male Teachers. *Teachers College Press*. 108(12), pp. 2497 – 2522.**

While considerable literature has focused on issues concerning Black male students in education, little attention has been paid to the role that Black male teachers play in urban education reform. There are few, if any, studies which focus on the pedagogical practices of Black male teachers whose identities as Black men in the classroom can be especially powerful in the African American community's struggle for social justice. In this study, Lynn modifies Lightfoot's 'Portraiture' method to describe the work of three Black male teachers in California. All three teachers work in the same large urban school public district, which primarily serves Black students. The percentage of Black male teachers in the district reflects the national trend (nationally 1.5% of teachers are Black males). All three teachers see themselves as members of the community they serve and attest to employing culturally responsive teaching methods. The study provides a description of the specific curricular techniques each teacher employs in his classroom. All three teachers draw on their own experiences as Black men as they teach. Two of the teachers were raised in similarly low-income, segregated communities, and are intimately familiar with 'street culture.' Their own identities inform their pedagogy. The study demonstrates that the role of Black male teachers is critical to improving the urban education system; the author asserts that there is no substitute for the unique passion and commitment of Black male teachers.

**Woodland, M., (2008). Whatcha Doin' After School? A Review of the Literature on the Influence of After School Programmes on Young Black Males. *Urban Education*. 43(5), pp. 537-560.**

In this article, Woodland focuses on strategies aimed at combating the plight of urban Black males. He discusses three different models of after-school programmes that previous research suggests may improve the social and academic trajectories of Black males. The first programme model is 'extracurricular activities'. These programmes include activities ranging from sports to art to academic enrichment. They capitalise on students' interests and talents and sometimes offer much needed one-on-one academic support. The second programme model is 'mentoring'. Mentoring programmes pair children or adolescents with caring, supportive adults who offer guidance. Mentoring programmes for Black youth that employ Black male mentors may be especially effective. The third programme model, 'Rights of Passage' (ROP), was designed specifically for Black male adolescents by African American adults. ROP programmes are generally facilitated by older Black male adults, or elders, and their basic premise is to give participants a sense of agency, cultural pride, and self-esteem. In addition to discussing these programme models, Woodland outlines the most critical core elements of all effective after school programmes – quality staff, safety, family engagement, an enriching curriculum, and rigorous evaluation – while stressing the importance of ensuring that all elements of after-school programming must be culturally relevant to the young Black males they serve. When done correctly, Woodland asserts, after school programmes can 'play a pivotal role in reshaping the social and academic outcomes of young Black males.'

#### **Reviews by Adriana Villavicencio**

**Durden, T. (2008). Do Your Homework! Investigating the Role of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Comprehensive School Reform Models Serving Diverse Students Populations. *Urban Review*, 40(4), pp. 403-419.**

Comprehensive school reforms are widely implemented in high poverty, low performing schools and primarily serve students of color. The author seeks to understand if these school reform programmes allow for culturally responsive education and support the learning needs of the students they serve. She describes the defining characteristics of culturally relevant teaching as believing that all students can succeed, taking student diversity and differences into account, and building connections between their community, national and global identities. Working within this framework, she examines two popular comprehensive school reform models – Success for All (SFA) and Direct Instruction (DI) – to ascertain whether these programmes exhibit the characteristics of culturally relevant teaching and learning. The author argues that there is little to no evidence that SFA meets the cultural and linguistics needs of the students its serves. She writes that SFA prevents teachers from connecting learning to their students' cultural experiences, does not allow for multiple perspectives, and denotes a deficit ideology by labeling children as disadvantaged and ignoring how their cultural capital can increase student achievement. Similarly, the DI programme fails to mention the use of students' cultural references in learning. Nor does it allow for collaborative, communal work (a component of culturally relevant pedagogy). In addition, the prescribed and scripted nature of the programme limits the teacher's ability to make learning culturally relevant to students. The author concludes that these programmes may prove to be culturally subtractive for students and challenges schools to determine whether a reform will complement the needs of their students before they adopt it.

**Morrison, K. A. et al (2008). Operationalizing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A Synthesis of Classroom-Based Research. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 41(4), pp. 433-452.**

This article synthesizes the findings of 45 classroom-based studies on culturally relevant pedagogy in order to provide illustrations of what culturally relevant teaching 'looks like.' The authors use three components of culturally relevant pedagogy - High Expectations, Cultural Competence, and Critical Consciousness (Ladson-Billings 1995) - to categorize specific teaching actions exhibited in each study. They find, however, that these categories are not mutually exclusive and often exist as co-requisites. The first component (High Expectations) is illustrated by actions teachers take to not only provide

a rigorous curriculum, but to also support students to succeed within that curriculum. Examples of Cultural Competence illustrate how teachers make the curriculum, classroom environment, and teaching styles more relevant to students' cultural experiences. There were fewer examples in the research they studied of the Critical Consciousness component. Among the limitations identified by the authors is the applicability of these studies to more heterogeneous or multi-cultural classrooms, since many of these studies were about homogenous classes (e.g. all African-American classes). Among the challenges cited by the authors is the clash between culturally relevant pedagogy and traditional education. They argue that in order to enact culturally relevant pedagogy, teachers must often work against hegemonic assumptions about teaching and learning.

**Rolón-Dow, R. (2005). Critical Care: A Color(full) Analysis of Care Narratives in the Schooling Experiences of Puerto Rican Girls. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(1), pp. 77-111.**

Grounded in a historical understanding of students' lives, critical care praxis allows for race-conscious pedagogical approaches that benefit students of color. This ethnographic study focuses specifically on the experiences of second-generation Puerto Rican girls at one urban school. The article begins by providing a historical background of the US-Puerto Rico relationship and its impact on education. It then establishes a framework by describing the tenants of critical race theory (CRT), Latino/a critical race (Lat/Crit) theory, and scholarship on the ethics of care. In her study of a low-performing school undergoing dramatic changes in the ethnic composition of its students, the author found that efforts to provide culturally relevant teaching were limited to actions by individual teachers. Examining the relationships between the Puerto Rican girls and their teachers revealed that racialized perceptions of the Latino community were linked to the amount of care displayed within their classrooms. The girls reported that the teachers' care was limited to pedagogical and academic concerns and did not extend to their lives or communities. In fact, most of the teachers preferred that students separate the classroom from their homes and neighborhoods. Only two teachers in this study demonstrated a willingness to use the community as a learning site and stressed the importance of the connection with students. The author argues that teachers and schools should forge more connections with the communities where they work. Critical care, she states, calls for teachers to care for students authentically by understanding the differences between them and their students, and using the community as an extension of the classroom.