

Editors' Introduction: Celebrating Emerging Scholars in Multicultural Education

Lakia M. Scott, *Yale University*, lakia.scott@yale.edu

Taylor D. Bunn, *Hope 4 All*, taylor.bunn@gmail.com

Abstract

The *Texas Journal for Multicultural Education* addresses the vital need for a dedicated platform to discuss and research issues in multicultural education, especially within the context of Texas. This inaugural issue emphasizes the significance of informed dialogue and research amid recent legislative actions like Texas House Bill 3979 and Senate Bill 17, which challenge inclusive educational practices. Highlighting the transformative role of multicultural education, this journal showcases contributions from emerging scholars who offer fresh perspectives on equity and inclusion. The issue also features presentations from the 2024 Texas NAME conference, underscoring cutting-edge research that shapes the field. By amplifying diverse voices and fostering critical thinking, the journal aims to advance equitable educational opportunities and promote a deeper understanding of multicultural education's impact.

Key Words

emerging scholars, multicultural education

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In today's interconnected world, the importance of a dedicated forum for scholarship in multicultural education cannot be overstated. *The Texas Journal for Multicultural Education* aims to serve as this crucial platform, focusing on the issues and trends that shape education, policy, and practice in Texas. Recent legislative actions, such as Texas House Bill 3979, which restricts the teaching of critical race theory, and Texas Senate Bill 17, which bans Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices in higher education, underscore the urgent need for informed dialogue and research. These laws pose significant challenges to educators and students, threatening to undermine efforts to promote inclusive and equitable educational practices.

Multicultural education is more than an academic discipline; it is a transformative approach that ensures equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds. According to James A. Banks, a leading scholar in the field, multicultural education seeks to reform schools so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality (Banks, 2019). This journal highlights the ongoing efforts to recognize and value students' unique identities, foster a sense of belonging, and promote critical thinking about societal structures and social justice issues. In Texas, where demographic shifts and political tensions present specific

challenges, the need for informed and inclusive educational practices is more pressing than ever.

This inaugural issue is particularly special as it is dedicated to emerging scholars in the field of multicultural education. These scholars represent the future of our discipline, bringing fresh perspectives, innovative research, and a passionate commitment to equity and inclusion. Additionally, this issue features the best presentations from the recent 2024 Texas NAME conference, showcasing cutting-edge work that is shaping the landscape of multicultural education.

The theme for this inaugural issue, "Celebrating Emerging Scholars in Multicultural Education," reflects our commitment to supporting and amplifying the voices of those who are just beginning their academic journeys. It is through this lens that we explore the triumphs and challenges of multicultural education, drawing on both historical perspectives and contemporary practices. This journal aims to serve as a repository of knowledge and a catalyst for dialogue. Our contributors come from various backgrounds, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the table. Their research, insights, and reflections provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of multicultural education.

Emerging Scholar Contributions

We highlight the work of new scholars who are making significant contributions to the field of multicultural education. Emerging Scholar **Eboni Bango** and her mentor, Dr. Donna Druery, challenged the inequities in the childcare arena. The childcare system is in disarray, presenting a significant barrier for parents seeking affordable, high-quality care that is essential for obtaining stable employment, further education, or job training. For families with limited financial means, the prohibitive costs of childcare add an extra layer of difficulty. This lack of accessible and affordable childcare perpetuates the cycle of poverty, forcing many parents to choose between lower-paying, flexible jobs and higher-paying positions with incompatible childcare hours. Utilizing a Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) framework, Bango and Druery

investigate policies surrounding early childhood education and care subsidies, offer insights into how quality ratings are determined, and discuss the standards for licensed providers. Their research sheds light on the critical issues of childcare inequity and aims to deepen the understanding of the systemic challenges faced by many families. Druery is Program Coordinator II and Lecturer of Multicultural Education at Texas A&M University.

2023 and 2024 Emerging Scholar **Lynette O'Neal** explores the retention of Black teachers through an autoethnographic study. Her research examines how various factors, including principals' leadership styles, workplace climate, and opportunities for professional advancement, influenced her decision to stay in the teaching profession. Through the lens of intersectionality and Black Feminist Thought, O'Neal reflects on her personal experiences in public education via detailed vignettes. She critiques office politics as a significant factor affecting school culture and identifies it as a potential source of conflict that principals need to address. By expressing her frustrations and highlighting the silences around microaggressions and biases, O'Neal urges readers and school leaders to confront and address these underlying issues to create a more supportive and equitable work environment. O'Neal is being mentored by Dr. Tonya Jeffery, assistant professor of Science Education at the University of Houston Downtown.

Best of the 2024 Texas NAME Conference

The presentations from the 2024 Texas NAME conference showcased in this issue represent the forefront of multicultural educational research and practice. **Drs. Taylor Bunn and Amy Britton's** award-winning poster presentation, for example, challenges viewers to consider the difficulties of applying multicultural practices, especially in Texas, where legislative measures such as bans on DEI offices and critical race theory undermine efforts towards an emancipatory education. By presenting a range of definitions and strategies for multicultural education,

their work promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion while fostering cultural competence and critical consciousness among students. Despite obstacles like curriculum standards and political tensions, their approach to defining multicultural education through diverse perspectives empowers educators to maintain inclusive practices. The interactive nature of their poster encourages viewers to engage actively, thereby deepening their understanding and commitment to multicultural education both within Texas and beyond. Drs. Bunn and Britton have also participated in the TXNAME Emerging Scholars Program in 2022 where they were mentored by Dr. Lakia M. Scott, Assistant Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity at Yale.

In his award-winning roundtable presentation, 2024 Emerging Scholar, **Kenneth Williams**, wrote about multicultural learning in Black male educator spaces. The underrepresentation of Black male educators in Central Texas perpetuates challenges for future Black male leadership in education and the professional world. This issue is further compounded by research gaps that exist in understanding Black males' leadership self-efficacy, a crucial aspect for which traditional leadership theories fail to account. As the demographic landscape shifts towards minorities becoming the majority by 2043, current educational and workplace diversity inadequacies pose threats to future societal and economic success. Typecasts impact self-efficacy, necessitating research into the leadership practices of Black males to foster inclusive educational environments. Williams is being mentored by Dr. Gwendolyn Webb, associate professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development at Texas A&M University.

Dr. Salandra Grice-Johnson also provides implications for finding joy through resistance. Black female educators often encounter racism and discrimination within educational environments (Davis & Brown, 2017). This challenge is further intensified for those teaching multicultural and critical pedagogies, who may face resistance from predominantly white student bodies. In this autoethnographic study, Grice-Johnson shares her experiences as a Black female instructor teaching a multicultural education course at

a predominantly white institution (PWI). She examines the opposition she encountered while delivering an undergraduate course on critical pedagogies to future educators. Her reflections offer valuable support and encouragement for other Black female educators, highlighting ways to sustain their passion and resilience despite such challenges. Anchored in Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000), this study provides important insights for teacher education programs, higher education institutions, and educators involved in multicultural education. It should be noted that Grice-Johnson was also an Emerging Scholar in 2021 and was mentored then by Dr. Lakia M. Scott.

As we embark on this journey, we invite our readers to engage with the content critically and reflectively. The Texas Journal of Multicultural Education is not just a publication; it is a community of scholars, educators, and advocates dedicated to advancing the cause of multicultural education. We hope that this journal will inspire and inform your work, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diversity that enriches our educational landscapes.

Thank you for joining us in this endeavor. Together, we can create educational environments where every student can succeed and where diversity is celebrated as a strength. We hope you will consider submitting your research on multicultural education to the *Texas Journal for Multicultural Education* in the future. More information is available at www.txname.org/txjme.

Reference

Banks, J. A. (2019). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (9th ed.). Wiley.

