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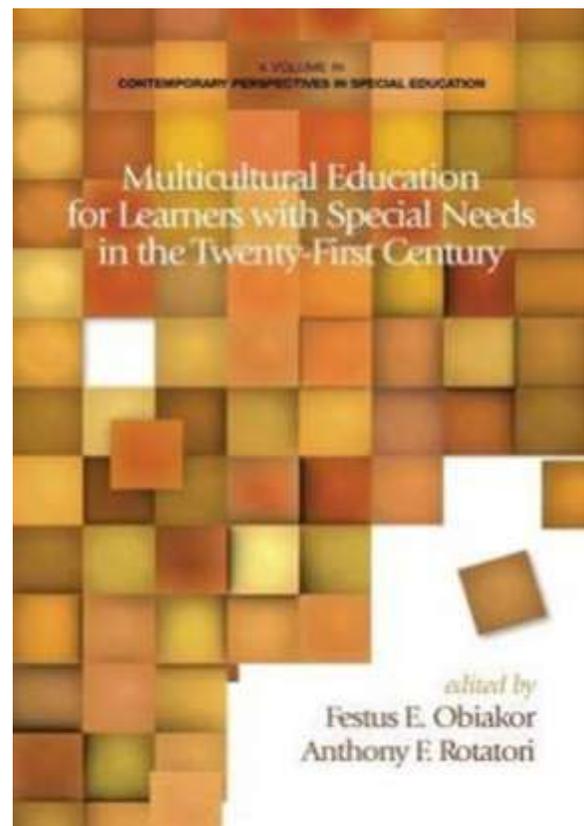
Obiakor, F. E., & Rotatori, A. F. (Eds.). (2014). *Multicultural education for learners with special education needs in the twenty-first century*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

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The federally mandated education of students with special education needs is a recent phenomenon, born in 1975 with the passage of the Education for All Handicap Children Act (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- IDEA). Celebrated as a victory for the rights of people with disabilities, the law ensured *all* students would receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). Yet in the 40 years since its inception, the face of education has changed. It is necessary to consider the current population of students in America and reflect upon who qualifies for services under IDEA, how they receive these services, and how students. As a student in the Curriculum and Instruction program at Texas Tech University, my educational interests lie in the dynamic nature of curriculum: as students and society changes, so must curriculum change to meet these new challenges. *Multicultural Education for Learners with Special Education Needs in the Twenty-First Century* analyzes the challenges of effectively teaching a diverse population of learners while preparing a generation for the demands of an increasingly diverse and globalized society.



Edited by Festus E. Obiakor and Anthony F. Rotatori, this book argues that special education disproportionately educates culturally and linguistically diverse students (CLD). From the pre-referral stage to the point of receiving special education services, the system is ineffective and inefficient in the absence of Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT). Students are referred by teachers who are ill-trained in multicultural education, measured using assessments normed for white, middle class students, and provided services that they either do not need or is irrelevant to students whose cultural and linguistic needs are not considered in the creation of curriculum and lessons. According to the editors, “[The volume] provides general and special educators innovative information that addresses the roadblocks that interfere with the implementation of effective practices such as misidentification, missassessment, miscategorization, misplacement, and misinstruction” (p. ix).

To gain a full comprehension of the book’s purpose, selected contributions and authors, and intended editorial voice, consider the credentials and research agenda of the editors. Dr. Obiakor is the Department Head and Professor of Early Childhood and Special Education at Valdosta State University. He has written extensively on multiculturalism in general and special education focusing with a focus on African American and other CLD students. He advocates the use of multidimensional education and created the Comprehensive Support Model, which “combines collaborative strategies with multifaceted interventions.” (p. 129). Dr. Rotatori is a professor of Psychology at Saint Xavier University who has examined issues and practices in Special Education, including developmental disabilities, behavioral therapy and interventions, and assessment. The editors share an interest in pursuing equitable education for students, and the book serves as a culmination of their need to raise awareness and address the changing pedagogical and

intervention needs of multicultural learners receiving special education services.

The volume is a collection of chapters, written by experts in multicultural education, outlining the needs of CLD students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how this must be addressed. The first chapter acts as the “thesis statement” of the book, rationalizing the application of CLRT, followed by a lengthy chapter that defines and examines the root causes of disproportionality in 21<sup>st</sup> century American schools and the damage it does to CLD students, their families, teachers, and schools. The chapter also highlights possible solutions through better intervention and assessment. Chapter 3 argues for the use of authentic assessment in the classroom that gives teachers a better understanding of what their students are capable. Chapters 4 through 8 focuses on the special education needs of learners within specific cultural and linguistic groups including Latina/o Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and foreign-born immigrants. Chapter 9 provides information to both administrators and teachers on delivering culturally relevant pedagogy to CLD learners. Chapter 10 instructs teachers and administrators on how to effectively prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century using information and communication technology, instructional technology, and assistive technology. A final chapter examines the cultural and linguistic background of a learner in behavior management while providing possible interventions reflecting CLRT.

*Multicultural Education for Learners with Special Education Needs in the Twenty-First Century* makes a compelling argument for administrators and teachers to reflect upon their own teaching practices and implement CLRT. The chapter dedicated to disproportionality discusses for the need for a revolution in special education. New, more inclusive evaluation practices which are adaptable to all students are needed to create a more just assessment for CLD learners. The chapter in detail describes why this is necessary, and provides a path for the subsequent chapters to recommend how this would look for multiple cultures. Following disproportionality, chapter three explains the

evaluation practice for CLD learners is authentic assessment. Authentic assessment is often performance based and allow for real life application of a skill. This form of assessment is often performed individually or in a small group and measured with a rubric rather than normed against their peers. Subsequent chapters provide educators tools to employ the practices specific to a cultural group, including supports for students who are English Language Learners. With the growing diversity in the United States, educators must recognize the need to establish an inclusive curriculum for all learners based on CLRT practices.

With the growing diversity in the United States, educators must recognize the need to establish an inclusive curriculum for all learners based on CLRT practices. The book's strongest feature is the in-depth description of how to establish CLRT practices for those uncertain how to approach the change. Chapter 4, which deals with the education of students who are Latina/o, not only explains the importance of recognizing the difference between special education needs and language needs, but also provides recommendations for applying CLRT, including connecting instruction and curriculum to the students' culture, language, and community. Turning to the topic of the over representation of African American students in special education, particularly males, a different chapter offers guidelines for practices which aim to reduce disproportionate representation. One study discussed in the chapter explained the difference that can be made by training educators about their multicultural teaching practices, such as raising expectations and beliefs about the ability of African American students or selecting textbooks which allow students to see people who mirror themselves.

While many examples are general and can be applied to all CLD learners, these and other chapters also provide information specific to a particular culture. The chapter dedicated to the education of Native

American learners, explains how past attempts to remove American Indian and Alaska Native students from their culture in favor of assimilation has impacted the current culture resulting in a continued distrust of American education- and requiring strong communication between schools, families, and tribal communities. The divide between youth and their culture also affects their self-esteem and motivation, a situation that can lead them to fall behind their peers academically. CLRT practices, which does not presume all tribes share the same values, can assist in the development of pride in one's self and community. The book provides several examples which allow educators to better understand their students and how to develop a curriculum tailored to their needs.

Despite the broad spectrum of topics and examples, this volume missed some opportunities. An entire chapter is included regarding the use of technology to educate multicultural learners with special needs, including useful tools and suggestions for their implementation in the classrooms and in IEP goal instruction. However, no discussion addressing the technology gap exists or addresses the issue of students with little or no prior knowledge how to use technologies due to limited access. While the book discusses a wide range of CLD learners, the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged are ignored. The authors seem to assume the cultural and linguistic diversity of students indicate a lower socioeconomic status (SES), and thus SES do not comprise a separate chapter. However, teachers should consider the SES of students while creating curriculum by avoiding assumptions of prior knowledge or access to educational tools such as Internet in the home, just as they would for CLD learners. While the chapter on Native American students explains how poverty has affected learners in that community, the discussion was limited to a paragraph.

The book's strong foundation would have been greatly substantiated by the recognition of economically disadvantaged

learners who receive special education services and specific interventions to use. Children living in poverty tend to perform lower on standardized tests and in the classroom than their more economically advantaged peers (Hair, Hanson, Wolfe, Pollak, 2015). Since both standardized tests and classroom performance are considered in students evaluations for special education services, this tendency should be considered as students are assessed. Additionally, the potential effects of poverty (violence, hunger, poor health) necessitate the same commitment and competence from teachers required for CLD learners. Teachers should also recognize how poverty can impact behavior and learning while providing interventions such as breaks during instruction, open access to school health personnel, and creating alternative assignments when Internet service is needed for completion. While not an ethnic or cultural community, the needs of students receiving special education services from a lower SES require specific considerations as well.

The book was compiled in an effort to change the direction of special education services for CLD students and would serve all professionals who will work with a diverse student body in all K-12 settings. The book is not limited to those who aim to work with urban populations, but those who seek positions working with CDL students in rural settings as well. The volume contributors wisely advocate for stronger preservice education is required to ensure teachers are qualified and prepared for students with a range of needs, abilities, cultures, and languages. Professionals working with CDL learners must be prepared to provide rigorous, yet attainable instruction to learners with special education needs which can connect their learning needs to practices reflective of their ethnic or cultural community. I would highly recommend instructors in special education teacher preparation programs incorporate *Multicultural Education for Learners with Special Education Needs in the Twenty-First Century* to provide educators the tools to engage CDL learners in all classrooms.

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## References

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## About the Reviewer

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Stacy Jane Mayer Fox is a doctoral student In the Curriculum and Instruction program at Texas Tech University. Her research interests include applying social justice theories in teacher education and using constructive learning theory to teach students with special education needs.



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