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Section II: Including "the Other": Transforming Knowledge and Teaching

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Section II

Including “the Other”: Transforming Knowledge and Teaching

In “Implications of Cultural Diversity in American Schools,” Johnson Afolayan reminds us of the history of education in the United States and its response to immigration. He suggests that in the past immigrant groups have looked to education as a vehicle through which to “escape poverty.” Education has responded by insisting that immigrants adapt to the United States culture. Afolayan contends that education should include the diversity of student backgrounds as a positive element in content and teaching techniques.

A number of articles point to the limitations of a traditional mainstream curriculum. Johnella Butler eloquently argues that the time has come for U.S. education to include our diversity in our knowledge base and in our teaching. This inclusion of “the other” will transform our curriculum and our teaching. Aubrey and Scott, “Knowledge into Wisdom: the Wise University” and Mintz, “Challenging Values: Conflict, Contradiction, and Pedagogy” describe the limitations of the hegemonic, Western-identified curriculum. Aubrey and Scott argue for institutions of higher education based on a philosophy of wisdom which requires, “a knowledge base (factual and experiential),... an awareness of the contextual nature of knowledge (awareness that one’s own views and those of others are interpretations), and an awareness that knowledge is a temporary settlement

based on the current best evidence (recognition of uncertainty).” Mintz, through travel and culture studies, reveals the effect of the ethnocentric lens of the “creed of universal knowledge.” She concludes by suggesting ways faculty can change their courses and teaching to enrich education through accepting the challenges of contradiction. McGinnis and Maeckelbergh demonstrate the ethnocentricity of human visual perception and argue for increased visual literacy and “sensitivity to the diversity of interpretation.”

Knowles, Medearis, and Snell’s “Putting Empowerment to Work in the Classroom,” Johnston’s, “Increasing Sensitivity to Diversity: Empowering Students,” and Hilsen and Petersen-Perlman’s, “Leveling the Playing Field,” describe specific remedies for ethnocentrism in American Indian higher education, the classroom, and student orientation in medical schools respectively.