

# Trotter Review

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Volume 14

Issue 1 *Race, Ethnicity and Public Education*

Article 2

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1-1-2002

## Introduction

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### Recommended Citation

Hart, Philip (2002) "Introduction," *Trotter Review*: Vol. 14: Iss. 1, Article 2.

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# INTRODUCTION

*Philip Hart*



We are pleased to share with our readers this issue of the Trotter Review. The events of September 11, 2001, will forever reshape our world as we know it. In addition to the far-reaching effects of this tragedy, it has revealed our general lack of knowledge about Islam and places in the world where religion and faith shape governmental and civic engagement. In crisis often comes opportunity. This opportunity to learn more about other religions and cultural pluralism is positive. It underscores the continuing importance of education and learning in today's world. So I think it particularly appropriate that this issue of the Trotter Review focuses on 'Race, Ethnicity and Public Education.'

Our world here at the Trotter Institute has changed as well since our last issue. Dr. Harold Horton, Associate Director of the Trotter Institute and Associate Editor of the Trotter Review, passed away in August of 2001. This issue of the Trotter Review, reflects his life-long interest in public education, particularly in urban settings. We will miss Dr. Horton's humor and high standards immensely. This issue of the Trotter Review is dedicated to Dr. Horton's memory. The University of Massachusetts, Boston, the Trotter Institute and the College of Education held a memorial service for Dr. Horton on November 9, 2001. This service was attended by family, friends, students and colleagues of Dr. Horton and reflected the love and dedication we all still feel toward him. At this service I was pleased to announce my initiation of the Harold Horton Lecture Series and Scholarship Fund. This lecture series and scholarship fund will insure that Dr. Horton's memory lives on in perpetuity.

Another change is that I have taken over as Editor of the Trotter Review from the very capable hands of Dr. James Jennings. I want to personally thank James for his long commitment to both the Trotter Review and to the Trotter Institute. We welcome his past contributions and look forward to his continued involvement and support.

This issue on 'Race, Ethnicity and Public Education,' focuses on culturally responsive leadership and school environments, the selection process for gifted minority children, mathematics, race and status in the classroom, the overrepresentation of African-American students in special education, and alternative school administrators at risk. In addition, given that this is my inaugural issue and given my background in public education and higher education, I have provided a commentary on public education and the continuing need for alternative education in today's world.

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Donna Davis provides us with a cogent definition of culturally responsive leadership in her article. Davis, in her discussion of the nature of democratic education, the nature of individual freedom and the barriers to culturally responsive leadership provides us with an optimistic view of the opportunity before us to truly develop culturally responsive leaders. Again, the events of September 11, forces the reality of the need to develop culturally responsive leaders even more to the forefront of discussion. Delois Maxwell's article focuses on the impact of a culturally responsive school environment on pre-service teachers. This is the report of a study of the extent to which selected features of the urban school environment impact pre-service teachers' willingness to teach in the school. This quantitative study is very useful in articulating and interpreting those variables most relevant to teaching, cultural differences and urban schools. Both Davis and Maxwell draw upon the work of James A. Banks who is a leader in the field of multicultural education.

The John M. Dillard and Netty Brazil article focuses on the difficult task of identifying gifted students by public school teachers and administrators, a task made even more complex when ethnic minority students are considered. They point out the importance of considering more than IQ tests when selecting gifted students, which should include training teachers in understanding cultural differences, lifestyles, and how to identify talented and gifted behavior. Dillard and Brazil also discuss the value of teachers knowing how to work with parents of gifted children. Competence in mathematics has been a stereotypical albatross around the neck of African-American and ethnic minority students. This is more so now in this age of high-stakes tests. The increasingly popular requirement across the country that students pass specific tests before they are allowed to graduate from high school is an alarming trend for those concerned about the future of African-American students. Randy Lattimore's study of six African-American high school students in Ohio, reveals that the cultural and social circumstances of African-American students are rarely taken into consideration when preparing them for the state mathematics tests. This results in inappropriate, inadequate and ineffective preparation for the tests, leading to mass failures and giving the impression that African-Americans are incapable of doing math. But Jacqueline Leonard and Scott Jackson Dantley show us that indeed "Malik can 'do' math." This case study recommends that teachers become cultural brokers to assist all children – particularly African-American and ethnic minority students – in learning the 'language' of mathematics.

The issues of gifted students and competence in mathematics are related on the flipside to the overrepresentation of African-American students in special education. As Valerie Maholmes' and Fay E. Brown's article shows, disproportionately large numbers of African-American students are consistently diagnosed and placed in special education programs. Maholmes

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and Brown argue that often it is the teachers' perceptions that lead to such classification, not objective reality. The authors present a model to help teachers reshape their perceptions. Finally, Maholmes and Brown make relevant recommendations for policy, research and practice.

Negative perception of minority students by their teachers is just one factor that leads to school dropout. In his article, Richard Verdugo extensively reviews literature on conditions and circumstances that lead to dropping out before completion of high school. Verdugo suggests that the two major theories of academic performance – cultural and structural – can be fused together in order to formulate more meaningful and effective interventions to the problem of school dropouts.

Christopher Dunbar, Jr., argues persuasively that in order for alternative schools to work administrators need to create a different cultural climate than in traditional schools. This includes knowledge of, and contact with, the culture of the students and their parents. In addition, parents must be encouraged to come to school. Further, given the long history of alternative schooling in American education, school superintendents have an extensive history of existing research to draw upon concerning alternative approaches to the traditional school. In my commentary, I draw upon this long history of alternative education as well as my experience in running an alternative school system in Roxbury, Massachusetts in the early 1970s. My commentary also draws on the fact that I was educated in public schools from kindergarten on through my doctorate degree. In addition, my mother taught in the Denver Public Schools for nearly forty years until her retirement a few years ago. Thus the importance of improving public education remains a priority for me. This issue of the Trotter Review reflects this interest as well as the importance of this issue to my dear departed friend Dr. Harold Horton.

I want to thank Dr. Regina Rodriguez-Mitchell for so ably stepping in as Associate Editor of the Trotter Review as well as Interim Associate Director of the Trotter Institute. Thanks also go out to Anne Gathuo for her consistent high standards as Managing Editor of the Trotter Review. I also want to welcome Powell Design to the Trotter Review, and in assisting us in taking this publication to the next level of excellence. Finally, to Trevor Clement, who worked very closely with Dr. Horton, thank you for your poetic tribute to his memory.

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