

# The Importance of Multicultural Sensitivity in an educational setting

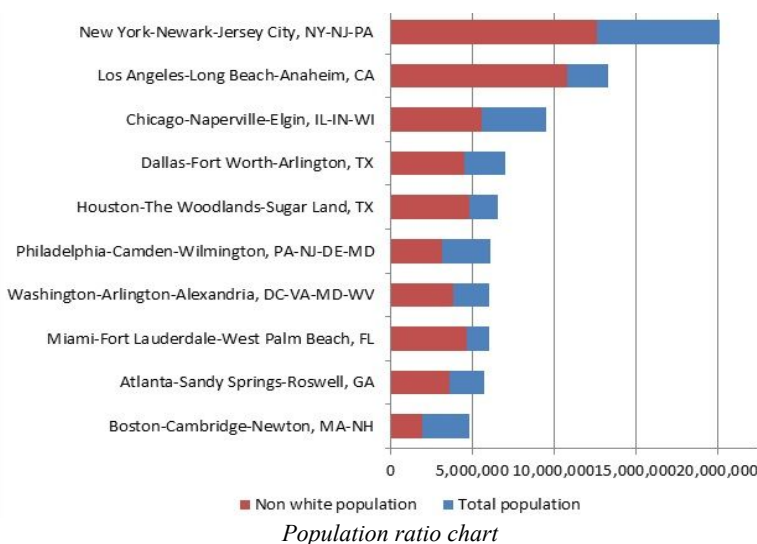
The main goal of a teacher, mentor, or educational role model is to help the students strengthen their understanding of what the world is and expand on the student's preexisting knowledge. This is meant to be accomplished by opening the student's mind to something new and describing its importance. When working with your peers there is the potential to learn and inform as well. The educational setting is about growth; to take what we know, and move to the next step with every new piece of information. What you and your peers add to the discussion is important, your perspective and belief system makes you the unique individual that you are, and it is important that every perspective is understood.

Unfortunately, organizational cultures aren't that seamless in reality. Opposing perspectives and different backgrounds can also make these discussions much more difficult to navigate which disrupts the educational discourse. The racially biased mindset is extremely prominent in the United States, and it causes a disproportionate amount of racially and ethnically diverse children and adults to struggle to be seen as equal persons their entire lives.

In the framework below, the large scale issue of racist discrimination is addressed and combated, as well as some of the individual problems that have stemmed from it. The world has learned of the terrible treatment and hardships from our past, it is now time to enact change onto the major systems that keep our world running, to push us into a positive future.

To break down the education system's flaws, we have to look at the bigger picture. The discrimination and profiling of African, Middle-Eastern, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Hispanic people is not a unique problem to educational settings, but it's often the introduction to the insensitivity and profiling.

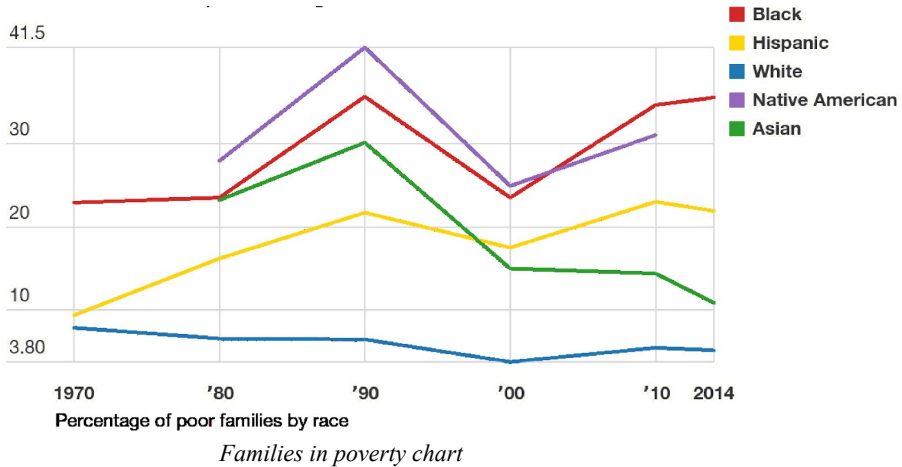
## Big picture facts:



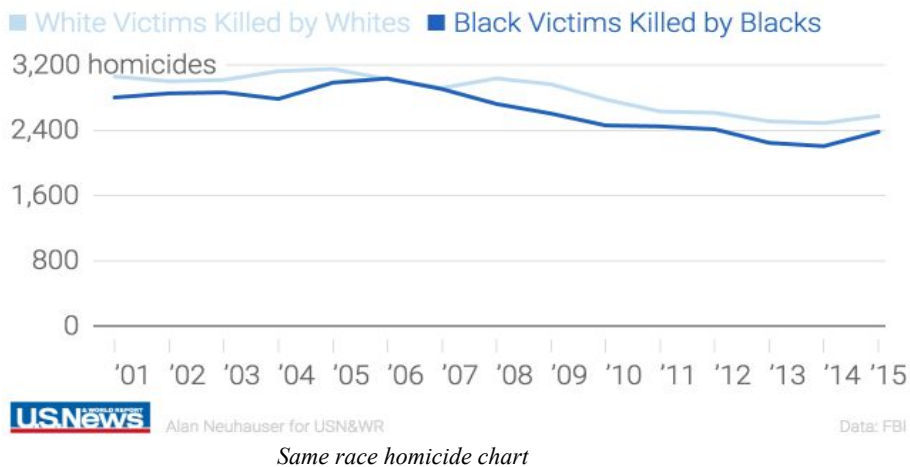
The non-white population is exceeding the white population in the United States<sup>1</sup>. We are living in a dated system that was built to favor white people. 39 percent of African-American adolescents and 33 percent of Latino adolescents are living in poverty, which is more than double the 14 percent poverty rate for White children<sup>2</sup>. The racially segregated society is significantly damaging far more communities than it is supporting, and there is no positive outcome from this.

<sup>1</sup> Pages, The Society. "U.S. Racial/Ethnic Demographics: 1960, Today, and 2050 - Sociological Images." *Sociological Images US Racial/Ethnic Demographics 1960 Today and 2050 Comments*, 2012, [thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/11/14/u-s-raciaethnic-demographics-1960-today-and-2050/](https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/11/14/u-s-raciaethnic-demographics-1960-today-and-2050/).

<sup>2</sup> "Ethnic and Racial Minorities & Socioeconomic Status." American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, July 2017, [www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/minorities](http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/minorities).



The families-in-poverty chart shows how White people are drastically in a much better socioeconomic status than all other races<sup>3</sup>. Poverty consequently leads to petty crime, which eventually matures to violent crimes and crime organizations. The phrase “black on black crime” is often used to diminish these facts, and the opposers state that black people are inherently more violent.



This is disproven by analyzing the crimes committed against the same race, and is visualized in the homicide chart to the left. Between the years of 2001 and 2015, same-race homicide rates for White people and Black people follow the same curve with Whites having a slightly higher number of homicides<sup>4</sup>. The charts prove to us that this system is unfair and unjust. It doesn't make ethical or logical sense to continue a way of living like this.

## Negative factors of the inequality in educational settings:

The privileged position doesn't have to be a negative one, although it is much too often used as a negative tool to continue separating the socioeconomic classes. Ignorance plays a large role in the creation of a privileged racist mindset, which strengthens the privileged attitude that they're in the right with their actions. Generational wealth began hundreds of years ago when racism was even more prevalent and directly harming. The redlining and segregation throughout cities and schools was blamed on the poverty and crime that was only a product of their own racist mindset. Our society has matured and diversity programs have been implemented in many schools, but now segregation happens much more quietly through the power of privatization<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Jiang, Yang, et al. “Also of Interest.” *NCCP*, 13 Jan. 2015, [www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1097.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1097.html).

<sup>4</sup> Cella, Matthew. “Race and Homicide in America, by the Numbers.” *U.S. News & World Report*, U.S. News & World Report, 2016, [www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-09-29/race-and-homicide-in-america-by-the-numbers](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-09-29/race-and-homicide-in-america-by-the-numbers).

<sup>5</sup> Kambutu, John, et al. “Privatization of Early Childhood Education (ECE): Implications for Social Justice in Nepal and Kenya.” *Policy Futures in Education*, 2020, p. 147821032092211., doi:10.1177/1478210320922111.

| Location/Sector         |                         | White | Hispanic | Black | Asian | Other |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|
| New York City           | Public District Schools | 16.1% | 40.9%    | 22.3% | 18.0% | 2.7%  |
|                         | Private Schools         | 66.9% | 12.6%    | 10.2% | 5.7%  | 4.5%  |
|                         | Public Charter Schools  | 4.3%  | 39.0%    | 51.7% | 2.7%  | 2.3%  |
| Rest of New York State  | Public District Schools | 62.1% | 18.5%    | 10.2% | 5.5%  | 3.7%  |
|                         | Private Schools         | 76.1% | 7.0%     | 7.7%  | 5.2%  | 4.0%  |
|                         | Public Charter Schools  | 13.7% | 21.7%    | 57.8% | 2.9%  | 3.9%  |
| State Total—All Sectors |                         | 46.6% | 25.0%    | 15.8% | 9.2%  | 3.4%  |

*Racial distribution of students by location and sector, 2018-2019<sup>6</sup>*

Many private and boarding schools and private universities claim that they're "colorblind" in the selection of incoming students. This selection method is not a solution, but rather a way to remove themselves from the conversation. The term "colorblind" insinuates that the color of a person's skin doesn't matter, or isn't seen. Although, since the human brain constantly makes unconscious biased decisions based on a person's appearance no one, or an entire school's staff is actually racially colorblind. It also carries the implication that the colorblind schools don't see racism as an issue, and that the minority and racially diverse communities are not facing any disadvantages in our culture.

Misinformation is typically passed down from family members, friends, or just by watching and listening to the child's role models<sup>7</sup>. That is why These conversations should start taking place as soon as children start making observations on physical traits. The formative years of a child's life is where their moral code and ideologies begin to form. the spread of biased misinformation undoubtedly affects a child's opportunities for a successful life. It makes it especially harder to achieve the same education, and can heavily affect their physical and psychological health as well.

Setting our global population of children up with the proper resources will benefit the entire human race and its future generations. Without the proper resources, the misinformation is recycled and the next generation of children will face the same prejudices as they do now and in the past. The job of an educational professional is to spread knowledge and understanding that helps further ourselves on the intellectual spectrum. The injustice in the education system is blocking the upward path for so much of our population that we are making the same mistakes our ancestors made one hundred years ago.

<sup>6</sup> Smarick, Andy, et al. "Complex Demographics of Students in New York State." *Manhattan Institute*, 20 Feb. 2020, [www.manhattan-institute.org/complex-demographics-new-york-public-private-schools](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/complex-demographics-new-york-public-private-schools).

<sup>7</sup> Hooven, Jennifer, et al. "Never Too Early to Learn: Antibias Education for Young Children." *EBSCOhost*, 1 Feb. 2018, [web.a.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=217f67c3-2436-4ef3-8e2f-3b01b565e873%40sessionmgr4008](http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=217f67c3-2436-4ef3-8e2f-3b01b565e873%40sessionmgr4008).

## Taking the next step:

In the educational setting, it is our duty to provide the students, teachers and administration staff with a full understanding of the complexity of the racial injustice. In college, preservice teachers need to strengthen their multicultural awareness and sensitivity to adequately provide their students with the knowledge and resources they need to enter our society with a truthful understanding of the position our global culture is in. Unfortunately, our colleges and universities are lacking these fundamental lessons<sup>8</sup>. Typically, multicultural awareness is brought up and discussed in schools, yet the actual act of making a change to the negative attitudes and beliefs are often not directly encouraged.

The article “Changing Preservice Teachers’ Attitudes/Beliefs About Diversity” discusses this issue. The author, Author Garmon, conducts interviews with one of his student-teachers, Leslie P., where she opens up to her predominantly white upbringing and the misinformation that became part of her belief system.

*“I remember a lot of negatives in the media. (Pause) Well, we lived about an hour north of Detroit, and I know that some things I learned in school and some things I heard that I associated with Detroit as being an almost entirely African American city, so therefore when I heard negative things about the crime and all those kind of things in Detroit, I just assumed, you know,...I just put two and two together and I thought, well, you know, the crime all stems from the African American people that are in Detroit”*

Small towns are often home to large communities of white people, and it is very common for the majority percentage of teaching staff to have the same homogeneous background that Leslie had. Without the proper education on varying cultures, these teachers are often complicit to hate crimes and profiling. Garmon listed intercultural experience, support groups, and educational experiences as the main factors in contributing to Leslie's change in attitude and belief towards cultures she was not a part of.

These factors mimic the results of the research in another study-based article “Changing Preservice Teachers’ Attitudes/Beliefs About Diversity”. In this paper, a group of preservice teachers participate in a cultural learning experience, where each preservice teacher was paired with a student that was racially/ethnically diverse and spent ten hours outside of the classroom with them at birthday parties, the children’s sporting events, family dinners, and whatever else the child was interested in. The resulting reflections from the preservice teachers correlate to the interviews with Leslie, where at first, their attitude was biased, but reformed into an open-minded belief system that learned to love the multicultural aspect of teaching.

---

<sup>8</sup> Garmon, M. Arthur. “Changing Preservice Teachers’ Attitudes/Beliefs About Diversity.” *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2004, pp. 201–213., doi:10.1177/0022487104263080.

The general perspective most children have encourage diversity, and building off of that preexisting mindset can help solidify the open-minded attitude into their moral code<sup>9</sup>. By the time a student is starting their preservice teaching position, their mindset and moral code has matured to a level that can be difficult to reform<sup>10</sup>. It is very important we place equality for human rights and multicultural awareness at the highest level of importance in the K-12 classrooms to ensure they remain significant to our goals and aspirations.

There are programs and experiments taking place all around the world with the hope to mitigate the biased attitudes of teachers<sup>11</sup>. As the research grows, and our knowledge of the situation becomes more substantial we have an increasingly large responsibility to act on it. The implementation of a curriculum with a strong baseline that encourages diversity has taken place in many age groups of students and concluded with mainly very positive results, using these programs with a larger group of students is the next step.

## To think about, and act on:

The mindset that physical traits define who you are as a person is strong in the white community, the debate consists of the disadvantaged population pleading for the necessary human rights to live a normal life, and the opposing view that they don't deserve any more rights than they have. As we enter a technological and scientific age of humanity we have the power to prove and disprove any point made for either side, and it is our responsibility to inform the uneducated on the facts of the issue.

Implementing a strong focus on multicultural awareness and sensitivity into every level of education is necessary for our society to surpass the grip that racism has had on us, but there will still be a wide spectrum of opposing beliefs and perspectives. In order to work around this monumental issue a new focus point is needed in all levels of education, wide spread discussion on human rights will help spread information on the inhumane treatment millions of people must suffer through, and it will help create a more solid fundamental level of understanding of how we should judge others with an open mind. To create true justice in the education system and every other industry, we must start focusing our time and energy into positive actions based on helping others rather than ourselves; spreading love rather than hate.

“So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.” - John Lewis

---

<sup>9</sup> Long, Susi, et al. “‘Diversity as a Verb’ in Preservice Teacher Education: Creating Spaces to Challenge the Profiling of Young Children.” *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp. 152–164., doi:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.2.152.

<sup>10</sup> Sanger, Matthew, and Richard Osguthorpe. “Teacher Education, Preservice Teacher Beliefs, and the Moral Work of Teaching.” [www.elsevier.com/locate/Tate](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/Tate), 16 Sept. 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Garmon, M. Arthur. “Changing Preservice Teachers’ Attitudes/Beliefs About Diversity.” *Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2004, pp. 201–213., doi:10.1177/0022487104263080.

## Sources

Bustamante, Juleesa. "K-12 Enrollment Statistics [2020]: Totals by Grade Level + More." EducationData, 2019, [educationdata.org/k12-enrollment-statistics/](http://educationdata.org/k12-enrollment-statistics/).

Cella, Matthew. "Race and Homicide in America, by the Numbers." U.S. News & World Report, U.S. News & World Report, 2016, [www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-09-29/race-and-homicide-in-america-by-the-numbers](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2016-09-29/race-and-homicide-in-america-by-the-numbers).

"Ethnic and Racial Minorities & Socioeconomic Status." American Psychological Association, American Psychological Association, July 2017, [www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/minorities](http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/minorities).  
Fershtman, Chaim. "Social Status, Economics And." The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics, 2012 Version, 2012, doi:10.1057/9781137336583.1686.

Garmon, M. Arthur. "Changing Preservice Teachers' Attitudes/Beliefs About Diversity." Journal of Teacher Education, vol. 55, no. 3, 2004, pp. 201–213., doi:10.1177/0022487104263080.

Hooven, Jennifer, et al. "Never Too Early to Learn: Antibias Education for Young Children." EBSCOhost, 1 Feb. 2018, [web.a.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=217f67c3-2436-4ef3-8e2f-3b01b565e873%40sessionmgr4008](http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=217f67c3-2436-4ef3-8e2f-3b01b565e873%40sessionmgr4008).

Jiang, Yang, et al. "Also&nbsp;of&nbsp;Interest." NCCP, 13 Jan. 2015, [www.nccp.org/publications/pub\\_1097.html](http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_1097.html).

Kambutu, John, et al. "Privatization of Early Childhood Education (ECE): Implications for Social Justice in Nepal and Kenya." Policy Futures in Education, 2020, p. 147821032092211., doi:10.1177/1478210320922111.

Kyuchukov, Hristo, and William New. "Diversity vs. Equality: Why the Education of Roma Children Does Not Work." Intercultural Education, vol. 27, no. 6, 2016, pp. 629–634., doi:10.1080/14675986.2016.1259093.

Long, Susi, et al. "'Diversity as a Verb' in Preservice Teacher Education: Creating Spaces to Challenge the Profiling of Young Children." Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, vol. 15, no. 2, 2014, pp. 152–164., doi:10.2304/ciec.2014.15.2.152.

Pages, The Society. "U.S. Racial/Ethnic Demographics: 1960, Today, and 2050 - Sociological Images." Sociological Images US RacialEthnic Demographics 1960 Today and 2050 Comments, 2012, [thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/11/14/u-s-raciaethnic-demographics-1960-today-and-2050/](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/11/14/u-s-raciaethnic-demographics-1960-today-and-2050/).

Sahin, Mehmet. "Cross-Cultural Experience in Preservice Teacher Education." Teaching and Teacher Education, vol. 24, no. 7, 2008, pp. 1777–1790., doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.02.006.

Sanger, Matthew, and Richard Osguthorpe. "Teacher Education, Preservice Teacher Beliefs, and the Moral Work of Teaching." Www.elsevier.com/Locate/Tate, 16 Sept. 2010.

Smarick, Andy, et al. "Complex Demographics of Students in New York State." Manhattan Institute, 20 Feb. 2020, [www.manhattan-institute.org/complex-demographics-new-york-public-private-schools](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/complex-demographics-new-york-public-private-schools).