INTRODUCTION FROM DR. DIANA SLAUGHTER-DEFOE GUEST EDITOR

The Clayton Lectures

1998	**Waiting for a Miracle: Why Schools Can't Solve Our Problems and How We Can** **James P. Comer**, Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry, Yale University
1999	**Race and School Desegregation: Legal and Educational Issues** **Edgar G. Epps**, Marshall Field IV Professor of Urban Education Emeritus, The University of Chicago, and Professor of Educational Policy and Community Studies, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
2000	**Teaching Young Children Well: Implications for 21st Century Educational Policies** **Barbara T. Bowman**, President Emeritus and Co-Founder of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development, Chicago, IL
2001	**Urban Educational Challenges: Is Reform the Answer?** **Susan H. Fuhrman**, Dean and George and Diane Weiss Professor of Education, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania

The Constance E. Clayton Lecture was established in 1998 at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education by the first Constance E. Clayton Professor in Urban Education, Dr. Diana T. Slaughter-Defoe. The lecture was established in recognition of the contributions of Dr. Constance Clayton, alumna and former university trustee, to the education of the children of the city of Philadelphia during her thirteen year tenure as Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, a tenure that concluded in 1993.

Contributors to the annual lecture series have included the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, the DuBois Collective Research Institute, the National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF), the Center for Health Achievement, Neighborhood Growth and Ethnic Studies (CHANGES), and University Departments of Afro-American Studies, Psychiatry, and Sociology. External support has been provided by the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children (DVAEYC), PNC Bank, and Child Care Matters. The lecture provides a forum or opportunity for practicing or prospective teachers, researchers, and scholars to reflect upon, evaluate and discuss key concepts and issues in the field of urban education.

Urban education is an interdisciplinary field, characterized by an attempt to bring as many perspectives as possible to the study of research pertaining to urban educational policy and to the practice of educating children and youth whose lives unfold in densely populated urban metropolitan areas. Consistent themes that are addressed with varying degrees of emphasis by urban educators include: a) an accounting of the basis for urban children's school failures and successes; b) a focus upon the sources of educational inequities whether in relation to class, race, or gender, and appropriate forms for their resolution; c) an emphasis on school improvement, even school restructuring, such that educational institutions can address children's personal-social needs, cognitive capacities, and behavioral motivations; d) an emphasis on the potential contributions of parents, families, and even communities to positive and constructive classroom and school change; e) a strong allegiance to the value of quality public education for all of Americaís children; and f) an expectation that teacher and administrator training/retraining are essential elements to realizing these educational aims.

Before the 1980s, our nation had great faith in the promise of educational research and training institutions to make a real difference in the lives of school children and youth. Today, however, this optimism has waned, and public schools, in particular, are being challenged. Will they be the primary vehicles for teaching and learning among the nation's urban and "minority" youth in the 21st century? Should they be? Can they be? The first four Clayton lectures offered provocative perspectives on many of

the most important issues in urban education. At times, the lecturers presented very similar views and at other times, strikingly different perspectives on urban educational themes.

In the 1998 inaugural of the Clayton lecture, James P. Comer emphasizes that the entire community in which he grew up was:

> locked into a conspiracy to make certain that I grew up to be a responsible, contributing citizen. The school was a natural part of the community because school people could be seen in the grocery store, post office, and other local public places. Because of my preschool experiences at home and in the community, I was prepared to go to school ready for learning and to elicit positive responses from teachers (p.6).

His biography led to the creation of the Comer School Development Program, a holistic, developmentally focused, school intervention program designed to introduce and sustain a positive school climate by recreating community within the school. Comer believes that school leadership must suspend the prevalent American cultural belief that "disadvantaged" and racial minority children are less intelligent than other children. Instead, these leaders should focus on enabling school staff and parents to help children to develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, and physically, so that they can learn in school. In the Comer School Development Program, structural changes in school organization are not ends in themselves; rather, these changes are a means to the end of enhancing the development of children. I have participated in the evaluation of a school in Chicago that has adopted the Comer model, and I found that its within-school implementation was correlated with modest outside-school community economic and social resources. I am presently writing about this unexpected and unpredicted finding.

Like Kenneth Clark in his pathbreaking 1965 book *Dark Ghetto*, Edgar G. Epps focuses squarely on the economic basis of American race relations and racial discrimination as factors essential to understanding urban education in his 1999 lecture. The concepts contextualize his overview and analysis of the legal and social history of public school desegregation, since the Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court Decision in 1954. School desegregation was a partial answer to the challenge issued to White institutions and privilege by the Civil Rights revolution. Epps pointed to the contemporary limits of legal remedies to inequality of educational opportunity; he observed that, "In essence, beginning with the Reagan presidency and continuing through the 90's, the federal government and federal courts, as well as state courts and legislatures have proceeded systematically to dismantle the legislative and judicial protections gained by African Americans and subsequently other people of color, women, and the handicapped" (p.8). Emergent legal and social initiatives have had little to do with educational research findings which suggested that desegregation benefits the academic achievements of Black children and does not harm the achievements of White children. Rather, the initiatives seem to reflect the reality that neither White nor Black communities and parents were prepared for the requisite sacrifices necessary to enable desegregation to work. By the turn of this 21st century both Whites and Blacks had serious reservations about supporting school desegregation as an educational policy designed to remedy educational inequalities, and today public elementary schools are more "segregated" than ever. In his address, Epps concluded that the future reduction of segregation in public schools should be perceived as part of an integral community development effort. I think that more visible, supportive national leadership is essential to discuss unresolved issues associated with educational inequalities, particularly those that are linked to race, ethnicity, and gender.

Barbara T. Bowman's lecture in year 2000 points to the tremendous strides afforded by new research knowledge in the area of prescriptions for the care and education of young children who are particularly vulnerable because they are developing rapidly. She affirms that studies have documented the close connection between children's relationships with their teachers (including especially, their earliest teachers, their parents) with school success and academic achievement. Bowman observes that currently many early childhood programs lack the systemic supports from public schools that kindergartens enjoy, but that the national trend is clearly in the direction of correcting this by pointing to the increase in the numbers of early childhood specialists in state departments of education. Notably, during Constance Clayton's work with the School District of Philadelphia, early childhood programs, including Head Start, became integrally associated with elementary schooling. Bowman also identified several barriers to "providing stimulating, interesting, responsive programs to children beginning at birth" (p.3). Speaking to early childhood professionals, Bowman emphasized the importance of developmental principles that can be realized through a variety of culturally different perspectives and practices; time and effort devoted to whether a particular practice is "developmentally appropriate" is, in her view, misdirected time and effort. Although I agree with Bowman and others such as Lisa Delpit and Shirley Brice Heath about the necessity for public schools to adapt and adjust to their clientele, I would also argue that cultural groups such as African Americans, should reconsider practices that disadvantage their children at school entry.

Two of the first four Clayton lecturers - Epps and Bowman - indirectly pointed to the limited or even incidental role of educational research in public educational policies informing urban school reform efforts. Susan H. Fuhrman chooses to address this issue more directly. In the most recent Clayton (2001) address, Fuhrman indicated that she questions the utility and viability of school reform efforts given identifiable political factors, an overemphasis on structural solutions, and current reliance on what appears to be an inadequate research base that guides decisions about school reform. Reforms are essentially "...specialized programs with loyal constituencies" that frequently have opportunistic origins which do not stress school improvement, programmatic implementation, and academic outputs (Stone et. al, Quoted in Fuhrman, p.3).

For many reasons, Fuhrman believes that urban American schools may focus too much on "school reforms" and not enough on "school improvement." Protracted school improvement necessarily involves influencing educators' knowledge, skills, and beliefs about whether urban children can learn. Cultures of reflective practice that draw upon evidence, including and especially evidence found through research, have to be created for and with educators. Advances in knowledge and skills associated with their professionalization as educators is essential, and leadership in curriculum design should offer options that can be used to enable educators to become the very best in their chosen curricular specialization. Parenthetically, I think that in urban schools, many introduced "reforms" are simply categorical policy strategies for providing children with observable experiences and programs that are traditionally and routinely part of the experiences of more socially privileged children, given the stronger fiscal tax base of their communities. From this perspective, urban school improvement also needs to be designed to address the life styles and conditions of urban children.

I hope that my overview and commentary stimulate reader interest and additional commentary for that is how the field of urban education can, and should, advance. In 2002, I can truly state that it is both an honor and a pleasure to have been invited to publish these scholarly and informative lectures in the inaugural issue of the Penn GSE Perspectives in Urban Education electronic journal. I hope that such publications will become a tradition, and that Clayton lectures are included in future issues to expand the forum for dialogue even further. Meanwhile, in the immediate future, I look forward to this online journal becoming the best of its kind.

As guest editor, Diana Slaughter-Defoe especially wishes to thank Janean Williams, research assistant Donghui Zhang, and editorial board members Katherine Schultz and Anne Burns Thomas for their special and timely contributions toward reproduction of the Clayton lectures in this exciting new format.

Dr. Diana Slaughter-Defoe
Constance E. Clayton Professor in Urban Education

Dr. Diana Slaughter-Defoe received a B.A. with honors In the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago, and an M.A. In the Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago. Her Ph.D. was awarded In the Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, with emphasis on Developmental and Clinical Child Psychology.

Dr. Slaughter-Defoe joined the standing faculty in 1998 as Clayton Professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania after having taught for 20 years at Northwestern University. Prior to going to the School of Education at Northwestern in 1977, she served on the faculties of the Department of Psychiatry in Howard University in Washington, DC (1967-8); the Child Study Center at Yale University (1968-1970); and the Committee on Human development and Department of Education at the University of Chicago (1970-7). At Northwestern, she was also a member of the Institute for Policy research, Studies and the Department of African American Studies. Her dissertation research, for which she received the distinguished research award from Pi Lambda Theta, was conducted with a Chicago-area Head Start population of mothers and children.

In 1994, she was cited by the American Psychological Association for Distinguished Contributions to Research in Public Policy. She has completed government-funded research in the area of middle school-aged children and families' experiences in diverse urban private school settings. Her publications include an edited volume on this topic: (Greenwood Press, 1988), that is a "classic first". Dr. Slaughter-Defoe is presently a member of the Board of Visitors of the Learning, Research and Development Center (LRDC) of the University of Pittsburgh, and has been a member of the Governing Council of the Society for Research in Child Development. She is on the editorial boards of Applied Developmental Psychology and NHSA Dialog: A Research-To-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field.

Dr. Slaughter-Defoe's research interests include culture, primary education, and home-school relations that facilitate in-school academic achievement. She just concluded a collaborative research evaluation of the Comer School development Program, a parent-focused school reform model implemented in several lower income Chicago schools. New ethnographic research in Philadelphia focusing on study of the learning environments in the primary grades of two Philadelphia elementary schools that are successfully serving 40 percent or more lower income and African American children began in fall, 2001.

guest-editor