

DIANA T. SLAUGHTER-DEFOE, VOLUME EDITOR

# Messages

for

# Educational Leadership

The Constance E. Clayton Lectures 1998–2007





# ***1. Introduction and Overview: The Constance E. Clayton Lecture Series***

DIANA T. SLAUGHTER-DEFOE  
University of Pennsylvania

## ***Background to the Clayton Lectures***

I am a developmental and clinical psychologist by academic background. However, urban education, by definition, 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 education with children and youth whose lives unfold in densely populated areas—whether city or suburb. Thus, psychiatry and public health; sociology; developmental, experimental, and social psychology; history and foreign language studies, as well as education, are disciplines and fields represented among the Clayton lecturers and respondents in urban education in this volume.

I think the concept of urban education as it addresses African Americans and other “underrepresented minorities” really emerged and evolved over the past two generations, following the publication of the late Allison Davis’ 1948 lecture at Harvard University, *Social Class Influences Upon Learning*. A social anthropologist by disciplinary background, Davis received an academic appointment in the Department of Education at the University of Chicago, and thus began to apply concepts from his disciplinary field to the problems of education—problems that he addressed in his time by emphasizing how schools needed to appreciate the cultural differences linked to the socioeconomic backgrounds of children from impoverished backgrounds, irrespective of their ethnic or racial origins. Professor Davis was the doctoral

dissertation mentor of my dissertation advisor at the University of Chicago, Professor Robert D. Hess. In research published in the early 1950s, Davis and Eells (1953), with Hess as one of their graduate assistants, attempted to develop “culture-fair” tests for school pupils.

In 1998, I established, with the gracious support of former Dean Susan Fuhrman, the Clayton Lecture Series in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, to further honor Constance E. Clayton, the African American woman and educational leader for whom my chair was endowed in 1993. Consistent themes in the lectures that ensued include attention to (a) an accounting of the basis for urban children’s school failures and successes; (b) a focus upon the sources of educational inequities, and appropriate forms of their resolution, whether in relation to class, race, or gender; (c) an emphasis on school improvement, even school restructuring, such that educational institutions are modified to address children’s personal-social needs, cognitive capacities, and behavioral motivations; (d) an emphasis on the potential contributions of parents, families, even communities, to positive and constructive classroom and school change; (e) an almost unquestioned allegiance to the value of quality education for all of the nation’s children; and (f) an expectation that teacher, and administrative, training/retraining are essential elements to realizing this educational aim. The lectures explore how these ideas have been presented, described, and rationalized over the past two generations when, in my view, the concept of urban education really emerged and evolved.

A word about how the annual Clayton lecturers were chosen by myself: I usually conferred very informally with members of a school-wide Clayton steering committee. Influential factors included persons I knew as significant mentors who also had national reputations; persons whose current educational research and policy interests significantly interfaced with themes linked to the ongoing life works and concerns of Dr. Constance Clayton; and my desire to vary the annual program so as to maximize the interests of different constituencies in our school and in the University. In the first year of the series, a school-wide Clayton steering committee was established that endured; members included myself, the current dean of the school, all African American faculty, and selected faculty with special interests in early childhood development and/or African American urban education. Co-sponsorships included other units in the University of Pennsylvania (e.g., Africana Studies, Engineering, History, Psychiatry, Psychology, and Sociology, the National Center for the Study of Fathers and Families [NCOFF], the Netter Center for Community Partnerships [NCCP]), and organizations outside of the University (e.g., Delaware Valley for the Association of the Education of Young Children [DVAEYC]).

### ***A Brief Overview of the Clayton Lectures***

Upon reflection, the above strategy worked well, and I believe readers will find the first 10 lectures reproduced in this volume in Chapters 3–12 very powerful and engaging. In addition, the Clayton Lecture series addressed many themes highlighted as important to the professional life of Dr. Constance Clayton in the Foreword to this volume written by Bernard Watson, her longtime colleague and friend. For example, Connie Clayton’s emphasis in my interview with her in Chapter 14 on the importance of a supportive home environment throughout childhood and adolescence to her own development as a leading educator is echoed in Chapters 3 (Comer) and 8 (Slaughter-Defoe). Further, three lectures focus on early childhood intervention and development, complementing her early involvement and engagement of the Philadelphia Project Head Start program: Chapters 5 (Bowman), 10 (Schweinhart), and 13 (see Murray’s discussion of the panel by Craig and Sharon Ramey, John Fantuzzo, and Vivian Gadsden in this chapter). Dr. Watson also observed that Dr. Clayton reached out to nourish and enrich curriculum in math and science; a similar outreach strategy is a primary aim of the GO GIRL intervention described by Pamela Reid in Chapter 11.

Two lectures focus on effective teaching and educational leadership, a lifelong preoccupation closely linked to her successful superintendence: Chapters 7 (Darling-Hammond) and 12 (Gomez). In the invited Chapter 15, Loder-Jackson addresses intergenerational mentoring and educational leadership issues. While all lecturers draw implications for school improvement and sustaining such interventions, this broad theme was a special focus of Chapters 3 (Comer), 6 (Fuhrman), and 12 (Gomez), each with different ideas about where to focus for enduring school change: school development, school accountability, and individualizing and enhancing instruction. Lecturers also address the continuing concerns of Dr. Clayton for positive public health, both physical and mental: Chapters 3 (Comer) and 13 (see Murray’s summary and discussion of the lecture by Dr. Margaret Spencer in this chapter). Last, but definitely not least, three lectures address important aspects of African American history and culture, particularly as racial issues interface with educational practices and policies: Chapters 4 (Epps), 9 (Jones), and 13 (see Murray’s summary and discussion of the lecture by Dr. V. P. Franklin). In Chapter 4, Epps evaluates school desegregation; in Chapter 9, Jones discusses factors linked to the intractability of racial inequalities; and in Chapter 13, Franklin’s summary alludes to the implications of this cultural history for contemporary educational policies.

I began my career at a time when the nation had great faith in the promise of educational research and training institutions for making a real

difference in the lives of school children and youth; today the nation's optimism has been challenged. Public schools, in particular, are challenged. Will they be the primary vehicle for teaching and learning among the nation's urban and "minority" youth in the 21st century? Can they be the foundation for equal opportunity in American society? Should they be? I hope that as we read and digest these urban education lectures, we keep the larger questions before us.

### ***Production of the Clayton Lectures***

My current administrative assistant, using available audiotapes and videotapes, immediately transcribed each one of the 10 lectures following the lecture. Over the years 1998 to 2010, respectively, these administrative assistants were Janean Williams, Jennifer Bateman, Donghui Zhang, Crystal Aderson, Erin Bogan, and Krystal Anderson. I am very appreciative of the dedication shown by these assistants; all but one assistant were graduate student workers. Like myself, the assistants were present at the lecture. Members of the Graduate School of Education editorial staff at the University of Pennsylvania rechecked the resultant transcriptions.

However, when I started publication plans in 2008, I supervised two graduate assistants who re-reviewed the earlier audio materials and transcripts. Therefore, I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of students in the Applied Psychology and Human Development Division, Andrea Coffin and Lapde So. Andrea especially devoted many hours during the Fall 2008 semester, and part of Spring 2009, to making each transcript, originally based upon a spoken lecture, ready for a reading audience. She was guided by my expressed wish to model the volume after the late Professor Allison Davis' 1948 published lecture on *Social Class Influences Upon Learning* at Harvard University. I also shared the transcripts on two different occasions between 2009 and 2011 with the first 10 lecturers. Thus, I think the lengthy and deliberate editorial process preserved the actual presentations, the spirited styles in which they were delivered, and the masterful links between the technical meaning of what was said and a delivery intelligible to everyday persons.

### ***Concluding Comment***

In the concluding chapter to this volume, Chapter 16, I discuss one area of Dr. Clayton's life noted by Dr. Watson but not addressed in the Clayton Lecture Series: the arts. With Dr. Clayton, I also believe children must discover through education the pleasures and joys associated with the humanities, both mainstream and intra-cultural, if they are to reach

adulthood as whole persons. In contrast, the following Chapter 2 was originally drafted for Black History Month, 2002. It is an orienting chapter, written for newcomers like I once was, to the professional life and scholarship of Dr. Constance E. Clayton, Black Woman and Educational Leader in the metropolitan Philadelphia community.

### ***References***

- Davis, A. (1948). *Social-class influences upon learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Davis, A., & Eells, K. (1953). *Davis-Eells test of general intelligence or problem-solving ability*. London, England: World Book Company.