

Transitioning Children with Disabilities

STUDIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Volume 34

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Scope

This series addresses the many different forms of exclusion that occur in schooling across a range of international contexts and considers strategies for increasing the inclusion and success of all students. In many school jurisdictions the most reliable predictors of educational failure include poverty, Aboriginality and disability. Traditionally schools have not been pressed to deal with exclusion and failure. Failing students were blamed for their lack of attainment and were either placed in segregated educational settings or encouraged to leave and enter the unskilled labour market. The crisis in the labor market and the call by parents for the inclusion of their children in their neighborhood school has made visible the failure of schools to include all children.

Drawing from a range of researchers and educators from around the world, *Studies in Inclusive Education* will demonstrate the ways in which schools contribute to the failure of different student identities on the basis of gender, race, language, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status and geographic isolation. This series differs from existing work in inclusive education by expanding the focus from a narrow consideration of what has been traditionally referred to as special educational needs to understand school failure and exclusion in all its forms. Moreover, the series will consider exclusion and inclusion across all sectors of education: early years, elementary and secondary schooling, and higher education.

Transitioning Children with Disabilities

From Early Childhood through Adulthood

Foreword by James E. Martin

Edited by

Antonio L. Ellis

Howard University, Washington, DC, USA



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**ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
*TRANSITIONING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES***

“As a professor and former Senior Associate Dean, I have spent over 30 years preparing leaders to implement effective practices for children and youth with disabilities in schools and communities. This book should be essential reading for anyone concerned with raising the awareness of educators to the struggles of young people with disabilities as they adjust to the adult world of work and post-secondary education. The chapters weave together into a fabric as they synthesize research related to effective practices to assist youth with disabilities in their passage from primary school through to adulthood. As a comprehensive work, the book fills a noticeable gap in our profession’s ability to identify the key elements, strategies, and resources required for successful transition into postsecondary education.”

– **Carol A. Kochhar-Bryant, Ph.D., Professor and former Senior Associate Dean, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University**

“One of the challenges faced in the field of special education is how to best help children with disabilities transition from primary school into postsecondary education and employment settings. In that regard, this is a timely textbook that contains the latest information regarding evidence-based models and best practices for young people with disabilities and their families, educators, service providers, and administrators. The research that has been compiled in this text will positively impact the postsecondary outcomes for our most vulnerable children and youth, as they grow into adulthood. I applaud Dr. Antonio Ellis for assembling such an impressive body of scholarship.”

– **Antwan Wilson, Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools**

“As a researcher on education, manager of schools and college dean, I’ve seen how methods of preparing youth for life have not included individuals with all types of disabilities. But as a father of a young black man who has intellectual disabilities, I see and feel battles of inequality that he faces every day. My son’s inability to read because of a disability didn’t lessen my expectation that his school teach him. And now that he’s graduated from high school, I also expect to see opportunities for him to contribute to society to the best of his abilities. *Transitioning Children with Disabilities* is not just for people like me, it’s for all of us who want safe and productive communities.”

– **Andre Perry, Ph.D., Rubenstein Fellow, Brookings Institution**

“This text includes an impressive line-up of authors writing on one of the most important issues in the field of secondary transition today.”

– **David W. Test, Ph.D., Professor of Special Education, University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

“*Transitioning Children with Disabilities* is a touchstone for authentic educational leaders. Dr. Antonio Ellis shares invaluable information that serves as a key resource for ensuring the long-term success of young people with disabilities. The research in this book is the key to unlocking the potential and changing the long-term trajectory for some of our most vulnerable students. I believe the information contained in this book could transform the way we serve students in both K-12 and higher education settings. You will return to this book repeatedly, and each time it will be an impactful learning experience. I highly recommend this text to my fellow educators.”

– **Andrae Townsel, Ed.D., Principal, Southbridge High School**

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FOREWORD

Transition education, practices, and services improve post-high school education and employment outcomes of young adults with disabilities. Compared to three decades ago, young adults with disabilities exiting from high school today are more likely to obtain paid employment and enroll in postsecondary education. Unfortunately, differential post high school outcomes exist and race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability categorization influence these poor outcomes, which result in social and economic marginalization of far too many young adults with disabilities.

Transitioning Children with Disabilities is not another transition 101 text. Rather Ellis compiled a unique group of authors to examine advanced and difficult topics in depth. To me, *Transitioning Children with Disabilities* examines three general themes essential to gain an advanced understanding of transition. First, I believe *Transitioning Children with Disabilities* is the first transition book to forthrightly examine issues facing students who risk social and economic marginalization after exiting high school. To do this, Ellis and his colleagues examine the need to include transition education into the personnel preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. McDaniel describes how to support the transition of English Language Learners with Special Needs, then Garraway and Robinson argue for increasing cultural responsiveness to improve transition outcomes for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students. Harris and his colleagues end the book with an appeal to use career readiness methods to increase the number of African American Males with Learning Disabilities attending college.

Second, *Transitioning Children with Disabilities* describes transition education systems and emerging methods. Ellis' book is the first book I've seen to present and explain Kohler, Gothberg, and Coyle's new Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0. Moore and colleagues provide principals' creation of building-level transition education practices. Jones and associates present an effort to increase data reporting on graduation rates in charter school across one state and its overall impact on graduation rates. Gardner and associates examine the need to use explicit and systematic instruction to teach students with disabilities literacy, self-advocacy, and organizational skills to expand postsecondary education and employment opportunities.

Third, Ellis expands the focus of transition away from only secondary schools to earlier and later years. Garraway provides a chapter on how to improve the transition of children with behavior issues from preschool to kindergarten. Walker examines how educators may use technology to prepare students for transition from private elementary into public secondary schools. To expand the breadth of transition education practices, Gothberg and her colleagues collaborated to conceptualize a comprehensive transition model than extends from birth to adulthood.

FOREWORD

Transitioning Children with Disabilities provides a useful means to gain increased knowledge of difficult transition issues while it expands the traditional focus of transition away from secondary years and makes a strong case for transition education to begin much earlier. Family members, policy makers, college students who want an advanced understanding of transition education, and educators delivering or supervising transition education services will want to read Ellis' book to gain a better understanding of what transition education must now do. As our field acknowledges the success transition education practices have had in facilitating improved post-high school education and employment outcomes, we also know many groups of students still do not achieve meaningful post-high school outcomes. *Transitioning Children with Disabilities* arrives at the perfect time as the field of transition education must now develop and implement improved methods to improve post-school outcomes for all students with disabilities.

James E. Martin
Zarrow Family Professor and Director
University of Oklahoma

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Ultimately, I am grateful for the contributing scholars of this volume. Thank you for taking this tedious journey with me! In addition, I deeply appreciate Jolanda Karada, Michel Lokhorst, Peter de Liefde and the Sense Publishers staff for publishing this body of research.

Role Models

I was inspired to produce this book in 2013 when Rev. Edward Jackson (associate minister at Alfred Street Baptist Church) helped me transition through moments when I faced disability-based discrimination from employers, which led me towards a downward spiral. Rev. Jackson is indeed a monumental figure and role model in my life, who served as the impetus for this book.

I acknowledge Mr. Linard H. McCloud (my high school music teacher) for believing in me, when other teachers suggested that I wasn't college material. Mr. McCloud's love, care, firmness, and encouragement showed me what an authentic educator looks like.

District of Columbia Public Schools Transition Team

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The Village

Countless persons helped me transition for early childhood into adulthood. Some of these persons include my beloved mother, Janice Ellis Myers. My resilient granny,

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Fraternity Affiliation

I pay homage to the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. More specifically, I recognize members of the Iota Upsilon Lambda Chapter, Montgomery County Maryland, for always believing in and supporting me. While I am unable to list all members by name due to space constraints, I acknowledge Dr. Darryl Hill (chapter president), Attorney Eric Elmore (my sponsor), Bro. Carlton Brooks (my sponsor), Roderick Hart and David Stancil (my line brothers), and last, but not least, my personal jewel, Bro. Robert (Bob) Hatchel.

Ancestors

Leon Myers, Anthony Slater Robinson, Robert Slater, William Salters, Dr. George Brown, Carolyn Ellis Washington, Marilyn Ellis Buggs, Dorothy Ellis Davis, Rose Ellis Sheppard, Georgia Mae Freeman, Allie Mae Brown, Marie Slater, Adlee Middleton, Rebecca K. Denmark, John Davis, Ruth Green, Dr. Jerome Jones, Graylin Milligan, Corey A. Green, and Christophus Javar Powell.

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THE INTRODUCTION

BOOK OVERVIEW

A number of works (e.g., books, book chapters, academic articles, etc.) have dealt with the transition of youths with all types of disabilities from school to the demands of adult life (Test, Aspel, & Everson, 2006; Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016). These materials have assisted us greatly in examining, planning, and acting upon the range of challenges faced in these transitions. This book is aimed at adding to that body of capacity-building literature by offering in-depth perspectives on outcomes and issues of children, youth, and young adults with disabilities, as they move from early childhood into adulthood. Difficulties with independent living, social and interpersonal networks, higher education, and employment are frequently ignored for these groups, due to perceptions about their capabilities and other competencies (Oertle & Seader, 2015; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2010). In fact, failure to address transition needs in each of the major life domains could, and often does, pose very serious problems for many persons with disabilities.

The importance of comprehensive transition planning for children and adults is the impetus for bringing this very collaborative effort to print. The covered topics, arranged as chapters, reflect areas that have the greatest implications for these children and adolescents' as they prepare for adulthood. The contributors of this volume present potent arguments for consideration regarding various topics addressing P-16 students' needs. In addition, this volume addresses both areas – secondary transition services and multiple disabilities. Ultimately, this book is a collection of interrelated chapters that offer rich insights into current trends and promising practices for individuals with disabilities who are moving into adulthood. The editor is hopeful that the material covered in this book will provide a continuum of support to help transition planning professionals become better “tour guides” for the journey upon which students are aspiring.

OBJECTIVE

The core objective is to develop an authoritative volume of scholarship through qualitative and quantitative methodologies on postsecondary transition services for a diverse readership. The editor's intended audience are composed of students with disabilities, school administrators, special education coordinators,

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higher education faculty and staff, among other related personnel. Readers of this volume will be educated on the postsecondary transition process, and the lifelong commitment of all stakeholders who guide students with disabilities through this rigorous, yet rewarding journey. This volume also can be used by student personnel administrators, student retention coordinators, and alumni/pre-alumni development administrators towards understanding the importance of postsecondary transitioning services.

CHAPTER ABSTRACTS

Chapter 1, *It Takes Two: Principals and Special Educators Creating Transitional Spheres*:

Students with learning, physical, mental, and emotional disabilities went for the better part of the 20th century without services. However federal mandates such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) served dramatically to change the landscape in governing programs and services for students requiring special education and related services (Bartlett, Etscheidt, & Weisenstein, 2007). The federal government further made apparent its emphasis on improving services by coordinating IDEA's school efforts with those of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001. IDEA and NCLB contributed to the uniting of general and special education students by emphasizing accountability and improved academic achievement. Now more than ever, it is a critical that principals and special educators work together to serve the needs of all children (Jones, Zirkel, & Barrack, 2008; Green, 2008). Improving transition outcomes for students with disabilities has often been thought of as the main responsibility of the teacher or case manager. Cobb, Lipscomb, Wolgemuth, and Schulte (2013) suggests there is still a significant need to close the gap between the post high school outcomes of students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities. What is contributing to this phenomenon and how do principals and special education educators close the gap between the post high school outcomes of students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities? Research suggests that the principal's role is pivotal in the special education process and the administration of special education services emerges as one of the most complex with increasingly demanding responsibilities (Green, 2008). The principal is also the instructional leader and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that every child has an opportunity to succeed. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how principals and special education educators collaborate to create transitional "spheres" to close the gap between the post high school outcomes of students with disabilities compared to students without disabilities. By strengthening the knowledge base of principals and special education educators to create transitional "spheres", this will provide a mechanism for embracing opportunities for reforming transitional services.

Chapter 2, *Transitioning to a New Regime or More of the Same? Examining the Efficacy of the Tennessee Diploma Project to Increase Data Reporting on Special Education Graduation Rates in Charter Schools:*

When charter schools were first established in 1992, some scholars and laypeople expressed concern about the possible retraction of educational equity for students from historically and contemporaneously marginalized communities. Much of the concern originated in the consideration of the potential resegregation of racial and ethnic minority groups. Scholars have committed a substantial amount of scholarship to advancing or attacking the ability of charter schools to enhance educational equity for students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Just as there is debate about the potential of charter school to appropriately serve racial and ethnic minority populations, there has been recent debate surrounding the ability of charter schools to equitably and effectively serve students with (dis)abilities. Research suggests that students with (dis)abilities, in general, obtain regular education diplomas at a lower rate than students without identified (dis)abilities. At the turn of the decade, the state of Tennessee developed policies to require all schools in the state to close the regular education diploma graduation rates for non-identified and identified students. When students with disabilities do not earn regular education diplomas, they become less competitive, if not totally excluded, from future enrollment in post-secondary studies. Charter schools should be able to take advantage of greater autonomy to most effectively serve students with disabilities and close the graduation and post-secondary studies gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Unfortunately, charter schools in Tennessee have consistently failed to report graduation rates for students identified as disabled. This chapter evaluates the role of the Tennessee Diploma Project in increasing the rate at which charter schools report graduation rates for students identified as disabled. Ultimately, the chapter finds that the Tennessee Diploma Project did not statistically change the proportion of charter schools that report graduation rates for students identified as disabled, but that the changes are, in fact, substantial.

Chapter 3, *Personnel Preparation in Transition Education: A High Need for Historically Black Colleges and Universities:*

Teachers of color have the potential to increase postsecondary outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with disabilities by implementing culturally-responsive, evidence-based transition activities. As institutions, which produce large numbers of teachers of color and commit their research agendas and resources to responding to and solving educational problems faced by CLD students, historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are uniquely positioned to provide culturally responsive transition education programs in their respective schools of education. The authors call for HBCUs to move toward

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prioritizing transition education as they continue their mission to improve academic and postsecondary outcomes for CLD students.

Chapter 4, Beyond Compliance: Supporting the Transition of English Language Learners with Special Needs:

Effective instruction and transition for students who are twice exceptional, English language learners with disabilities, is an often-overlooked area of research. When presented with this culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional population, the discussion often revolves around meeting students IEP goals and determining how students will receive support for their disability and language development. Unfortunately, practitioner and teacher professional preparation often focus on either tailoring instruction to develop either students' academic language, or addressing their special needs without considering how to prepare students to participate in postsecondary opportunities. This chapter examines the legal and historical contexts, research-based instructional strategies, and teacher competencies needed to effectively service and transition students who are twice exceptional. Strategies for differentiating by proficiency level and core components of effective transition plans are presented.

Chapter 5, The State of Federal and State Accountability Systems That Support P-12 and Postsecondary Transition Services for English Learners with Disabilities: Do They Exist and What is the Need:

Educational accountability policies at the Federal and State levels do not currently include the population of students who have a disability and who also speak a language other than English. The decision not to include English learners with a disability as one of the subgroups reported for accountability purposes has an impact on the educational and support services provided to this population. This chapter focuses on the federal and state policies that existed under No Child Left Behind and which still exist under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Data is provided on assessment and accountability policies in states with the largest populations of English learners with disabilities. Recommendations for improving accountability systems include formulating educational policies that support postsecondary transition services for dually identified English Learners with exceptional needs, using Kohler's Taxonomy for Transition Programming, are provided.

Chapter 6, Role of Technology on Preparing Students with Language-Based Learning Differences for Transition to Public High Schools:

Though the post-secondary transition process for Students with Disabilities is a major concern in the United States, preparation for the transition from K-12 schooling to college and career takes place during the transition from K-8 to 9-12 grades (Balfanz, 2009; Akos & Galassi, 2004; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994). In this regard, one of the main concerns for students with language-based learning differences who attend

specialized private K-8 schools is the ability to transition to general education public high schools. Recent research (Kennedy & Deshler, 2010; Gardner & Davis, 2013) shows that correct multimodal educational technologies help these students prepare for the learning challenges that they will face at general education public high schools. The purpose of this study was to determine ways that technology supported students with language-based learning differences (LBLDs) as they transition from private special education K-8 schools to public general education 9-12 schools.

Chapter 7, The Role of Literacy on the Postsecondary Opportunities of Students with High Incidence Disabilities:

Literacy is a critical skill for both school and lifelong success. Unfortunately, many adolescents with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and mild intellectual disabilities) are exiting high schools with poor literacy skills. A disproportionate number of these adolescents are minority students. This is occurring at a time when our society is increasingly technology driven, requiring individuals to have more advanced academic skills for postsecondary success. This chapter discusses the current state of literacy for adolescents with high incident disabilities and how literacy impacts postsecondary opportunities for these learners. The authors examine causes and possible solutions to the literacy crisis among students with high-incidence disabilities including: 1) importance of literacy, 2) legal concerns, 3) disproportional representation of minorities in special education and 4) literacy and transition. The authors will make recommendations for secondary and postsecondary educators that can increase the academic success and vocational opportunities for students with high incidence disabilities.

Chapter 8, Transitioning to Kindergarten: Improving Outcomes for Preschool Children with Behavioral Challenges:

Children with emotional or behavioral challenges may face considerable challenges in their transition to kindergarten, which means that the inclusion of invested stakeholders (children, parents, educators) in the transition process is imperative to improving positive outcomes. Children in the primary grades are reportedly being suspended and expelled at alarming rates which has serious implications for how schools support students with problematic behaviors. The challenge for many educators will be getting to know the students they work with so that students with emotional and behavioral challenges have access and opportunities to experience success. A review of the literature focusing on the transition from Pre-kindergarten to kindergarten reveals that there is a greater need for services, resources, and assessment data to be transferred from the pre-school to the elementary school classroom. Providing opportunities for stakeholder collaboration, increasing family participation, and providing opportunities for social-emotional learning were common practices that were found to improve positive outcomes for preschool children with behavioral challenges.

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Chapter 9, *Rethinking the Paradigm: Comprehensive Transition from Birth to Adulthood:*

Attaining successful outcomes in school and life requires a process of supports and individualized learning experiences that begin long before high school graduation. This need for supports and early planning is true for all learners, but particularly important for vulnerable populations, such as individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are at increased risk of poorer long term outcomes such as increased high school dropout and lower employment rates (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knoockey, 2009). However, early planning and supports can provide significant changes in long-term trajectories. To this point, documentation of transition planning typically begins upon high school entry. Yet research shows that particular early interventions beginning at birth, such as curriculum-based home visiting or high quality preschool, have been linked to school readiness and success into high school, as well as, postsecondary employment, education, life, and even long-term health benefits (Shonkoff, 2010; Schweinhart, 2005). Continuity and alignment are key to success transitions and post school outcomes. Therefore, it is important to begin viewing transition as a lifelong process beginning at birth. In this chapter, the authors utilize Kohler's well-known theoretical framework of research-based practices in transition planning (Kohler, 1996; Kohler, Gothberg, Coyle, & Fowler, 2016) to align and discuss key evidence-based practices that are linked to successful post-school outcomes and span from birth to adulthood.

Chapter 10, *Increasing Cultural Responsiveness: Improving Transition Outcomes for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students:*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of culturally responsive practices that will enable educators to work more effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and families to promote positive transition outcomes. Improving outcomes of CLD youth with disabilities is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. A comparative analysis of scholarly articles from the fields of special education and culturally responsive teaching was conducted. The barriers to effective transition planning and suggestions for improving outcomes for CLD youth with disabilities are discussed. The importance of viewing CLD youth through a holistic lens-their experiences, strengths, and challenges is essential as educators work to ensure a smooth transition process. The suggestions outlined in this chapter to improve transition outcomes for CLD youth are necessary considerations for all invested stakeholders.

Chapter 11, *Using Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 to Guide Transition Education:*

Despite legislative initiatives and mandates, numerous studies have shown that student with disabilities have higher dropout rates compared to students without disabilities and the post-school outcomes for students with disabilities lag significantly behind their peers in all outcome areas including postsecondary education, employment,

and independent living (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knockey, 2009). This chapter introduces the recently updated Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0 (Kohler, Gothberg, Fowler, & Coyle, 2016). Over the past three decades, transition practices research has demonstrated that post-school outcomes of students with disabilities improve when educators, families, students, and community members and organizations work together to implement a broad perspective of transition planning, more appropriately referred to as transition-focused education. The Taxonomy 2.0 brings in the latest literature regarding predictors of post-school success, strategies to increase graduation and reduce dropout, school climate, and vocational rehabilitation services focused on fostering successful transition of youth with disabilities in college and careers. Readers will increase knowledge of the evidence-based and promising practices (EBPPs) for transition education and services represented in the Taxonomy 2.0 including those recently identified for education, vocational rehabilitation, family engagement, and program structures.

Chapter 12, Transitioning from High School to College: A Dance for Students with Learning Disabilities:

With increasing numbers of students with identified learning differences attending post-secondary educational institutions ways to help support the transition for students is critical for their success. Referring to theoretical research and experiences of students and practitioners, along with data collected from students attending higher educational institutions helps inform best practices. This action research study looks at ways to support the transition of high school students with learning differences to post-secondary educational institutions. This research contains analysis of data collected from a survey and interviews conducted of graduates with learning differences who participated in a Learning Resource Center (LRC) while attending an independent private boarding school in Florida. These graduates went on to attend both private and public universities and colleges throughout the United States. The findings include an affirmation that participating in a strategic curriculum while in high school focusing on skills needed at the collegiate level is beneficial for students with learning differences attending higher education institutions.

Chapter 13, Reaching Higher: College and Career Readiness for African American Males with Learning Disabilities:

African American males with learning disabilities have great promise for success in postsecondary endeavors. However, they are often met with challenging experiences that may detour them on their road to success (Miller Dyce, 2013). As such, it is imperative that all educational stakeholders, including school counselors and school psychologists, collaborate to ensure the college and career readiness of African American males with learning disabilities at every educational level. Throughout this manuscript, the authors discuss how collaboration between school counselors and school psychologists can support African American males with learning disabilities by promoting positive academic, social/personal, and career development needed

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for postsecondary educational opportunities. This chapter was previously published in the *Journal of African American Males in Education*, in accordance with the following citation:

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Chapter 14, *One in the Same*:

This chapter includes three empowering poems that are dedicated to children with disabilities and their families.

NOTES

- ¹ The references below are representative of the book overview and objective sections of the introduction. Citations that are referenced in the abstracts can be found at the end of each chapter.
- ² This book includes three poems by Christine “Queen” Washington.

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