INTERROGATING THE SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTION OF RACE AND DIFFERENCE IN ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Master of Arts Degree
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the construction of race and difference in the Ontario public school system and interrogates how racism, in particular, intersects with other forms of oppression along the lines of gender and class.

As an entry point to the discussion, the thesis further examines the existing ideological relations of Eurocentric power and dominance in learning as hegemonic and calls for a counter-hegemonic discourse through antiracism education. In that context, the thesis discursively engages research on how cohorts of black and minority students experience difficulties in school relations and how the school itself, and local communities are implicated in the struggle for equity, justice and fairness.

Throughout the entire discussion, the thesis critiques the dominant view of what is considered "normal" and "stable" knowledge and provides an explanation for how minority students have come to be identified as "different" from the norm. Suggestions for reforming the school system and teacher education, in particular, are provided.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Grandmother Adella Ruth (Goodly) Hazell 1895–1990. She has taught me everything I know and is absolutely responsible for the man that I am today. Memories of her reside in my thoughts constantly. Thanks and praise Mama.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, the young persons commonly called "high school dropouts" in Ontario public schools have received increased attention from educators, researchers and policy makers. With respect to black youth and schooling, this attention is particularly justified since black students, who have had disproportionate dropout rates, are increasing their numbers in Ontario public school (Brown, 1993; Cheng et al., 1996). In relation to this problem, there are rising levels of immigration from southern countries (Shelton, 1995). Thus, racial issues in the system, based on institutional structures, will undoubtedly increase in this new millennium. A genuine effort to seriously implement antiracism programs might preclude many problems.

According to the findings of several researchers, the need for change is especially strong since instances of racial intolerance and antagonism are reported to be increasing and hindering expected improvements of students (Alladin, 1996; Brathwaite and James, 1989; Brown, 1993; Cheng and Yau, 1996; Cheng, Yau and Ziegler, 1993; Dei, 1995; James, 1990; Karp, 1988; Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (ORCL), 1994; Quirouette, 1990; Solomon, 1992; Yau et al., 1995). In general, underachievement, alienation, "dropout," and powerlessness serve as barriers for cohorts of minority students in the public educational system of present-day Ontario.
Hence, the need for a curriculum that combats racism requires serious attention (Lyons and Farrell, 1994). Yet, despite efforts of researchers in gathering critical statistics on the salient aspects of the problems in schools, none have proposed an adequate analysis of the problems and of the reforms necessary to deal with them equitably.

Some critical Canadian educationists have argued that the Eurocentric, monocultural approach to education is seriously flawed (Dei, 1996, Thomas, 1984; Lee, 1985). This mono-cultural approach to schooling, they contend, sees Eurocentric ways of knowing as the only source of knowledge of the world. However, when examined with critical lens, the way knowledge is created and transmitted in schools seems mainly to support the perpetuation of white power and dominance. In other words, schools, as a social institution of society, tend to promote a worldview that is mainly Eurocentric, white and male (Dei, 1996; Lee, 1985). Also, the traditions that promote this world-view are usually supported by theories supporting that claim to be objective. Therefore, claims of “success” and equality, argues Radwanski (1987), are suspect rhetoric since inequalities continue to persist, not only in schools, but in society at large.

In critiquing Eurocentric teaching in schools, multicultural programs in education have purportedly sought to deal with inequality affecting minority students (Kehoe, 1984). Judging by available research data/information, inequality of groups of people has persisted, and these programs have proven
to be quite ineffective (ORCL, 1994). For that reason, an antiracism education that addresses how race, class and gender intersect to produce change in schools is necessary. This approach emphasizes equity issues and challenges racism, sexism and classism in school content and structure.

An inclusive approach to antiracism education aspires to include the needs of all students, including students from the dominant culture. The "politics of difference" (Dei, 1996) in schools, at present, speaks of power inequality among students. This inequality results when minority students confront the beliefs, norms and mores of the traditional dominant group. Hence, the liberal focus placed on "difference" is oppressive because it does not address the inequalities that are entrenched in the institutions of society.

It is, therefore, important to provide a deconstructed vision of multiculturalism in learning, particularly with respect to how "difference" and "knowledge" are produced and disseminated in school. Besides an emphasis on "theory," I have focused on teachers' practices in antiracism education. The theory helps to explain the connection between knowledge and power and between the educational achievements of students and their life chances. The idea of practice signifies and represents these relationships.

Advocates of liberal, multicultural education programs cannot continue to be "color blind." They provide an excuse for complacency and promote "whiteness" with innocence (Dei and Calliste, 2000). We are all different from
each other in a number of ways. This is not to say that some people are
deficient, deviant or superior to others. When students’ actions deviate from
the traditional norm, it simply means that they are different and that people
have the right to be different. An antiracist education focuses on the validation
and affirmation of students’ historical, racial, cultural, social and gender
differences and the development of their identities (Dei, 1996; Lee, 1985;
Thomas, 1984).

**Research/Learning Objectives**

This thesis sets out to fulfill a number of objectives. It examines and analyzes
the nature of problems that black and minority students are facing within a
system of inequities and makes a case for decentering the current system of
Eurocentric education. Secondly, through the critical interrogation of
Eurocentric pedagogy, the thesis presents an appraisal of how racism
intersects with other forms of oppression in educational processes, along the
lines of gender, race and class. Using the lens of an antiracist/multi-centric
approach, the thesis problematizes and interrogates the role of “whiteness”
through multicultural education programs in veiling dominance in educating
minority students. It further explains how students’ self-concepts can be
affected by Eurocentric teaching praxis and, in contrast, how positive identities
can be developed; and lastly, it critiques Eurocentric knowledge and provides
an alternative discourse in antiracism education in order to empower students
on the margins. It is about power and identity.
**Key Questions**

Based on the preceding account of racism in the educational system, and on the serious difficulties that may be expected in the absence of antiracism programs, I propose to focus the thesis on the following questions: (a) Are the issues of race, gender and class pivotal in how Eurocentric pedagogy is created and transmitted to students? (b) How can the social and political dynamics of schooling change to address issues pertaining to equity and social justice in the public education system of Ontario today? (c) Can Ontario public schools continue to be effective and still be able to maintain meritocracy and high academic standards without confronting issues of pedagogical change? The answers to these questions, and others, are intended to provide a basis for an adequate analysis of the institutional biases in the present educational system.

**Locating Myself in Relation to the Subject**

I immigrated to Ontario, in 1975, from an island in the West Indies called St. Vincent. I was 13 years old. Before I arrived, I was privileged to attend a prestigious Canadian private school called St. Martin’s Boys Secondary School. I was educated mainly by Anglo-Canadian and American teachers and studied with students from the affluent echelons of Vincentian society. It was at this remarkable school that I developed middle/upper class values and a profound interest in equity studies. Now, 26 years later, I can say that I have grown up in the City of Toronto, a city that I love and would not like to see deteriorate. It was here where I received first-hand experiences of teaching and learning in multicultural school settings. These experiences have afforded me the
opportunity to evaluate the merits and weaknesses of public education in Ontario and to provide theoretical strategies for change in the system.

I remember when I arrived to Toronto in 1975, many other immigrant students were arriving as well. At that time, I clearly remember incidents of discrimination that were taking place in school, the media and the criminal justice system. Those experiences have shaped my initial understanding of all forms of oppression as unacceptable. As an African Canadian male, I have come to the realization that I can never be considered a true advocate of antiracism unless I recognize and understand the oppression of other minorities. If groups can come together to address and resolve common problems, such as domination and oppression, the efforts toward achieving that goal will have a more comprehensive basis.

To understand oppression in all its aspects, I have become interested in the creation of a conceptual framework that includes the needs and experiences of all Canadian students to be fairly represented in the school curricula. I am acutely aware that the thesis may be influenced by my own intellectual agenda and personal experience of racial discrimination in public schooling. Notwithstanding this fact, I have attempted to give concrete evidence of the notion that minority children are presently living in a “different” reality in the Ontario public school system and the society at large.
**Thesis Structure**

The thesis is organized into seven chapters.

The introductory chapter is followed by chapter 2 — on review of the literature. It highlights the problem of black youth and schooling and what research findings indicate on the topic. Issues pertaining to how Eurocentrism and multicultural programs operate in education are also discussed.

Chapter three addresses the problem of Eurocentric schooling and its effects on the differential achievement of minority students. Issues such as teacher expectations, curriculum discrimination and the practice of streaming are explored.

Chapter four discusses the principles of antiracism education as counter to the ideals inherent in multicultural education programs. These principles relate to the curriculum, knowledge construction, identity and representation in learning.

Chapter five examines how the school can change to empower students and develop positive identities for all students. Issues such as the hidden curriculum and changing the school are discussed.

Chapter six continues the discussion on change in education, signalling how both teachers and students can become empowered. Antiracism issues
examined include teacher training goals, problems involved in creating change, and the implementation of antiracism teaching in diverse school settings.

In the final chapter, Chapter 7, I give my concluding reflections on the issues discussed and my thoughts about future possibilities.

**Significance of the Study**

The present thesis advances the call for reforms in public schooling. It draws attention to how the Eurocentric idea of "difference" based on race, class and gender is socially constructed and produces inequality, ranking groups of students according to the notion of superiority and inferiority (Ogbu, 1994; Stanworth, 1983). The notion of superiority, particularly with respect to Eurocentric knowledge, supports this ranking by how people are perceived to be "better than" others due to privileged positions of power, race, gender and class (Sleeter, 1994). In this thesis, such thinking is interrogated. Since "differences" are socially and politically constructed, they can also, at least in theory, be deconstructed.

Antiracism education challenges the monolithic structures inherent in Eurocentric/multicultural education programs and goes beyond the mere idea of inclusion to call for action on issues pertaining to social justice and equity in learning (Lee, 1985). It acknowledges the differential treatment of students who share similar experiences of discrimination based on their identities. Antiracism education also espouses to create new spaces in learning so
students can act on values, such as equity and equality in order to liberate themselves from the painful experiences of discrimination (Dei, 1996). As a result, schools would be less able to continue creating the "other" by making hierarchies based on group differences. Therefore, my proposal is that antiracism teachings permeate the entire school culture so that all students can be empowered to deal effectively with the existing realities in schooling and have a democratic vision for the future (Lee, 1991). In other words, Eurocentric schools should not create a "centre" to reproduce the marginalized "other"; instead, both the centre and the margins must come together in one space to empower students to negotiate with the margins of their identities (Dei, 1996). This is what I mean by decentering Eurocentric pedagogy.
CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to come to grips with the theoretical issues, and provide a basis for my analysis, it is necessary to review the main findings and ideas that one presently finds in the chosen area. The literature on minority children and public education in Ontario is quite extensive. However, much of it focuses on the problems students are experiencing, rather than the real causes of these problems. For the most part, the literature suggests that economic and family problems, cultural adjustment, school failures, linguistic difficulties, unfair school curricula, low teacher expectation, boredom and the need to quit school for paid work constitute the main issues affecting minority students in the Ontario public school system today (Cheng et al., 1993; Karp, 1988, Livingstone et al., 1992; MacKay and Myles, 1989; Ontario Commission on Learning (ORCL), 1994; Radwanski, 1987; Solomon, 1992).

A report by the ORCL (1994) explicitly states that, "there appears to be a crisis with black students and the level of education expected." This revelation is compelling, yet it appears like nobody wants to take responsibility for students who are failing as opposed to those who persevere in school.

One study that will be cited throughout the thesis is called Identifying Probable School Leavers in Ontario High Schools (1990), by Pierre Quirouette. This is a follow-up from an initial study done in the Fall of 1987. It was carried out in 40 English language schools in the eastern, northern, north eastern, central
and western regions of Ontario. Accordingly, 6,832 grade nine students in total answered the “School and Me” questionnaire. Though this study did not include race as a category of analysis, its findings revealed that 39% of boys and 36% of girls were identified as “at risk” (p.9). Also, the study reported that the highest number of “at risk” students were dealing with feelings of isolation. Schools at present do not seem to be responsive to the needs of these students.

George Dei’s study *Drop Out or Push Out? The Dynamics of Black Students’ Disengagement in School* (1995) is of critical importance to the thesis. His was a three-year study, working with OISE/UT graduate students that examined the dropping out of school by black students. In total, 150 black students from 4 metro schools and over 24 students were selected randomly from metro high schools. Also, 21 school “dropouts”, 7 “at risk” students, 41 teachers, 55 black parents and 59 non-black students were interviewed to cross-reference narratives of black students about their experiences of public schooling in Ontario. This study contributes to the discussion to explain how race, class and gender intersect to produce injustice and discrimination in education. Also helpful is Dei’s analysis of the multiplicity of factors that contribute to students’ disengagement and dropping out of school in his book *Anti-racism Education: Theory and Practice* (1996). Here, Dei, uses the perspectives of students from his previous study on “dropouts” in an integrative framework he refers to as Afrocentricity. ¹

¹. Putting the histories and needs of African students at the centre of the curriculum (Dei, 1996).
In addition, the research study, *School Climate and Conflict Resolution: Survey of the Toronto Board of Educations' Elementary Schools (1994)* by Yau et al. (1995) is useful to this thesis. In 10 elementary schools, 847 students from grades 4 - 8 and 134 teachers were interviewed. The purpose of the study was to obtain a quick view of the status of individual schools in relation to the Board's Conflict Resolution Initiative. Data from this study will be cross-referenced to highlight the issues pertaining to the school environment and how minority students and teachers are coping within it.

Karp's (1988) report attempts to confront the problems faced by minority students in Ontario public schools. This author discussed some of the behaviors that are associated with students' early disengagement from school. She contrasted the "reward driven" student with the "work driven" student and spoke of how these factors impact on minority students and learning.

MacKay and Myles' (1989) research on Native student "leavers" provides an interesting account of discrimination against minority students in school. The author discussed the problems of adaptability and learning faced by Native students in the public school system. He gave an assessment of certain areas such as language skills, academic achievement, curriculum issues, school rules, culture of the school, welfare and a host of other problems. The author did not explore issues pertaining to power, history and how racism can be researched and critiqued in the interest of all students. Also, the study seems to concern itself primarily with how the experiences of students could
themselves be responsible for under-achievement and early departure from school.

Finally, the work of Ibrahim Alladin (1996) has a critical role in the present thesis in helping to dispel the myth that Eurocentrism in schooling is working for all Canadian students. He analyzed the genocidal issue of racial inequality and student underachievement facing teachers across the country. In fact, Alladin (1996) referred to the deteriorating condition of multicultural programs in education “as a form of assimilation based on the theory of social Darwinism” (p.7) (See also Radwinski, 1987). This position will help to explain how the social construction of “difference” based on class, race and gender intersect to produce and reproduce inequality in schooling. It will also help to set the tone and provide a basis for remedial action in education today.

To further explicate the problems black students are having and how they should be remedied, it is important to examine literature on multicultural education versus antiracism education. Other related issues to be discussed in this chapter pertain to the broader problems of Eurocentric pedagogy, the social construction of knowledge and difference and the construction of prejudice and identity in Eurocentric schooling.

**Multicultural Education versus Antiracism Education**

This thesis discusses some merits as well as the weaknesses of multicultural education and presents a case for its replacement by antiracist education. I
will outline the common aspects of multicultural and antiracism education and describe the differences between the two. Gill et al. (1992) have suggested that these two forms of education are misrepresented since there are many areas of common concern. Since one main difference that stands out is the curriculum, the contents of multicultural curricula and antiracist curricula will be compared using current research.

**Multicultural Education**

According to Kehoe (1984); Young (1984); Fleras and Elliot (1992), the components of multiculturalism in education include three main goals. These goals are (1) Equivalency in achievement, (2) More positive inter-group attitudes and (3) Developing pride in heritage. Proponents of multicultural education propose that the first goal can be accomplished by
(a) teaching English as a second language (Kehoe, 1984);
(b) removing ethnocentric bias from the curriculum;
(c) teaching students in a way that is consistent with their cultural background (Tharp, 1989);
(d) changing assessment techniques and placement procedures (Kehoe, 1984);
(e) encouraging participation by local communities and;
(f) ensuring that teacher expectations do not deny achievement.

With respect to the second goal, multicultural supporters maintain that it can be achieved by
(a) encouraging the development of caring, empathy and tolerance;
(b) encouraging students to recognize differences between groups of people and encouraging students to judge people on the basis of internal rather than on external qualities (Aboud, 1980);
(c) teaching critical thinking skills such as recognition of unsubstantiated and misguided arguments;
(d) facilitating structured personal contact (Amir, 1976).

With regard to the third goal, supporters of multicultural education suggest that it can be achieved by
(a) retaining heritage languages;
(b) including cultural contributions to mankind and to Canada as part of the curriculum;
(c) encouraging individuals to retain their original cultural background and;
(d) familiarizing all students with their own cultures and those of others through the exchange of art, dance, food, clothing, religion and other subjective aspects of culture such as eye contact and social distancing.

**Antiracism Education**

Dei and Calliste (2000); Lee, (1991) and Thomas (1984) posit that multicultural education programs essentially ignores the fact that differences must be challenged by changing the total organizational structures of learning. Dei and Calliste (2000) and Lee, (1991) propose some major issues addressed by an antiracist approach. They are as follows
(a) examination of the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of racial prejudice and discrimination in Canadian society;

(b) the exploration of the influence of race and culture on teachers' own personal and professional attitudes and behavior;

(c) identification of and countering bias and stereotyping in learning materials;

(d) identification of appropriate antiracist resources for incorporation into the curriculum.

(e) identification of appropriate assessment and placement procedures and practices;

(f) assessment of the hidden curriculum to make it more inclusive and reflective of all students' experiences;

(g) implementation of personnel policies and practices consistent with equity goals while educating teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement equity programs.

**Eurocentric Pedagogy**

This section of the thesis theoretically addresses the connection between the legacy of Eurocentric education and present-day school practices that are problematic. It discusses how the entrenched structures of domination serve to perpetuate racism, classism and sexism as "normal" exist in schooling. In so doing, it provides a foundation upon which an alternative approach of antiracism can be argued.
Eurocentric pedagogy can be defined as a philosophy of teaching that puts the needs and aspirations of the dominant group at the center of learning while the interests of others are made to languish on the periphery (Dei and Calliste, 2000). It supports the view that white people are the significant majority of those who matter in the world (Dei, 1998). Eurocentric knowledge, then, is a derivative of this belief; it upholds the view that the European perspective is the only proper way of interpreting the world (Dei, 1996). This "knowledge" is what is transmitted and disseminated in current multicultural education programs, as I will discuss. It serves to promote the idea of "whiteness" in schooling by helping to validate the notion and practice of "difference" insofar as the idea of superiority/inferiority is concerned. These differences are based on race, gender and class stratification in society (as well as on differences such as disabilities and sexual orientation). Social stratification refers to how these groups of people are ranked in society (Ogbu, 1994). It implies a differential relationship between groups who are at the top of the hierarchy and those that are at the bottom. These kinds of stratification are based on socially constructed categories built on physical, biological and economic characteristics (Dei, 1996; Ogbu, 1994). Consequently, racism, sexism and classism in the north can be construed as offshoots of Eurocentrism, especially in schooling. They relate to the question of unequal power relations in society and how the dominant group is able to use their racial identity to marginalize, exclude and deny opportunity to other groups (Alladin, 1996; Dei, 1998). According to Alladin (1996), multicultural education programs must be suspected of covertly maintaining the goals of Eurocentric teaching.
Over the course of the last three decades, multicultural education programs have purportedly attempted to identify and resolve problems of equity, fairness and inclusion for cohorts of black and minority students. However, according to research cited, these efforts have fallen short of meeting those goals. The reason for this shortfall seems to be linked to oppression inherent in the multicultural approach to teaching. This multicultural approach is political in that it covertly strives to uphold and carry out the virtues of Eurocentrism and "whiteness skin privilege" in learning. Indeed, skin color has been and continues to be an important signifier of privilege and punishment (Dei, 1996). This entrenched approach depoliticizes the cultures of others, thus making it a problem to identify and resist racism, sexism and classism in diversified schools. Despite claims to the contrary, multicultural programs in education are not genuinely centered on the proclaimed standards of equity and inclusion, but rather on the practice of diversity, which is not inclusive, but appears to stifle the cries for a new approach that can include all groups of students.

The legacy of racial discrimination and minority students throughout Euro-Canadian history is well documented (Berger, 1981; Dickason, 1992; Li, 1979). Native children, for example, were brutally uprooted and forced to attend Catholic and Anglican schools (MacKay and Myles, 1989). They were forced to deny their cultures and languages and adopt the mores and norms of Anglo-Canadians (Dickason, 1992). This proved disastrous for Native children, who still occupy the lowest rung of the economic ladder of success in Canada.
(MacKay et al., 1989). I will discuss discrimination against Native peoples a little further at the end of this chapter in order to provide an understanding of how minority groups, other than black students, are currently faring in the public school system and why change is necessary. Native Canadians were not the only ones discriminated against in Canada's history. In the 1940s, Japanese Canadian children were not only detained, they were systematically banned from entering white schools; their parents' possessions were confiscated by the governmental authorities during the second World War (Berger, 1981). In terms of their exclusion, alienation and underachievement in learning, minority students are experiencing a similar fate in public schools today.

In the latter part of the 20th century, people from around the globe have made Canada their home (Shelton, 1995). Canada encourages immigration since the nation is experiencing a decline in birth rate, and the population is aging, which is seen as threat to the country's economic stability (Lyons and Farrell, 1994). Immigration levels have been raised to 250,000 a year in order to fill the gap, as well as acquire and promote needed skills and capital investment in Canada (Lyons and Farrell, 1994). Immigration patterns from the 1960s have shifted from Europe, particularly England, to include Italy, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean (Shelton, 1995). Over the last few decades there has been a large influx of new immigrants to this country, a country that has been stolen from First Nations. However, in spite of multicultural education efforts, it appears that the way in which children of these immigrants are
welcomed and accommodated in schools is problematic. This is because multiculturalism praxis in schooling betrays an inability to detach itself from the traditional Eurocentric approach, which reflects and caters to the values of Anglo and French Canadians and not others.

At the same time, the concept of multiculturalism in public education has merits. It may be able to provide the groundwork for all educators to work together since it claims to promote equity and inclusion to foster intercultural relations for the betterment of Canada, which is consistent with the mandate of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, (Kehoe, 1984). One of the drawbacks of the federally created multicultural policy is the problem of jurisdiction in implementing it in provincial education. The federal government has very little control or influence in implementing this policy throughout Canadian schools. For much of Canadian history, both the federal and provincial governments have attempted to assimilate all Canadians into the dominant culture. This is a peril, and educator Enid Lee (1985) has insisted that we must resist this attempt and keep fighting to change unequal relations in society. Trudeau’s constitutional repatriation package of 1982 failed miserably to recognize Aboriginal cultures as distinct from those of other Canadians. I argue that is was around that time that the policy of multiculturalism showed itself to have serious flaws; it came to be seen as biased in promoting or emphasizing differences in relatively superficial areas, such as food, music, dance and clothing (Kehoe, 1984). Such emphasis is not
the problem. The problem is that multiculturalism stops there and does not challenge stereotypes, inequities and power relations in society.

So, quite naturally, little fruit has been yielded in respect to movement towards true inclusion, and equity in learning. Programs such as heritage classes have not contributed to the success of black and minority students (Alladin, 1996); these students are still struggling to attain fair representation in learning and to have their experiences and cultures incorporated in the school curriculum. The public system of education in Ontario is founded on inequality (Livingstone et al., 1992). Indeed, there is evidence that black and other minority students are not getting the same “breaks” as other students who are usually Anglo or West European male and white (Solomon, 1992). The biased Eurocentric curriculum and the culture of the school arguably make it politically “profitable” to marginalize and alienate minority students. Given this kind of discrimination, Dubois (1973) posits that it is logical to expect that the aspirations of these students and their life chances would be greatly diminished, and such evidence has been reported (Cheng et al., 1993; Dei, 1995; Radwanski, 1987).

In order to confront and challenge this kind of inequity in schools, I support the proposal that the debate on multicultural education should be shifted from the talk of tolerance of diversity to a consideration of issues pertaining to power and interlocking systems of social oppression (Dei and Calliste, 2000). In keeping with the goals of that effort, my thesis supports the elimination of
entrenched inequalities in Eurocentric education in order to transform the dominant, white, middle class, and patriarchal approach to learning. An inclusive approach based on antiracism proposes to combat this hegemony and to ensure that different worldviews are incorporated in the school curriculum. As I will explain later on, this approach will not detract from the meritorious aspects of Eurocentric knowledge, where it genuinely exists, but will go beyond.

**The Social Construction of Difference**

To create the change toward fairness and make education reforms more effective requires a basis upon which to understand how the construction of race, gender and class discrimination intersects in schools. One needs to examine how these differences are constructed and perpetuated. It is how they are interpreted is the problem, not just the recognition of them (Dei and Calliste, 2000). The people who are considered “different” i.e., “they”, the “other” are defined by the dominant group i.e., “we”, the norm. Both “we” and “they” are socially constructed generalizations designed by the dominant group to categorize individuals they consider inferior. These generalizations serve to perpetuate the physical and economic differences that stratify people and continue to produce inequalities between “us” and “them” (Dei and Calliste, 2000; Ogbu, 1994). These stratified differences are responsible, at present, for minority students’ mis-education and their view of themselves. That is why educators must be responsible for assisting minority students to express their own experiences in order for them to develop personally and in their communities (Dei, 1995).
As an African Canadian male, what I am and what I know determines how I measure myself and understand the realities of the world around me. As a student of higher learning, I have first-hand experience of how traditional knowledge in pedagogy has always afforded the typical Anglo-European white male certain benefits that are denied to others. "White" ways of knowing, though largely exploitative of "others" have been taken for granted by many teachers and promoted as "value free" and "stable" knowledge in school (Dei, 1995; McIntosh, 1990, Thomas, 1984). As Banks (1995) argues, the position of the person who creates the knowledge is often a reflection of that person's own station in life. Thus, different forms of knowledge of people on the margins, including women, visible minorities, and the poor, tend to be excluded from that knowledge. To understand the reason for this inequality, I now discuss how "difference" is constructed and made to reproduce in learning.

The classification and hierarchization of students based on race, gender and class is political and is an indication that power and social relations within these groups can change (Ogbu, 1994). With respect to present-day schooling, multicultural buzzwords of goodwill such as "diversity," "tolerance" and "empathy" should not be trusted. They are suspicious because they veil domination and preclude anger when anger is a necessary prerequisite for revolutionary social change. Two examples of such change that come to mind are the emancipation of Zimbabwe and the feminist revolution of the 1960s.
All forms of discrimination in schooling are hurtful and stifle the voices of the many victims. However, if all of these voices were to come together to confront and challenge discrimination, the hegemony of “whiteness” in schooling could be radically undermined. Programs in multicultural education then should move to ensure that schools are not places to play hurtful games to demean and marginalize students based on the idea of difference.

Furthermore, “whiteness” can be interrogated as a mere social construction with political, cultural and economic capital (Dei and Calliste, 2000). It is nothing but “oppressive and false” argues Dei (1998) and Dei and Calliste (2000) in how it constructs difference normality and privilege, which excludes and appropriates. In the policy of multiculturalism where it exists, one may argue that this policy evolved as a finely worded smoke screen for inequity and exclusion. It can be seen as a political arrangement through which the dominant class can propagate itself and hold onto the benefits of capital power and affluence while the socially constructed “other” can be relegated to the inferior status of “them” (Dei, 1996). It is critical to point out how the construction of “whiteness” and “difference” are learned and disseminated in school texts and how the identities of children are affected in the process. Something must be done to change these realities in schooling today.

In a more philosophical vein, the construction of “difference” is linked with how humans construct ideas and feelings based on dualities: right and wrong, long and short, good and bad, pretty and ugly, rich and poor, men and women. All
of these are mental constructs that enable persons to function on a daily basis. However, constructs could be deconstructed if people would understand that one would not exist without the other and that in many cases it is a mistake to affirm the value of one pole and deny the other. To pretend otherwise may lead to calculated errors in judgement. Beliefs that white is better than black, or that men are better than women can produce conflict in relations between these groups. It is from this perspective that we must interrogate the underlying source of conflicts for minority students and schooling today. For instance, when one thinks that white is better than black, one may develop certain attitudes that may be expressed in discriminatory acts towards blacks. Most people usually discard and "alienate" what they consider to be bad and focus more on what they feel is good.

Correspondingly, a multi-centric approach in antiracism education acknowledges that these differences are constructed on the basis of socio-economic status and of the subordinate identity of persons and groups (Dei, 1996); it could set the tone and help to rectify wrongs. It also recognizes that educators should understand the underlying meanings behind the social and historical construction of difference and how to eliminate them in learning. Educators must be made aware of the social and psychological effects of practices of labelling and alienating the knowledge of the socially constructed "other", the minority groups in educational settings.
In advancing the argument for change, I will discuss, later in the thesis, how schools can effectively deal with difference in pedagogical interactions in a way that will help teachers and students reconstruct and liberate themselves. For now, it is important to illustrate how the construction of difference is linked to prejudice and the construction of identities in public schooling today.

**Prejudice and Identity Construction**

According to the *New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary* (1987), prejudice essentially means an attitude developed against someone or members of a group that is not based on evidence. Also, it can be defined as a negative attitude towards someone or members of a social group made without prior basis. It is through prejudice that Eurocentric teaching alienates and labels minority students and perpetuates exploitation. Such teaching produces a negative self-concept or identity in those adversely affected and contributes to problems, such as truancy, low performance and leaving school altogether. Therefore, a central purpose of antiracism teaching is to change this trend and promote the development of positive identities in all students.

When some students report that alienation and lack of caring are barriers to their success in school (Karp, 1988; Quirouette, 1990), there are indications of a failure to recognize that socio-economic status, race and gender play an important role in structuring inequality. These identities are constantly shifting and are based on the confluence of one's history, culture, race, class and sexuality. Owing to this multiplicity of identities in learning, educators are
encouraged to assist students in understanding how they can relate socially to
others. The task of the Ministry of Education should be to create a unified
approach in diverse situations to foster creation of positive identities at the
individual and school levels to promote a harmonized national identity (Berger,
1981). To emphasize the point of inclusion, this process should involve Native
Canadians as well. As a result of European colonization, Native people in
Canadian society are viewed as wearing a badge of inferiority and defeat. Their
threatened identities and their feelings about themselves, as constructed in
schools, are an indication of the similar effects of racialized discrimination in
learning.

Indeed, there is a likelihood that what happened to Native Peoples could very
well happen to other minority groups in schooling if preventative measures are
not taken to develop positive identities in all students. Through the well
documented processes of Christianization, subjugation, segregation and in
some case extermination, Native Canadian students are still denied their
history, language, culture, land, livelihood and even their dignity (Fleras and
Elliot, 1992; Berger, 1981). It must be remembered that it was the role of the
Church to educate Aboriginal children and its clergy saw fit to replace their
beliefs, mores and norms with those of Christianity (Bolaria and Li, 1988).
Therefore, Aboriginal children were educated with the goal of assimilation into
the dominant society. In non-native schools, they were directly taught to
dislike their culture and to believe that their culture is inferior and backward
(MacKay et al., 1989).
Like other minority students, Aboriginal students can become frustrated with meaningless exercises and may even give up thinking for themselves. When students are taught to hate themselves in Eurocentric schooling, it may cripple their futures since they do not see positive images of themselves and are not taught about the contributions of their group to Canadian society. Instead, they are receiving an education that keeps them forever dependent on the point of view of others. As a result of not being taught properly, and with the host of problems with which they are faced, Native Canadians may feel powerless and isolated in society as a whole (MacKay and Myles, 1989). Their situation is similar to what black and other minority students are facing in Eurocentric schools today. The next chapter examines these similar problems.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The present thesis is a theoretically based review; it does not report fresh findings. My approach is to clarify a number of studies on the topic of racism and schooling that can be used as part of a theoretical discussion centering on the rhetoric of equality versus the realities facing black and minority students in society. Studies that I propose to mainly draw from include the works of Alladin (1996); Cheng et al. (1996); Dei (1995, 1996, 1998); Karp (1988); Quirouette (1990); Yau et al. (1995).

Alladin’s work on racism in Canadian schools is critical to the thesis in that he aptly criticizes the tenets of multicultural education programs, describing them altogether as “a form of assimilation based on Social Darwinism” (p.7). As noted in Chapter 2, this theme helps to explain the structural hardships encountered by some students who cannot assimilate. Using concepts such as the “reward driven” and “work driven” student, Karp’s (1998) work refers to how psychological strain can contribute to students’ decision to learn or not to learn. However, these concepts do not adequately explain the workings of the processes of domination as causes of the problems facing black and minority students.

In addition, Dei’s study called Drop out or Push Out (1995) is of high significance to this project. It is a study that provides critical narratives of and gives credence to the plight of minority students who are “at risk” in the
Ontario public school system. *Antiracism Education* (Dei, 1996) is also useful, especially Dei's analysis of "the politics of difference" in schooling and his proposal for *Afrocentric* education. Other works by Cheng et al. (1993) and Yau et al. (1995) cross-referenced statistical data of teachers and students to provide evidence of inequities, particularly with respect to how students are ranked in the different levels of schooling. Also expressed is a recommendation for alternative teaching strategies within an antiracism framework.

**Explanation for School Problems and Black Youth**

The above literature helps in providing explanations as to why black and minority students do poorly in Ontario public schools. Some of the explanations suggest a deficiency in the children themselves and/or in their homes experiences (Villegas et al. 1991). The present thesis rejects the notion of deficiency and redirects attention to the educational practices that are responsible for creating differences and reinforcing inequalities in the school system. The process is known as racism when children are unfairly singled out for discrimination based on race and other similar signifiers so that unequal treatment be justified and expanded (Dei, 1996; Berlowitz and Edari, 1984). Oftentimes though, race is used to divide subordinated groups and to create divisions within the working class that weakens its ability for unified action (Berlowitz and Edari, 1984). In the mean time, the oppressive structures of stratification are maintained.
Race and Class Difference: Capital Dictates

It is also important to note that throughout the history of capitalism, racism as a socio-political practice has been the source of the very highest profits through the exploitation of black labor (Berlowitz and Edari, 1984, p.67). In centuries of exploitation, Europeans have climbed higher on the backs of blacks and pushed them further in the dirt (Rodney, 1990). Today, one must become consciously aware that the exploitation of women, blacks and other minorities as laborers is rooted in the functioning of the economic system (Berlowitz et al., 1984). Therefore, one can say a key element in the oppression of minorities is economic or where the transference of wealth takes place to benefit one group at the expense of the other. The usage of stereotypes and labelling of minority students in school is arguable a strategy to support and maintain their exclusion and exploitation for profit. This ideological frame of the dominant group is what is often used as a pattern for rationalizing and justifying discrimination against minorities (Alladin, 1996; Berlowitz and Edari, 1984). Therefore, any responsible discussion on solutions to the difficulties black and other minorities are facing in public schools requires a solid understanding of the sources of inequality and the workings of white skin privilege in school performance. The view of a non-white student quoted in Dei (1995) provides an example of such inequality:

"White people seem to get positive attention from teachers, meanwhile we are getting negative. Like 'Stop talking and do your work'.... And, for the white people [it's] just like, 'Oh well, she got 100, she da da da and all that stuff.' (Dei, 1995. File w11: Lines 495-501)."
This quote is illustrative of how the politics of difference in schooling serves to benefit white students at the expense of black students in Eurocentric schooling. I will further develop this explanation throughout the thesis to elucidate the problems black students and minority students are presently experiencing in all facets of learning in schooling today.

As public schools in Ontario are becoming more and more culturally diverse, educators seem to be at a loss when it comes to explaining the tragedy of multicultural education programs in failing to enhance learning outcomes for all students in this province. According to the ORCL (1994), the problem with respect to black youth and public schooling in Ontario is serious. The reason for this situation stems from the values of "whiteness" and patriarchal dominance in schooling that are oppressive. This situation of dominance, argues Alladin (1996), is the main cause why some students are resistant to learning and perform poorly in school.

As a result of this resistance and "strain", minority children are psychologically pushed to leave school (Dei, 1995). At a time when the economic prosperity of Canada depends on a highly educated population, approximately one out of every three students in Ontario public schools drops out of school before completing grade 12 (Radwanski, 1987). According to Radwanski (1987), many students who do graduate do so by minimally satisfying the basic requirements for a high school diploma (p.7). One must agree with Radwanski's conclusion
that many Ontario students enter adult life lacking the knowledge, skills and 
attitude required to function effectively in the demanding present-day society.

Inequality in learning continues to persist in Ontario and seems to correspond 
to how society is socially and economically stratified. There appear to be 
serious problems with dropouts and their relationship to the basic and general 
streams of study. The dropout rate of 42% for black students is reportedly the 
highest among all racial groups (Cheng et al., 1993). Native students appear to 
run a higher risk of dropping out but are not usually taken into account since 
they are invisible in urban schools (Brown, 1993; Cheng et al., 1993; MacKay 
and Myles, 1989). This high dropout rate for black students is the most visible 
manifestation that something is wrong with the system that requires urgent, 
remedial action. When people are pushed out of school for no other reason 
than the color of their skin, educators must be concerned. Our society must 
be concerned that these very people, without the necessary skills and 
education, will inevitably be relegated to the bottom rung of the economic 
ladder (Dubois, 1973; Radwanski, 1987). They will be consigned to low-paid, 
dead-end jobs at a time when these jobs are quickly disappearing (Radwanski, 
1987).

We see certain practices throughout public schools that discourage the 
advancement of black children. This, argues Alladin (1996), makes room for 
white students' success. One such practice is the “spiral curriculum” that 
promotes children from grade to grade with their age group even if they have
learned considerably less than their "other" classmates (Radwanski, 1987).

This practice is not fair. Again, it is the result of how the idea of difference plays out in the school culture. The dominant group sees it fit to classify and stratify black and minority children in schools to ensure that students who are Anglo, male and white are the beneficiaries of black failure (Alladin, 1996).

This is why I am saying that some children are learning on the backs of "others". For instance, when one group of students is labelled as the "failing" group and treated that way, other students owing to "white skin privilege" could be deemed "successful" on the basis of difference in skin color and status. This must cease. Yet, this kind of subordination is the main cause for the problems black students are facing in schools today.

Moreover, the traditional ways of teaching, as I have argued, are seriously flawed; they breed and perpetuate inequality in schooling; they preserve white male dominance. Therefore, such ways must be abolished in order to create fairness for all Canadians, especially at a time when Canada is becoming more and more a part of a global village. I am of the opinion that, if adopted, an antiracist approach in education would interrogate aspects of Eurocentric teaching and begin to resolve the many problems it produces for black and minority children. As I know it, Eurocentric education still supports a curriculum system that produces and reproduces inequality in schooling and robs children of the chance to realize their full potential in schools and the society as a whole.
Alladin (1996); Belowitz and Edari (1984) and Dei (1996) further argue that many of the problems experienced by black and minority students are the direct result of racial prejudice and discrimination in order to protect and advance the interests and aspirations of white children. What exactly are some of these problems that do not seem to go away? They need careful examination to understand how the stratification of schooling perpetuates discrimination based on gender, race and class to maintain white male dominance and power.

In the study, *The 1991 Every Secondary Student Survey, Part 3*, Maria Yau et al. (1993) reported that in Ontario public schools, there is a higher concentration of students from high socio-economic backgrounds at the advanced level of schooling. At the general and basic levels are found students from lesser socio-economic backgrounds. Thus, schools are mirroring the social realities in the Canadian economy; many minority students in the lower streams will only be able to find employment in the service sector. This sector does provide a large number of jobs for the unskilled and the under-educated (Radwanski, 1987, p.17), but such jobs tend to be low-paid, frequently part-time, and not permanent. Further, these jobs will be steadily reduced as a result of automation. Therefore, a good education is necessary to prepare all students for effective and rewarding job opportunities in an increasingly knowledge-intensive economy.

Owing to a number of political factors in public education, students who are placed in the lower streams of education do not seem to comprehend the
connection between their status as students and post secondary opportunities (Cheng et al., 1993). Black and other minority students are uncertain about their futures, as compared to white students in the advanced echelon of learning who are not “at risk.” Furthermore, Cheng et al. (1993) make another critical observation of how race plays a key role in learning. Whites constitute approximately 54% of the school population; Asians 30%, blacks 9% and Aboriginals 1%. Despite the fact that blacks and Native children are only a small minority in the school population, a lot of focus is given to them by the dominant society. Black and Native students represent a small minority in advance levels of learning, yet they are the majority of students who drop out of school. Black students account for 7% in the advanced levels of schooling. They make up 16% of the general stream and 18% of the basic (Cheng et al., 1993). I will discuss the reasons for these discrepancies later on in the thesis.

**Gender Difference**

With respect to gender, Cheng et al. (1993) have reported that males make up 53% of the Ontario public school population and females 47%. At the advanced level, males account for 51% and females 49% (Cheng et al., 1993). However, at the general levels, males have a 62%-38% margin over females; at the basic level, males represent 56% of the student population versus 44% females (Cheng et al., 1993). Although male students represent the majority at the basic and general levels, they still outnumber female students at the advanced level. Despite the gains made by women in universities, this to me is an indication of discrimination at a time when predictions of future patterns of
economic inequality may become increasingly uneven for women in the world (Davies, Mosher and O'Grady, 1996). It seems that schools are still operating under the assumption that we Canadians are living in a man's world and that women need not stay in schools long enough to obtain the education with which they need to compete with men in the employment marketplace.

According to Gaskell (1992), Eurocentric schools are still acting as if femininity is the reason for low achievement whilst male traits are used to explain “success” (p.28). Efforts are still being made, Gaskell says, to render women docile and subservient instead of independent and thoughtful (1992). Gender stereotyping and discrimination disadvantage women and make their employment chances more difficult. Despite the fact that women have made great strides in employment, becoming doctors, lawyers, members of parliament and so forth, some courses in high school are still being labelled as more appropriate for women (Davies et al., 1996; Gaskell, 1992). School counsellors are encouraging girls to enroll in courses such as math and science and it is paying dividends (Davies et al., 1996). At the same time however, the patriarchal tendency still remaining in the school curriculum pushes girls, especially those of minority background, to enroll in courses such as typing and home economics rather than science and industrial arts (Stanworth, 1983). Therefore, the school curriculum needs to change the view that men naturally dominate the world in order to allow women to become aware and involved with the national and global economic circumstances with which they are faced. Female students should not have to conform to the ideals of
patriarchy in learning but should be liberated and allowed to express themselves as whole beings instead of what is expected of them. The school curriculum should reflect this concern in addressing how sex-role ideology impacts on women and public schooling. The contributions of women of all cultural and racial groups to schooling and society could play very important roles in the collective struggle for fairness and inclusion in learning.

In presenting data about the discriminatory effects of inequitable policies in schooling, Brown’s study, *A Follow-up of the Grade 9 Cohort of 1987 Every Student Survey* (1993) is important. He reported that, of the 1987-1988 grade 9 students he interviewed, 69% of advanced students had graduated on schedule in 1992, compared to 40% of general level students and 27% of basic level students. More interestingly, the graduation rate for Asian students peaked at 72%; for white students 59%; for black students 44%. However, the dropout rate for Asian students was 18%, for white students 31% and for black students, 42%. These figures are certainly indicative of a problem pertaining to anti-black racism in the system. Why? The school and school curriculum seem to be promoting the learning of some students to the detriment of “others” and such is not in accord with the stated intent of multiculturalism in education. Antiracism education could tackle this issue.

**Intersection of Race, Class and Gender in Learning**

An antiracism approach to learning sees the social stratification based on race, class and gender as always having played a key role in the advancement of
capitalism and colonialism. Certain phenotypic characteristics focused upon e.g., nose size, skin color and hair texture, have always been attributed in such a way as to create a system of categorization and hierarchization for the exploitation of profit (Miles, 1989).

Differences based on race, class and gender, argues Ogbu (1994), may be considered social constructs that promote the capitalist functioning of society. Yet, the construction of racism has absolutely no scientific explanation or evidence for its claims (Dei, 1996). What is known is that the ideology of "whiteness" has always attempted to justify racism as a black problem that white people just cannot understand (Miles, 1989). Somehow, racism is seen as a great, elusive mystery. White people do not want to understand how the history of Africans and Native Canadians, on their continuum of economic development, was interrupted for the development and advancement of European culture (Alladin, 1987; Dubois, 1973).

Most white administrators simply do not choose to admit how the creation of "others" benefits only themselves and inferiorizes others. They do not want to accept responsibility for the damage they have done to other cultures for their own development. Indeed, it seems as if school officials do not want to understand how the processes of domination make basket cases, vagabonds and outcasts of others (Dubois, 1973). It must not be forgotten that Native peoples' entire cultures including their religions, economic systems, languages and family ties were ruthlessly disrupted in order to make way for European
capitalism. The enslavement of Africans accomplished the same purpose and the result was genocide on a massive scale (Dickason, 1992; Ivanov, 1996).

Today, it seems as though no one is making a claim for real compensatory damages to rectify all the wrongs that have been inflicted on the minority cultures of the world for the survival and advancement of white capitalism and power. This white power has always used black people to make white Europeans stronger and richer and to make black people relatively and sometimes absolutely weaker and poorer (Rodney, 1990). This reality is not taught in schools, yet educators are still reluctant to change and give minority students the space and recognition they need to act as autonomous beings in school and the democratic society at large.

The creation of classes, like racism, is an inevitable outcome of capitalist forces; both are stratified processes (Bourdieu et al., 1977) and are therefore linked with socio-economic and family background, level of education achieved, and income (Dei, 1996). Despite the fact that one can make individual changes to one's status, the public school system in Ontario is arguably an agent for maintenance of the class structure and the status quo (Bourdieu et al., 1977). As a result, this system of schooling has a tendency to exclude children who are poor and to ignore their culture and values.

As far as the stratification of gender is concerned, it discriminates against women in terms of sexist bias and stereotypes. Therefore, sexism in education
benefits male students and impacts negatively on the lives and aspirations of female students (Gaskell, 1992). One can therefore see that race, class and gender relations in schooling are social constructs that are the inevitable workings of white male patriarchy translating in dominance over blacks, working class and female students.

In order to create the kinds of changes I am proposing in Eurocentric schooling, it would be first necessary to interrogate the structures of patriarchal power and inequalities that have historically developed around the idea of "difference". In that way, the notion of "difference" as displayed in multicultural teaching could be seen as a deceptive instrument designed to stifle the voices of minorities and harm the economic potential of Canadian society. How does one change this trend and achieve true fairness in schools?

Equality through Education

It is my opinion that Canadian teachers must be sensitive to the cultural characteristics of all students in their classrooms. However, this requires a fair balance of a culturally responsive pedagogy to deal with "difference" in schools. In order to develop a responsible discussion of the solution to the varied problems experienced by minority students, it is necessary to begin with a thorough understanding of the sources of inequality in educational performance. This understanding, I believe, would facilitate the implementation of solutions that I will discuss later on in the thesis.
Schools can do a lot more to improve the environment for all students rather than pre-judging students based on their set of circumstances. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that the disparity in school achievement between minority students and majority students widens over time (Brown, 1993; Cheng et al., 1993; Persell, 1977). If Eurocentric schooling is not to blame, and had education been more multi-centric and equitable, this gap would be greatest when the student first enters school and would gradually narrow over time. However, the contrary holds, and these differences appear to widen with time (Brown, 1993; Persell, 1977). So, by blaming the children for their own problems, deficit explanations seem to accomplish nothing except to take away the onus from schools with respect to the role they play in the construction of difference and "failure" in education.

**Teacher Expectations**

When Eurocentric teachers make pre-judgements about the ability of some students, the teacher inevitably develops different expectations for these students (Baruth et al., 1992). Once these expectations are formed, interactions between these students and teachers may deteriorate, possibly resulting in school failure, the development of a negative self-concept, and dropping out. Based on the unfair expectations and negative assessments that teachers harbor about these students, explanations could very well be communicated in subtle ways and translated into a covertly racist, sexist and classist teaching praxis.
Streaming

One practice of Eurocentric teaching is the streaming of students by placing them in their respective classes, not based on their abilities but on the basis of how they are perceived. It is fair to say that schools in Ontario use this kind of practice of stratification beginning at the junior high and high schools levels. The argument generally used to support streaming is that by narrowing the range of ability in a given group, teachers can be more effective in assisting the students (Livingstone et al., 1992).

However, a disturbing aspect of streaming is that students of minority backgrounds tend to be over represented in the lower academic streams (Alladin, 1996; Cheng et al., 1996). This over-representation is justified by school authorities, not only for the reason that teachers hate black and minority students, but rather, because they like many others, believe that danger has a brown or black face. So the attitude is “who cares if we put them in basic and general streams... After all, it is for the greater (white) good.” This is an unfortunate reality. Teachers and the school administration are partly to blame for not having the sensitivity to the historical nature of cultural differences. Unwittingly or not, they may go about interpreting the behaviors of minority students in ways that can lead them to under-estimate the true potential of these students (Irvine, 1990; Barber and Meuer, 1990). Once these students are placed in basic and general streams of learning, their learning potential is often quite difficult to determine, and as a result students have a hard time moving up to higher levels of instruction (Rist, 1976). Thus,
teachers' pre-judgements of minority students' potential, I would argue, have long lasting effects on the lives of these students. Indeed, such judgements are costly to minority students individually and to the society at large.

Findings of several investigators indicate that students who are placed in low and basic streams are often subjected to inferior forms of instruction. For one thing, labels given to them such as "disadvantaged", "low" and "basic" or even "at risk" carry with them negative connotations (Irvine, 1990). Once students are assessed to be deficient in some way or the other, teachers have a tendency to start treating them that way. This experience is often detrimental to these students since they commonly internalize the ways they are treated.

For instance, "at risk" students complain that they are called on less often in class, given less time to respond, praised less often, given less feedback and criticized more frequently (Irvine, 1990). In addition, the students in low streams of learning often receive shorter periods of instruction than what is normally accorded to their higher streamed counterparts. For them, it appears that class periods begin later than scheduled and end earlier. They spend more time with homework and lose more time in class interruptions and management routines (Lehr and Harris, 1988; McDermott, 1977).

**Curriculum Discrimination**

In the Ontario public school system today, there are significant differences with respect to how the curriculum is used in high and lower streams of instruction.
In a general sense, education for students in the low and basic academic streams seems to lack any meaningful direction and purpose. Often, the learning material is ambiguously introduced and taught at a slower pace (Irvine, 1990). According to Lehr et al. (1988), knowledge for these cohorts of students tends to be conveyed in the form of simple facts and simple skills while emphasis on potentially controversial topics is avoided (Contreras, 1988). The purpose for carrying out these procedures is hardly ever explained.

These realities, according to Hilliard (1989), are the inevitable result of systematic inequalities in Eurocentric schooling. He maintains that these inequalities seem to stem from unfair pre-judgements of some students’ inability to learn. Such judgements can lead some teachers to expect little from these students and to treat them in ways that reflect such thinking, which stifle these students’ learning capabilities. Thus, the low level of school performance on the part of minority children should be perceived as a symptom and not a cause (Radwanski, 1987).

In addition, Eurocentric textbooks and educational materials seem to present monolithic, distorted and erroneous information about certain racial groups, or to omit their contributions altogether. Such books give an Eurocentric view of the world while simultaneously denying other cultures what they need to know and are capable of. Minority groups are usually portrayed in negative ways. The following testimony of one black student in Dei’s (1995) study illustrates this dilemma.
...The main steam kids...they may not think of it, but when they look through all those books, they see a representation of themselves. And somewhere in their little heads is “well, I don’t see someone who looks like so and so”.... the ridicule starts then, you know” (Dei, 1995, File F03: Lines 568-584).

...So really the curriculum, it is geared to Europeans...the way they think, the way they go about their lives (Dei, 1995, File19: Lines 1561-1562).

Furthermore, Aboriginal people, for example, are often portrayed in a negative light, while blacks are often portrayed as athletic sub-humans and lustful savages (Ivanov, 1976). These portrayals must cease in schools; educators must recognize that it hampers the life chances of people and that no nation can face the future unless it knows what its citizenry is capable of. However, capitalistic addiction based on white skin privilege and power and the creation of the “other” for the purpose of sustaining this addiction prohibits this from taking place (Li, 1979).

Many critical educationists such as Dei and Calliste (2000); Levin (1987); Moll (1988); and Stage (1989) have asserted that blacks and minority students are positioned in an ineffective curriculum that is oppressive and one which retards their learning potential. To change a school curriculum that is biased and unfairly developed, teachers must raise their expectations of minority students and be able to understand that these students have certain strengths that could be useful, instead of focusing on their weaknesses. The thinking of teachers should move beyond the traditional deficit approach that makes the
goal of developing potential impossible to achieve. Schools that are currently Eurocentric have a responsibility to develop a fair, equitable and challenging curriculum that could afford all students academic success. However, certain considerations pertaining to cultural difference may present roadblocks in achieving this goal.

**Cultural Mismatches in Teaching and Learning**

According to O'Doyley and Silverman (1976), although minority students and teachers may speak the same language, they sometimes have different ways of using it. Some students from the Caribbean for instance tend to use nouns as verbs and vice versa (Silverman and O'Doyley, 1976). Students from the dominant culture seem to have an advantage in the learning process since their language use at home and in their immediate communities corresponds more to its use in the dominant culture at school. Their values are similar to the "official" school values. By contrast, minority students have problems in continuing their language use at home and in their communities at school.

Here, it must be pointed out that the dialect West Indian persons speak is the language they have inherited from their slave masters. Slaves were not allowed to speak the language of the master class while in bondage. This very master class was responsible for exploiting them for profits. Consequently, no real effort was made to have the children of slaves speak the same language of the master class. Today, inherited language problems of West Indian kids in school may include being misunderstood when they use their type of
communication in classroom duties (Cazden, 1988; Erickson, 1975; Moll, 1988; Phillips, 1972).

To summarize, the literature on black youth and schooling indicates that, owing to problems in language use and culture, students from minority backgrounds approach learning differently from other students (Brathwaite, 1989; Solomon, 1985) and this generally seems to be overlooked in schools. When the traditional approach to learning is in place, teaching can take on a particular type of socialization that is linked closely to the needs, aspirations and experiences of dominant students but clashes with the home and community experiences of minority students. This, to me, is one of the most important reasons why antiracism education in all Canadian school settings is so badly needed today.
CHAPTER 4

THE PRINCIPLES OF ANTIRACISM EDUCATION

This chapter discusses the principles of antiracism education to counter the existing ideals of race, class and gender constructions conveyed in multicultural education programs. These antiracist principles relate to the curriculum, knowledge construction, identity and representation in learning.

In a research study, *School Climate and Conflict Resolution* (Yau et al., 1995), the investigators reported that there is an expressed need by some teachers for antiracist education in schools today. The fact that teachers could play a vital role in its success in well documented (Yau et al., 1995; Grant, 1989; Kehoe, 1984). However, many teachers seem to resist taking responsibility for how they interact with minority students in school. Their refusal to hear what students are saying indicates the necessity of implementing antiracist teaching, which is the first step to raise teachers’ awareness. Teachers’ perceptions in general are skewed. For example, 76% of all students, when asked if teachers are always nice to students agree, but 98% to teachers say it is so (Yau et al., 1995). When asked about politeness and respectability to others, it is reported that 58% of students responded that teachers were respectable and polite to them whereas 98% of teachers agree (Yau et al., 1995). This evidence can be interpreted as indicating that teachers are covering up the politics of domination in schools that serve to undermine the integrity of many students, especially minority ones.
In addition, when questioned on the issue of tensions in schools, 33% of students claim that there is a lot of tension between teachers and students while only 19% of teachers agree to this (Yau et al., 1995). Equally interesting is the revelation that 43% of students agree that boys and girls always treat each other nicely; 39% say sometimes; yet 86% of teachers maintain that all students treat each other nicely (p. 4).

The above data seem to suggest that teachers are unaware of what is really going on in the different echelons of learning in school. Perhaps they think that racism is just a perception as I had once thought. Downplaying how teachers and students treat each other may create conditions, which could maintain the politics of “difference,” where teachers may not feel responsible for how all children are being taught and made to succeed or fail in learning (Holt, 1982).

According to the evidence reviewed above, the present educational system requires fundamental structural changes in the administration and delivery of education in Ontario. Indeed, the evidence indicates how this educational system produces a situation in which the performance of minority students is seriously harmed. The idea that teachers do not want to take responsibility for how some students perform in schools suggests that the existing Eurocentric pedagogy, in a multicultural context, is quite ineffective in assisting minority students to raise their self esteem and maximize their full academic potential.
Owing to the modus operandi of "difference" in Eurocentric learning, most parents believe that race is the fundamental problem affecting minority students and school success (Cheng et al., 1996). This is one reason why mainstream pedagogical praxis should be transformed towards the goal of creating an open and equal opportunity system with effective social outcomes for all groups.

In fact, Cheng (1995) reported that 51% of teachers admit that students would benefit more if teachers had more training in antiracism education (p. 6). If the teaching staff had more training in antiracism education, 64% of teachers agree that school programs would benefit students; 81% of teachers with no training agree (p. 6). This is a clearly expressed need for an alternative teaching strategy that combats discrimination in all forms of schooling today.

Once antiracism education is in place, no longer would teachers and the school culture elicit only the voices of the dominant and exclude the voices of minority students. With an antiracist approach to teaching, teachers would find it convenient to learn how to understand and analyze students' experiences and how to use these experiences to empower students. Indeed, agency and voice for minority students should be important components of how to reconstruct positive self-images and identities in a curriculum based on the idea of difference (Dei, 1996). It is now appropriate to give an explanation of certain features of antiracism education followed by a theoretical antiracist framework.
Critical Features of Antiracism Education

Under the present system of education, the aspirations and grievances of minority students are ignored (Lynch, 1992). As a result, antiracism educators maintain that this change can occur in the school curriculum by helping all students to

(a) understand and resist the social structures that contribute to racial exploitation (Parker, 1992; Thomas, 1984);

(b) counteract the racist effects of capitalism (Dei, 1996; Massey, 1991);

(c) identify and redress power imbalances (Donald and Rattansi, 1992);

These goals can be accomplished by

(a) discussing past and present racism, stereotyping and discrimination in Canadian society;

(b) questioning the economic, structural and historical roots of inequality and power relations (Dei and Caliste, 2000; Lee, 1984);

(c) interrogating the realities of racism and the human consequences of racism (Stanley, 1992);

(d) changing the social realities that racism appears to explain (Stanley, 1992).

Antiracism Discursive Framework

Antiracism education concerns itself primarily with an education that is reflective of the need for social change and social justice (Dei, 1996). According to Lee (1985), its aim is to eliminate racism in all its various forms. Therefore, it interrogates the barriers found in the political, social and cultural spheres of school practices and subject areas and provides alternatives to the social
construction of not only race, but also gender and class. Rather than pathologizing homes and entire communities, the antiracist approach examines the assumption of "difference" and challenges the notion of white skin privilege and power. It also challenges the universality of Eurocentric knowledge in terms of how it is constructed to devalue and deligitimize the knowledge and experiences of "other" cultures in schooling (Dei and Calliste, 2000).

Furthermore, an antiracist approach in public schools would inevitably eliminate the stereotype that black students are by nature inferior to whites. There is no scientific evidence to corroborate this notion. Still, such thinking by untrained teachers could lead to the classification and deprivation of students based on their racial identity. Further, other forms of discrimination based on gender, and class, are likely to be produced from such thinking in term of "natural differences" (Dei, 1996). Accordingly, an antiracist paradigm sees these "natural differences" as man-made constructs and seeks to eliminate them in the name of fairness and social justice.

In that light, antiracism education does not only fully support equitable race relations and prejudice reduction strategies in schools but moves beyond this idea to develop fair and harmonious relations, which could be interpreted as improving the environment in school. It does not just seek to abolish inequalities at the individual level but at the political, historical and economic levels where they mainly operate (Dei, 1996). Antiracism pedagogy is capable of challenging the ills of diversity and the construction of "difference" in
responding to the concerns, needs and aspirations of minority students in
schools today. (Dei, 1996).

Antiracism education supports the view that the inclusion of minority students’
experiences and cultures should be recognized and incorporated in the school
curriculum. This is important in order to protect minority students’ sense of
self and their psychological survival in schools. In this respect, teachers can
play critically important roles if they demonstrate that they are knowledgeable
about other cultures and are sensitive to how they communicate with minority
students.

It is a fatal defect in public education when the knowledge and experiences of
minority students go virtually unacknowledged in a racially and ethnically
diverse society. When this occurs, black and minority students are bound to
feel isolated and suffer harmful effects in learning. I am not suggesting
however that the school should just focus on the culture of the student alone,
as this may tend to further alienate students from the dominant culture.

When the cultures of black and other minority students are discussed in
schools, there are very important issues to consider rather than simply
associating these cultures with customs regarding to food, music, dance and
dress (Kehoe, 1984). When this association is made in an oppressive learning
environment, a tendency arises to subject these students to a negative and
condescending attitude. In addition, concentration on the minority students’
culture alone is not a guarantee that these students will develop positive self-concepts and identities in schools. Therefore, the teaching of cultures should be done within the context of universal respect and acceptance.

Studies of European colonialism, as presently taught, are a part of the dominant culture that does not support minority students' equal life opportunities in the broader society. Present-day, mainstream historical studies easily confuse these students and lay the groundwork upon which they could be further exploited and oppressed (Miles, 1989).

To reverse this trend, teachers with training in antiracism can develop teaching strategies to promote success for minority students in schools. Since Anglo-European students are not taught to recognize bias in their schooling, the decisions made by teachers to identify and define problems must be carefully guided. All students must be encouraged in proceeding to solve their own problems. Eurocentric knowledge should not be mistaken for knowledge that represents the whole world, but must be identified and clearly shown by educators to be a mental construction that helps to preserve white dominance and power.

By working together, minority students should be given the space to research and analyze what approach in teaching would be liberating for them. Students, at present, are not given the space to be independent in constructing their thoughts; teachers should provide such spaces along with subtle and
direct instruction. When this is done successfully, students learn to internalize the experience. Indeed, they should be supported and motivated to internalize a positive view of themselves, which is an approach I believe should be integrated throughout the school curriculum.

In the next chapter, we look at ways in which the school can change to empower students. Issues such as developing positive self-concepts and identities, the hidden curriculum and changing the school are discussed.
CHAPTER 5

DECENTERING EUROCENTRIC SCHOOLING

When multicultural programs in education are interrogated through the lens of a multi-centric, antiracist approach, certain pedagogical changes are inevitable. It is noted that people with power never want to lose it. So the idea of altering social arrangements from which they benefit, and with which they are comfortable, poses a serious problem. Indeed, a break from the status quo is often extremely difficult to bring about.

Antiracist education does not simply accept the facts as created by Eurocentric epistemology in multicultural education. It proposes that these facts are skewed to sustain inequality in schooling; it supports revamping of the system to reflect the needs and aspirations of students who have always been on the margins. The change from Eurocentric knowledge to an inclusive curricular construction may not be an expensive venture. It may involve promoting innovative teaching measures that are inexpensive. This may include the use of different learning materials to radically change teaching strategies and ideology in education. Many people who think that change for the betterment of all students is an impossible task are simply the victims of their narrow perceptions and values (Sleeter, 1994). However, it is vitally important to involve every one in the change process. According to research findings, when students are made to feel like a part of the change process, they may try to work harder for better results (Anderson, 1990).
According to Michael Fullan, (1992), an important aspect to change is the development of the institutional will to do so. This institutional will entails the use of school resources to facilitate learning among minority students. Therefore, the idea of change refers to collective effort that has to be internalized in students for it to have long-term effectiveness (Fullan, 1992). At the same time, such a process will help these students to succeed in school and to contribute to a more humane and democratic vision of society. Again, to achieve this goal requires the development of positive identities for all students, whatever their background.

Developing Positive Self Concept and Identity through Change

A positive identity and self-concept can be attained through the acquisition of knowledge and education about one's history and set of circumstances. However, owing to the hegemony inherent in Eurocentric, patriarchal pedagogy, the traditional white curriculum shows no promise for promoting the self-development of minority students but continues to devalue and delegitimize their identities and self-concepts. When students or their experiences are poorly or negatively represented in the school curriculum, they generally tend to develop feelings of isolation, which is what many black and minority students have reported at the present time (Dei, 1995; Karp, 1988; Quirouette, 1990). According to Bourdieu (1979), feelings of isolation and alienation are inevitable as a result of the perpetuation and maintenance of dominant/subordinate relations, which can be construed as a sort of “violence” in schools. This violence manifests itself in teaching practices consistent with
Eurocentric teaching to essentially "infantilize" (DasGupta, 1992) minority students and to further instill feelings of worthlessness and cultural deprivation. Nieto (1992) has explained that minority students tend to feel better about themselves, if they are represented fairly in the school curriculum.

Students who are poor, female and black do have realistic goals in life and proper self-esteem (Ianni, 1989). It is a matter of how these students are treated in schools and ultimately in the society at large. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, schools play a crucial role in how students internalize their learning experiences and how these experiences are constructed.

Since the self-esteem of minority students is tied to their experiences in learning, racist teaching can produce a negative self-concept for some students while developing a sense of superiority in students from the dominant group. The involvement of parents and the local community could make a big difference in encouraging students to participate in school activities that help in the construction of healthier self-concepts for these students. In that light, the construction of difference as it applies to race, gender, and class is critical for the development of both the dominant and minority groups in multicultural school settings. It is important to acknowledge that students from the high and lower echelons of schooling are able to share their common experiences with one another and to understand the nature of one's relationship to the dominant group (Cummings, 1986).
The objective for public schools with diverse student populations today is to create an atmosphere of inclusiveness where the cultural identities of "others' can be respected and appreciated. The pre-judgement of "others" in terms of their history, beliefs and behaviors is contrary to the goal of building strong identities in all students for the good of society. In that sense, antiracist education is essential, not only in providing a positive individual identity but a community and national identity as well. As immigration to Canada is on the increase, the "minority" student population is expected to increase as well and schools must be prepared to face this reality. A study by Berry and Kalin (1992) indicates that Canadians have expressed support for such a policy. Yau et al. (1995) and Lee (1985) have agreed that an antiracism pedagogy in schools is an important goal for the construction of positive self-concepts in all students.

However, the differing make-up of the student population is reflective of a system that feeds off the co-existence of differences in students' experiences and cultures to succeed. In a post-modern world, this must not be allowed to continue since the social and political dynamics of identity are integrated with a global consciousness; all parts of the world are interrelated systems and they need to share common concerns and goals (Dei, 1996). Before this can take place, students need to become empowered.
Empowering Students

The main purpose of an education is empowerment to gain the freedom and ability to control one’s destiny and to know one’s place in the world (Lefcourt, 1976; Dei, 1996). In order to achieve this empowerment, students need to have a sense of control over what they are doing to enable them to achieve and act (Lefcourt, 1976). At the same time, minority students, in particular, need to be empowered since they often tend to have inferior and negative self-concepts (Shor et al., 1987). In order to reverse these negative self-concepts, minority students will need to further develop communication skills and the ability to think critically.

For that reason, the current system of education must be transformed and replaced with a system of antiracism education before it can be effective in teaching all students to have positive self-concepts and make positive changes in their lives. Together, both teachers and students from different backgrounds would be able to work together based on new insights as to how to see and do things in a different, more equitable way.

Not all minority students, at present, are quite prepared to take on the challenges of a multi-centric pedagogy. Some black and minority students who are “at risk” experience a host of problems that would not make them good candidates as partners for change in schools. To cope with their individual problems in learning, some of these students are heavily influenced by rap artists such as Snoop Doggy Dogg, Korrupt, Coolio, Dr. Dre and others. The
musical products of these artists are full of obscenities, drugs, sex, self-loathing and anti-female sentiments. With those is also a gangster component that sells like hotcakes in the music industry. Therefore, it should not be a surprise when many black and now white students, who are not positively responding to Eurocentric teaching, call themselves “dawgs” and “wiggers.” They feel they are not fairly represented in school and tend to exhibit patterns of loudness in the hallways and displaying other forms of deviance and attention-seeking behaviors which lead to other forms of resistance in school (Solomon, 1985). These may also include drug use and violence.

J. Hold in *How Children Fail* (1982), agrees with the present view that some students are not “fit.” He has maintained that students, who exhibit problems of the kind I am describing, are socially created. They tend to come from working class or from poor socio-economic backgrounds and from single-parent households that are usually plagued by other problems. These set of circumstances are indicative of the health of some of these students in school. Indeed, their health is intrinsically tied to resistance of the school culture and alienation from the content and process of schooling.

The framers of Canada’s insightful act of multiculturalism should be honoured, and I am sure they are, for their tremendous moral insight in recognizing the potential for inequities and discrimination in the society and in creating the conditions for meaningful change. As it stands, the policy of multiculturalism requires urgent remedies when one considers the ghastly consequences that
are likely to ensue if antiracism principles are not implemented to fairly reflect a part of children's education and of themselves. Canada's international reputation could be at stake if she does not fulfill her democratic obligations to be the trend-setter in representing social justice, freedom and peace in her social institutions, especially the system of education. When any other kind of education is allowed to flourish, Canada's democratic ideals could become suspect to the rest of the world.

Canada's constitution provides the right for all Canadians to be treated as persons with dignity; it is unconstitutional to discriminate against persons, including students, on the basis of race, gender, class or handicap (Martin, 1985). What is preferred is a curriculum standard that is non-racist and non-sexist in order to show the world to students as it really is; students would be given the opportunity to question certain aspects of their society, such as poverty and social inequity. It is essential to point out that we are living in a world that is for everyone and should not be dominated by just a single world-view, the Eurocentric one. Different spaces must be given to students in schools so they can voice their own and different perspectives; this approach would undoubtedly facilitate learning in a sharing, caring and more rewarding environment.

Recently, there have been many reports of the high achievement of minority students other than blacks in the public school system. In fact, Neil Guppy et al. (1987) have speculated that students from Asia are more successful in
schools than all other minority groups, and in some instances white students themselves. He also seems to reject racism as a dominant factor in determining student outcome. I differ with that position. According to Cornbleth (1985), the explanation for this could be a matter of how Asian students are able to culturally adapt to North American schools. Owing to certain factors such as values and beliefs, these students are not usually labelled as inferior and "different" from the norm, but similar. For example, one hears all the time of how Chinese students are good at math and science, whereas black students are good in sports. Ogbu (1978) posits that this is a result of how some students are socialized. He argues that some students have the privilege of having real educational goals instilled in them at home early, which makes a difference in their academic achievement. However, Ogbu (1992) admits that despite their academic achievement and proper familial socialization, Asian students often experience discrimination and prejudice due to differences in their language use, cultural background and behaviors. Yet, I would argue that had they been subjected to a "culture of poverty" or to slavery of their ancestors as pointed out by Lewis (1961), it is probable that these students would not have been as successful in school as they are. It seems clear that culture modulates and modifies social inequality in schooling, how it is produced and reinforced. That is the reason why all cultures must be valued in learning. A multi-centric approach in antiracism education challenges the behaviors and beliefs of all teachers in how they relate to all minority students in schools. Again, this framework addresses the importance of a school environment that focuses on inclusion and the sharing of information. It
reinforces co-operation, questions inequality and fosters an understanding of prejudice and discrimination and how to eliminate it in schools. In addition, an antiracist approach helps to develop a democratic process of interaction in schools. Therefore, all students of diverse backgrounds should be included in all components of the instructional program, including the resources of the library and from the students themselves that seek to represent the interests of black and minority students. In this way, all students would not have to be subjected only to the history of Europe in their classes. Instead, they would be able to also develop an understanding of the cultures and mores of other students in the classroom so that real inter-cultural relations and sharing could take place in school and the society at large.

**Changing the School**

Since multicultural programs in schools have the potential for contributing to the problems some students already have, it is a problem that seems to emanate from the idea that Eurocentric knowledge is superior to all other forms of knowledge. That is simply not true; according to Giroux (1992), no one particular group of people can speak with authority and certainty for all humanity. School conflicts can arise when that view is ignored. It is ignored largely in part because Eurocentric teaching tends to minimize the contributions of black and minority peoples of the world. Therefore, when some students complain of alienation and teachers not caring enough (Karp, 1988; Quirouette, 1990), problems may develop in the educational system. That is why I am arguing for a transformation of the Eurocentric system of
education, in that it should be replaced with a multi-centric, antiracist pedagogy that would be more responsive to the needs of students.

Black students are tired of studying only about Columbus and Joan of Arc. I propose that these students can also learn about Bob Marley, Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington and Sojourner Truth. There are other black persons of eminence that students could learn about. The following are examples:

William P. Howard, a black man, represented Ward four in Toronto and served thirteen consecutive terms as Alderman at the turn of the twentieth century. He was also the acting mayor of the city of Toronto, Justice of the Peace, School Trustee, and was instrumental in establishing the Toronto Transit Commission (Black Studies: A Resource Guide for Teachers, 1983).

Black students might also learn that Dr. Ruffin Anderson was black and that he rose to become the first Canadian-born black to graduate from the University of Toronto medical school. Also, Charles Drew, a black doctor who was educated at McGill University, discovered a process for the storing of blood plasma. What is the fear of teaching black students the stories behind these eminent personalities? All students might also learn that a white man has not been the heavy weight-boxing champion of the world for over fifty years. I propose that the present educational system is unlikely to collapse if such information were taught. No teachers’ positions would be jeopardized.
In attempting to respond to the questions posed above, it is important to acknowledge that the present system of education is based on functionality and the smooth operation of things (Gaskell, 1992). Therefore, teachers are not trained to understand the political issue of how “difference” is developed and organized in schooling. Instead, they are taught about how to manage the system and nothing more (Fullan, 1992). Antiracism education challenges this approach and demands an end to hegemony in the system and its management.

With a multi-centric, antiracist approach that can permeate all subject areas and school practices (Lee, 1985), schools can be reorganized to meet the needs of children, not for the benefit or pleasure of the governing authorities. As a result, this change from a management to a leadership style would be a welcome approach in helping to liberate the minds of all children in this present land of immigrants called Canada. In reflecting her democratic ideals, all concerned parties should be involved in the creation and implementation of the change.

Change should not just start from the local level but from the top as well. Policies from the top would be critical in determining what the effects of change would be. At the same time, more accountability from the school site, regarding student academic performance should be ensured. The policy makers of public education are usually away from the school and seem to be more preoccupied with the economic needs of society instead of the highly
streamed system that discriminates against minority children on all levels (Livingstone et al., 1992).

Social justice or fairness is supposed to be the real goal of multicultural education. Therefore, top-down policies in schooling should support equity and diversity with mechanisms to control discrimination against students based on sex, race, gender and class. The best way to do this is to allow the school environment to be determined by the school itself. Its object should be to promote inclusion, dignity, respect and fairness for all students. And this, in more ways than one, can determine genuine success or failure in the performance of Ontario public schools.

According to Delgado et al. (1993), many minority students may experience a toxic learning environment in public schools as a result of lack of cultural awareness training on the part of educators. Also, some students may internalize subtle messages that they are not wanted in school and may act accordingly. It is important to point out that just because a school says it has multicultural policies does not mean that programs exist which promote the fundamental rights of those of all backgrounds.

The argument above points to the structure of the school as the main cause of learning problems in it, not the students. When students internalize negative experiences through the organization of the school, then both the student and the school fail. This is especially true if the standards, ethics and goals of the
school are not consistent with the diverse needs of the student population (Giroux, 1992).

The crisis faced by so many public schools in Ontario at present is that Eurocentric “knowledge” has a tendency to blame the victims of racism, sexism, and classism instead of accepting responsibility to create change. A deconstructed version of Eurocentric teaching sees diversity as an asset and not a drawback. It would just entail a larger frame, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of structure and culture. This deconstructed or multi-centric approach cannot be bad for Canadian society. On the contrary, it is good in that it is about fairness and reflects the true makeup of Canadian society instead of attempting to further the economic and cultural interests of only the affluent and white male students at the expense of the socially constructed “others”.

**Dealing with the “Hidden Curriculum”**

The “hidden curriculum” is viewed as one of the largest barriers to multi-centric teaching in Ontario public schools today. It involves the implicit transmission of messages that are found in the process of teaching and the school on a whole. As an African Canadian male student, I have witnessed that certain teacher attitudes towards minority students can be denigrating and alienating. These attitudes of teachers operate in ways to reproduce inequality in school performance. This is the case since these attitudes are connected to
how students’ identities are developed, and what is considered acceptable or not acceptable.

As stated earlier, when teachers unwittingly promote inequality in school, only the voices of students from the dominant group are made to be valued and given legitimacy, whereas the voices of minority students are devalued and deligitimized. Again, these kinds of messages and behaviors on the part of teachers must cease if genuine equity is to emerge in the Ontario public school system today. Equity can never be achieved as long as teachers continue to compare and teach students what their rightful station in life ought to be instead of what they can become.

There is a danger when the idea of “difference” is essentialized or given priority in school. It violates the constitutional rights of minority students; biased teachers could get away with teaching students what kind of knowledge and learning is important and necessary, who has power and who does not and what is socially rewarding from what is not (Alladin, 1996).

When knowledge from the margins are omitted from the school curriculum, then structural inequality is perpetuated and the culture of the dominant group becomes validated (Alladin, 1996). Sometimes, minority students may pick up on teacher’s preferential practices and may react apathetically to alienation and feelings of being insulted. Sometimes, it may take weeks and months to recover from the pain and stress. When this kind of thing is
happening routinely in schools, educators can never say that they are successful. To change it, both students and teachers need to be empowered.

**Education of Minority Students**

Owing to differences in culture and language use in school, some teachers may have difficulties in disciplining and counseling black and minority students. Because there are biases in the Eurocentric curriculum, many of these students have already experienced psychological damage in school (Anzuldua, 1990). In such cases, they resist the culture and other aspects of the school; hence the "discipline problems."

In an Eurocentric school and program that ignores minorities’ experiences, black and minority students may become disengaged and be present in body but absent in spirit (Dei, 1995). When they come up against certain demands of the school such as rules, tests and discipline, they tend to rebel (Shor et al., 1987). Along with the urge to rebel, there are feelings of alienation and hopelessness; these may result in passive behavior and refusal to follow through on homework assignments and students’ ultimate withdrawal from school.

From my point of view, when these students are pushed to the limit, it is understandable that they may become aggressive to the parties they believe are responsible, such as teachers and the school itself. It is not also hard to see
that students who are provoked may behave in ways that could prevent others from learning and themselves from achieving.

Canada is supposed to be a democratic country. As such, all classrooms within a multi-centric framework should be democratic in scope. However, I am not saying that because they should be democratic, they should not be controlled. The challenge for diversified schools then is to establish a balance between control and equity, in terms of liberation, in schools (Shor et al. 1987). The onus is placed on schools and educators to create emancipatory learning environments for their students.

In that vein, both teachers and students should be able to question and learn why they should follow the rules and why they ought to take responsibility for their own behaviors and actions. To realize this goal depends on the willingness to share power, recognizing that teachers and students are located in different realms of influence (Dei, 1996). By that, I am not at all implying that teachers should try to control the lives of their students. Rather, I am saying that given the overall scenario of how discipline problems arise, that teachers can no longer afford the luxury of being silent on what to do to resolve those problems.

Teachers can establish voice and other forms of relating right in the classroom to deal with growing antagonism in school. For example, using appropriate eye contact and opening up the lines of communication may help. However, the
authority of teachers must be utilized only as long as needed and be judged by the vast majority of students as fair and necessary. On a whole, teachers must be equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to handle incidents of conflict as they arise in the class. Conflict is something that cannot be avoided (Banks, 1992). And since the potential for conflict is greater in a pluralistic school setting, teachers need to know how to reduce the likelihood of conflict and how to positively channel the energies of black and minority youth in school. One example is to give leadership roles to gifted students who are often disruptive; these students can act as mentors and tutors to less challenged classmates (Banks, 1992).

**Counselling Students Who Resist Schooling**

Most teachers are not trained social workers, but many guidance counselors are. In order for counselors to be effective in confronting the challenges of the changing school population, they must share a commitment to the construction of an equitable society and adhere to the principles of an anti-racist, anti-classist and anti-sexist education (Dei, 1996).

I remember when I was in high school in Toronto, my guidance counselor advised me that I should forget about pursuing my goal of becoming a linguist and become a carpenter instead. Even to remember that incident is painful. It is because of such experiences that I insist that counselors avoid the use stereotypes as facts in assessing black and minority students; they must recognize and appreciate these students' unique traditions and innate abilities.
Minority students in Eurocentric schools should be counseled to take subjects that will define their life chances in a multi-faceted employment market place that is clearly structured on the basis of race, class and gender. When guidance counselors, wittingly or not, counsel students to get into programs of study based on alleged male and female domains, it accomplishes nothing but to advance white mail dominance (Gaskell, 1992).

Illustrative instances of sexism and racism are as follows: One example is the phenomenon of female students being steered into subjects that have the potential of limiting their future opportunities (Gaskell, 1992). Another involves the practice of withholding information from black students about the choices they can make in their educational future. If teachers are not trained in anti-racism education, then the chances for minority students to fulfill their dreams are cut off. Antiracism education can also help to offset the detrimental effects of discrimination in the larger society.

**Teacher and Student Empowerment**

In my estimation, for real and positive changes to occur in Ontario public schools, both teachers and minority students need to be empowered. According to Giroux et al. (1986), teachers should be given a voice in how their work environment is organized and operated. Their role as teachers must not be underestimated; therefore, they must be allowed to function as individuals and not as robots designed to manage an outdated and inequitable system. To empower students is one way of breaking the deadlock to allow them to develop
their full academic and social potential. As Ashcroft (1987) proposes, educators play a key role in creating the conditions that enable students to act. Empowerment of students gives them latitude to achieve (Cummings, 1986) and to become responsible adults and highly regarded Canadian citizens. Again, to achieve that goal, minority students must first receive an education that empowers (Shor et al., 1987). This requires a process of inquiry, sharing and discovery instead of the fixed notion that Eurocentric knowledge is value free and the only way of knowing (Dei, 1996). Antiracism education is opposed to that notion. It is an empowering education that recognizes schools as microcosms of a larger society and as sites of contestation for social change (Dei, 1996).

Antiracism education focuses on individual growth as well as the creation of curriculum that gives voice and space for all students in learning (Dei, 1996). These voices, usually based on class, race, and gender constitute the voices of the world and the experiences of all people. When students are empowered, they would feel free to articulate and share their experiences with others and develop political strategies for action and change (Lefcourt, 1976). That is why it is necessary for teachers to create meaningful relationships with students in order to encourage inquiry in an environment that would be receptive of multiple worldviews and expressions. This approach would undoubtedly go a long way toward helping all students to develop a strong identity and a positive self-concept.
CHAPTER 6

TEACHER TRAINING IN ANTI-RACISM: THE POSSIBILITIES OF CHANGE

Strategies for change in the Ontario public school system are linked to teachers' willingness to recognize that the school environment and the curriculum show many inequalities. Therefore, it is critical that teachers develop an equitable attitude and knowledge that can change the political structures that serve as barriers in school. This new approach can help minority students to reach their full potential in learning. As suggested by the high drop out rate affecting the black student population, teachers' inability to effectively teach black students may ultimately lead to alienation, failure and the possibility to commit crimes (Hartnagel et al., 1989).

If the traditional system of teaching continues, then the problem of school failure, poverty, crime and vagabondage will be extended from generation to generation. To avoid this dilemma, teachers must be taught to relinquish their approach of classifying and ranking students based on stereotypes, an approach which has proven to be ineffective in addressing students' needs and aspirations (Brandt, 1987). Schools can never be deemed a success unless teacher education can first be reflective of this reality (De Vreede, 1986).

One of the main barriers that serve to sustain inequality in teachers' attitudes and teaching appears to be the lack of implementation of the social policy and equity provisions in teacher training programs. This may be the result of resisting change from an assimilation perspective to a genuine multicultural
one. So when I talk of change in teacher training, I am implying a change in how teachers are prepared to bring about this change.

**Teacher Training Goals**

Teacher education should be oriented in antiracism and tied to the goals of the multiculturalism act. The reason for this is because we are living in a cosmopolitan society; teachers should therefore prepare all students for democratic citizenship and for communication with the rest of the world. In a pluralistic society such as Canada, teachers must work with diversity and "difference" in schools as long as these differences are fully understood. When students' cultural, intellectual and linguistic backgrounds are only partially represented, teachers may experience a difficult task in teaching when their own background, history and knowledge are biased (Grant, 1989). When this is the reality, teachers may teach in ways that do not promote equality and social justice (Giroux et al., 1986). As a result, the classroom can come to be a site of conflict and negotiation; this would be the inevitable situation when teachers are taught, in subtle ways, to devalue students they consider to be "different".

Teachers must be taught to be responsible citizens in recognizing their role in producing and reproducing "difference" in schooling and the maintenance of the Eurocentric status quo. In order to avoid this, teachers must be taught that multicultural education is concerned with the knowledge of the world as well as with the subjective world of feelings and values—the cognitive, affective
and ethnical domains (Mukherjee, 1981). To achieve this goal, teacher education curricula should reflect the obvious changes that are taking place in our Canadian society.

Although the Ontario public schools give the appearance of being concerned with the success of multicultural education, little has been done to address the core issues of its intent. Some schools at the site level have made strides in providing in-service training in multi-centric and antiracism education. However, there is generally very little done to prepare teachers to work with a multicultural student population. The reason lies in the traditional approach to teaching, which is designed to prepare only white male students for entrance in high levels of employment and social affluence (Gaskell, 1992).

Without a doubt, this approach can never be effectively applied in multicultural settings unless some drastic changes are made. It seems to me that the institutions that are responsible for teaching teachers are somehow reluctant to respond to the changing needs of society and the diverse nature of our schools today. This reluctance seems to be linked to the subtle approach of a "color blind" pedagogy which is supported by teachers' unions, school boards and schools (Baruth et al., 1992).

I hypothesize that the reason for this is due to the idea that cultural pluralism has political undertones that have the potential to be volatile. It seems that teachers and educators tend to avoid controversial realities that could be found
in concepts of racism, prejudice, discrimination and unequal treatment and opportunities (Sleeter, 1994). When these issues are not discussed and are avoided, then a lack of understanding and mistrust of the power dynamics in multicultural programs in education occurs. Thus, schools are not able to relate and address the problems of diversity of schools, which make failures out of efforts for corrective policies. This should not be a surprise considering that some of these policies tend to focus more on non-racist/non-sexist approaches instead of anti-racist/anti-sexist strategies that could potentially interrogate and rupture systemic discrimination in schooling. The old way, which has always been adept as masking inequality and social injustice in schools, must be scrapped. Contreras (1988) points out that the tardiness of schools in adopting workable solutions to problems stems from the belief that teachers will somehow draw on their own resources and perceptions, giving them the right skills and attitudes to be successful teachers in diverse classes without any specific instruction.

There is still an attitude among educators that multicultural programs in education are only for students who are considered “different” and not for all students. This tendency has to be eliminated since it corroborates the idea that to be “different” is to be “deficient” (Contreras, 1988). This is an idea that is especially dangerous for minority students, since teaching programs do not commit time and resources to prepare teachers of children that are “at risk” of being under-educated and mis-educated (Contreras, 1988).
In traditional educational programs, the onus has been placed on the mastery of subject content and classroom management. Needless to say, student differences were often overlooked or ignored, devalued and often excluded (Dei, 1996). With the passage of the Multiculturalism Acts and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982, there was some recognition given to racial, ethnic and gender differences, but this alone was not enough to challenge the inequitable structures in the system. What seems to persist is the attitude that teachers are expected to do “cultural days” and displays while concentrating on issues of content and discipline and the transmission of the dominant Eurocentric culture.

The studies by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) and Rist (1976) have revealed that teacher attitudes and expectations influence student performance in school, especially when the expectations are based on gender, race and class. Yet, the results of these studies have not deeply affected how teachers are taught to teach. A new pedagogy in antiracism must be promoted and become more political in addressing issues of racism, sexism and the human rights of students. This antiracism paradigm must be reflected and infused in teacher education (Lynch, 1987). Some people say that to accomplish this may be a daunting experience, to say the least. Some of the barriers and possibilities that are involved in the change process are now examined.
Problems Involved in Creating Change

Despite the increasingly diverse school population, schools under the present Ontario government are experiencing funding cuts at all levels. When this happens, the quality of teacher education is unfairly compromised along with the quality of education in public schools; needed changes do not take place. It is increasingly difficult to allocate funds required to educate both teachers and a diverse school population. According to a Special Senate Committee on Youth (1986), Canada can afford to fund health care for all its citizens. Since she is among the wealthiest industrialized countries, Canada can afford to fund reforms in public education. Yet, millions of taxpayers' dollars are spent on promoting diversity and difference instead of similarities and inclusion.

In addition, parents, especially white mothers, may not want any changes to occur that can potentially "jeopardize" their children's futures (Oakes et al., 1986). Both parents and teachers have come to accept a system that works in their best interest and not in those of "others". The ideas of fairness and inclusion do not sit well with many conventional teachers and parents since any deviation from the standard curriculum is deemed risky. At the same time, there is growing pressure and expectation from the Ministry of Education to cover materials that are prescribed, and the addition of a genuine multi-centric/antiracist approach is often construed as an additional burden (Kehoe, 1984; Lund, 1998).
Fullan (1992) has reported that teachers are often overworked and usually have oversized classrooms; they are often controlled by the principal and the administration of the school (Anderson, 1990). Also teachers are afraid of making mistakes with disciplining students they don’t understand. As a consequence, it is clear that teachers do not have the training to undertake the changes necessary for inclusive learning in a multicultural democracy.

**Teacher Pre-service Programs**

Ontario pre-service programs seem to often concern themselves with the promotion of knowledge and the ability to be versatile. At present, it is seen as a good thing that general education focuses on language, culture and history. However, attempting to satisfy only the language needs of minority students is indicative of an assimilative approach being pursued instead of a true multicultural one. Further, there is little evidence to suggest that the teaching of cultures alone helps to eliminate prejudice in the educational system (Moodley, 1981).

Because they are peripheral, the teaching of multicultural topics is not fruitful; it reaches only students who are already socialized and assimilated in the system. Even if these programs were made to be compulsory, chances are they would likely further marginalize the students who are in need of help (Stenhouse, 1975). As a counter, antiracism education must be used to redefine all aspects of how teachers are trained; and be available through in-service programs for student teachers and practicing teachers as well.
Implementation of Anti-Racism Teaching in Diverse School Settings

For the implementation of antiracism education to be successful in Ontario, its aims and objectives must be made clear. Teacher responsibility must be extended to include teaching as a moral entity with binding social consequences. In other words, instructors must be able to enable student teachers to reflect critically upon teaching and learning to bring about a liberated learning process (Ianni, 1989). Teachers need to develop ways as to how to materialize these goals. For all intents and purposes, teacher education ought to give serious attention to identifying and rectifying possible biases and hidden, but subtle inequalities in the classroom.

According to Dei (1996), teachers must be prepared to allow all students to voice their concerns regarding ideological elements that are hegemonic in the school curriculum and politics. With this strategy, students would be able to interrogate certain negative perceptions of themselves by teachers and how these perceptions could play out in an extended socioeconomic and political context.

Partnership in Learning

When student teachers are supervised, it must be done as a partnership that focuses on the emancipatory aspects of teaching. Other kinds of approaches found in journal publications could also be useful as strategies for dismantling the hegemony of Eurocentrism in teaching and feasible for the effective implementation of teacher education in antiracism education. For instance,
“add on” programs in antiracism education may work (Lund, 1998) if they are not made to fail. However, these alone may not be able to do the job as opposed to first addressing the structural inequalities that are entrenched in the entire system (Dei, 1996). But we must accept any positive sign of progress, as good progress and we deserve it.

In the interim, it must never be forgotten that the primary role of teachers is to impart knowledge to students to assist them in developing their full potential as human beings (Rich, 1985). The development of inclusive citizenship and a positive self-concept should be goals of multi-centric teaching (Giroux and McLaren, 1986). Thus, there is a need for a pedagogy that can empower students to function as full human beings with dignity and respect in the school system.

Accordingly, students will need to develop critical thinking and values and to comprehend the organization of power relations, which could facilitate how they deal with incidents of inequity and injustice in schools. Hence, it is important for teachers themselves to be empowered in order to establish the right conditions for student self-empowerment to take place. This empowerment must mean that all parties have an understanding of how different cultures intersect, and how they should be lived out in classroom settings. Indeed, the art of teaching minority students will continue to be ineffective if teachers, in their pre-service training, are not led to see how the dynamics of power relations serve to perpetuate difference and inequality in
multicultural schooling. Within this context, teachers must learn to see that uniformed "knowledge" of minority students could potentially lead to alienation and further exclusion in classroom interactions. They could learn of the political mechanisms by which "difference" is created and organized, and how it influences the way teachers define themselves and their students.

Owing to the inequalities in the traditional way of teaching, today's teachers are not taught how educational practices reproduce subordination and serve to marginalize minority students. Many studies, reviewed in previous chapters, have given testimony to the fact that current problems of the high dropout rate among black students is a result of differential treatment in schools based on socioeconomic background (Cheng et al., 1993).

**The Lack of Teacher Caring**

Today, out of the many problems plaguing the Ontario public school system, the lack of teachers' caring seems to be of priority. Because of this perceived lack of caring, some minority students may develop an internalized tendency to alienate themselves from learning, which could lead to drop out (Dei, 1995). The lack of caring by teachers may not be personally directed, but seems to be the result of the lack of responsiveness to students' needs which is inherent within the dominant educational system. Therefore, critiquing the practices in such a system may help teachers to use language and skills in a commonsensical and fair way in their classroom interactions with students (Noddings, 1986). According to Noddings (1986), this important goal can be
achieved through the process of role taking, modeling, practice and confirmation. This process should be geared to help students do their best work, as well as, assisting them to develop critical thinking skills and tools with which to understand the various and subtle ways of how racism, sexism and classism are produced and reproduced and how to interrogate structural inequities in schooling.

Furthermore, the perceived lack of caring by educators in diversified schools could be linked with non-recognition of what Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) call “culture capital.” Many minority students, in their education, are not able to draw upon their lived experiences and ways of knowing. The different worlds in which minority students find themselves in learning do not have the same beliefs, values and benefits of the dominant culture. This dominant culture may not be beneficial to them. Perhaps this explains why some students find it so hard to live up to the ideals of the old standards and to try to be winners in a failing school system.

Since educators already know that some students are challenged, motivated and learn in different ways, teacher training should furnish guidelines on how to create spaces and agency for minority students in classroom interactions. It is one of the only ways in which these students can positively interact with each other to share and develop their identities. All students must be allowed to pursue their dreams and recognize similarities instead of negatively constructed differences in others. Similarities in experiences of race, gender
and class discrimination must be elicited to encourage better and more meaningful relationship between boys and girls, teachers and students and working class and middle-class students.

Such goals are not possible if traditional tools, such as the spiral curriculum are still in place in the school system. It is time for new, equitable and antiracist approaches.

The dominant group's protection of its interests is inextricably linked to its human capital investment for profit and productivity in other institutions (Villegas et al., 1991). These approaches must be confronted and challenged to expose how the hidden dominance of traditional Eurocentric pedagogy continues to mis-educate and under-educate people who are socially constructed as "different". Teachers have a moral responsibility to teach all children and to help shape their futures. They should not be engaged in unjustified ideological practices to restrict the aspirations and opportunities of some groups. The system of education should be able to confront and challenge inequitable policies of the school with regards to curriculum, pedagogy and culture. Since knowledge is socially constructed, black and minority students should actively participate in the learning process rather than receiving mis-truths and internalizing negative views that others hold of them.
Teachers and Minority Students

The fact is that many minority students are complaining that they feel that teachers don’t care and that they feel isolated and alienated in schooling (Karp, 1988; Quirouette, 1990). The majority of students who are saying so are boys who need to develop a more positive relationship with teachers (Quirouette, 1990). With the appropriate kind of training that I have talked about, teachers can help these students to feel included in the learning process. They should spend time with these students in after-school activities where they can model, role-take and develop trust with these students. This will go a long way toward improving classroom relations between teachers and students. However, it is important to remember that this classroom improvement needs to be linked to teacher development and school improvement in order to be effective (Fullan, 1992). In the end, this approach would fulfill the antiracist goal of fairness and inclusion in school and the society at large.

Mentoring and Modeling

Teachers do well to become aware in their pre-service training that since teaching is an ethnical issue, the development of friendly relations between themselves and students is an important goal of multiculturalism. Teachers must be active learners and should have the ability to tune in, role-play and actively listen in order to “care” for the needs of their students. They must also be able to critically examine their own location in terms of how differences are recognized and accepted as normal. Teachers need to learn that caring and accepting are the new “antiracist” ways of pedagogy. Caring by teachers would
likely have a definite impact on the failure and success of all students (Noddings, 1986).

The education of teachers should not just be to “manage” the system which involves taking attendance and correcting homework, but to constructively engage students in making their own learning decisions (Noddings, 1986). Equally important, all children are living in a world where adults are often perceived as giants. Accordingly, the way children are socialized and construct their identities, rests in large part with the caring influence of adults. No longer should teacher attitudes be reflective of a system that is doomed to failure, a system that is desperately trying to hang on to policies and standards that are deeply rooted in white patriarchal values and interests. This way of doing things continuously subordinates and discriminates against female, black, poor and other minority students on the margins of learning. That is why the political arrangements and racist attitudes of teachers must change; educators need to recognize how their expectations of students are formed according to biases, yet are accepted as normal in their praxis (Combleth, 1985).

To avoid the continuance of a system of domination, all students should be given the space and autonomy in their classrooms to learn and develop their own knowledge. Teachers should try to create the conditions for minority students to learn; such an approach would help students to develop their aspirations and academic success. However, it is necessary to mention that
not all children can learn what is being taught in the ordinary manner. Such
problems may be the result of different psychological patterns in learning
(Banks, 1995). It is also viewed as the result of inferior socio-cultural
socialization and influence (Banks, 1992). Here, it should be made clear that
the need for diversity in teaching and learning is great and the school must
respond to develop and care for these needs. Since students learn in so many
ways, teachers must be able to employ a variety of teaching approaches to
enhance the achievements of all students.

Since schools can also be used as "sites of contestation" (Dei, 1996; Fine, 1991)
to resist racism, sexism and classism, the classroom could be used in
negotiating and resolving conflicts that may arise as a result of differences.
The tensions that presently exist in the Ontario school system do have the
potential of intensifying if they are not effectively addressed (McDonald, 1988).
That is why the classroom can be used to discuss how the construction of
difference in race, class and gender are sources of conflict and hardship for
some and not for others. In this way, all students can learn together and from
each other, which I believe is a goal of genuine multiculturalism.

When antiracism education is truly realized in public schooling, the attitudes
and methods of teachers would become emancipatory, allowing all students the
opportunity to voice their concerns and to have these voices gain legitimacy in
the system. In this kind of environment, minority students would experience
confidence and greater self-worth in challenging racist, sexist and classist
ideologies in learning. A great deal rests upon the ability of the teacher. He or she must keep in mind the social consequences of learning and how to gear teaching techniques to encourage the creation of partnerships in school. This goal would be virtually impossible to achieve if student teachers are not committed to an antiracist vision of society; "normal" and "stable" knowledge as we know it must be interrogated and replaced with a system committed to producing teachers who can be effective models in a pluralistic society.

Teachers cannot educate others if they themselves are not educated (De Vreede, 1986). They must develop cultural awareness in their in-service training along with the knowledge of the guidelines of the Human Rights Code, to be fair to all students. Teacher education need not be precise in how methods are implemented. What I am saying is that it should make allowances for broad directions.

Some teachers may not be aware of how they treat minority students differently. Their behaviors may inadvertently tend to mirror the stereotypes of society perpetuated by the media and popular culture. Based on these stereotypical images of minority students, teachers may make inappropriate assumptions about these students who are from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Teacher education can help develop a proper awareness.

The evidence seems clear that students learn better when teaching is adaptive to their style of learning (De Vreede, 1986). Teachers then ought to recognize
these styles if they are to be able to develop shared learning. So it is important that teachers acknowledge that the way minority students see the world is valid and valued. Factors such as socioeconomic and cultural background, family structure and the home environment must also be acknowledged (Nieto, 1992) as social constructs in order to assist black and minority students in developing the way they want to learn. It is not possible for them to learn when they are made to feel excluded; they will not participate in their learning.

What of minority students’ lack of identity and interest in the pedagogy? Black children find it difficult to learn since they are met with resistance to have their interests and learning styles recognized in how they are taught. If these factors were to be recognized in teaching, then minority students could experience enhanced self worth and improved learning (Perry et al., 1984). Teachers must be aware of the way in which they communicate with their students since this tends to affect the way students adjust to learning. Insults and "putdowns" are no longer going to work (Delgado et al., 1993). All students should be allowed to question all aspects of pedagogy; this can take place in an exciting and mutually rewarding environment.

**Teaching Social Justice**

It is my opinion that the best way of addressing the many problems of black youth and public education today is to nationalize the current system of education. Changes must start from the federal level down to the provincial and municipal levels. The federal government can establish youth councils to
hear what young people are saying and what changes they want made in education. (I am aware this approach has been successful in Europe and Australia). In that way, structural changes can occur at the local levels of schooling where educators would be more accountable for student performance. This new accountability must mean that teachers involve all students’ experiences in teaching them; this will allow students the opportunity to develop self-esteem. All students should be allowed to think critically, instead of having “strange” knowledge imposed on them in learning. In that way, they will feel empowered and included rather than excluded. Teachers also could alter traditional teaching methods when it comes to disciplinary problems and the reduction of boredom in their classroom. Every one should be included instead of excluding the voices of minority students.

A global and multiple approach in teaching can be an enriching experience for all students in the learning system. There should not be just one voice and not just one approach as to how to learn. All students should learn that global issues are part of history and that many problems today emanate from the vestiges of capitalism and colonialism.

One would agree that “white” would not be “white” had it not been for the construction of “blackness” or that poverty would not exist had it not been for wealth. When these kinds of learning are given primacy in learning, each student can learn from each other about specific kinds of discrimination and how to resolve them. This would require tact in how teachers discuss the
realities in the lives of all students. Thus, it is important to include the study of all students' cultures in diversified school settings. Choosing to trivialize and alienate the experiences of minority students can be a devastating reality for them. I am not saying that the cultures and experiences of minority students be given primacy in the school system as this may tend to further isolate the student from what the mainstream culture has to offer. What I am saying is that the cultures of all students must be available and discussed for the purpose of inclusion and fairness. Schools can make a good start in moving toward equity if the teaching of cultures can be done within a global context (Dei, 2000). In terms of learning and sharing and the discovery of self, class discussions of cultures should be an important part of learning.

Teachers are urgently required to provide moral leadership in terms of recognizing patterns of discrimination in multicultural education and to eliminate them. They have to be morally responsible in recognizing the values of students and be sensitive to discrimination based on class, race and gender. Teachers need to create space to carry out antiracism principles of fairness and social justice. The moral purpose of education should be to serve all students without disadvantaging some for the sake of others.

It is important for all students to learn how to analyze the values of the dominant patriarchal system of education that is oppressive to some students. Since the values of minority students are considered "different" from the norm, they are still perceived as posing a problem to what is considered "normal"
pedagogy. Some people are afraid that if the system of categorization in learning ceases, then everything, including teaching methods, school culture and student/teacher relationship may be affected (Martin, 1985). Such fears are not based on reality. The ultimate decision to create fairness rests on how certain teaching values are recognized within the context of humanity.
At present, the Toronto school system at both the junior and senior levels are imbued with many problems. These problems are viewed as stemming from the ongoing nature of discrimination in the system. Despite the struggles for equity in education over the years, it appears that the dream for fairness and social justice is slipping away. The time has come to impress upon Canada that we have a large stake in this country. Indeed, blacks and other minorities have a long and unjust history on this continent. If we hope to end the predatory practices inherent in Eurocentric schooling, we will have to speak up and not shy away from offending those who have made it a sport of offending us.

In interrogating present-day multicultural education programs with antiracist lens, the question of what is inclusion without influence is often ignored. An antiracist education wants to change the Eurocentric hegemony that is hesitant in dealing with discrimination and with how peoples' differences are seen as deficiencies which disadvantage them (Lee, 1991). Antiracism education further seeks to move away from the promotion of a mono-cultural or racist education that is often perceived as “normal” and make room for other cultural perspectives. This is where changing the curriculum is important in changing the social realities outside the school (Dei, 1996; Lee, 1991). That is why I believe that the evaluation of minority students must not be carried out
according to political considerations. New methods to evaluate students must be genuinely diagnostic and not derived from the dominant value system.

Today, in the Ontario public school system, black and other minority students do not have the space to develop their potential. If the system of Eurocentric education does not wish to confess that it practices a mild form of cultural and intellectual genocide on minority students, then it should move to transform itself to a multi-centric, antiracist agenda. In this way, students can be helped to develop positive identities to enable themselves to become full-fledged citizens of this great democratic society.

Given the presence of racism, sexism and classism in the system, the possibility for greater difficulties may exist if the present concerns are not addressed. Multi-centric education with an antiracist bent can prevent these difficulties from materializing. It stresses the importance of how certain students ought to see the world around them (Dei, 1996). All students should be able to critically understand how racism, sexism, poverty, and violence continue to reproduce themselves.

Multicultural programs in education are essentially designed to value difference and diversity. However, the creation of “difference” and the “other” carries with it unequal power relations in school, which seems to have a negative impact on how certain student identities are constructed (MacClaren, 1984), which goes against the aim of multiculturalism laws, and is unjust. The
construction of difference in schooling is political; it categorizes and hierarchizes students based on race, class and gender (Stanworth, 1983). For multi-centric/antiracism education to be successful, minority students need to have their identities recognized and validated in a system that has, up to the present, been slow to do just that.

Moreover, all students need to be taught about the inequalities that exist in our democracy and must learn to challenge prejudice and discrimination at all levels in the schooling system. No longer should students who are deemed “different” be able to view the school and the school curriculum as unresponsive to their needs. The experiences of these students should no longer be discarded, devalued or superficially addressed.

The decentering of Eurocentric pedagogy is necessary to allow all students to develop a comprehensive view of the world and how they see themselves in it. The curriculum should not just concern itself with presenting the views of the dominant white patriarchal system. It must be inclusive of others.

The practice of constructing the “other” in Ontario public schools should cease since it is constructed around group prejudices and differences. In attempting to transform Eurocentric pedagogy, multicultural education programs must seek to create unity and learning environments that are free of discomfort and discrimination (Sleeter, 1994). Also, antiracism education aspires to create a
level of consciousness that moves beyond the monolithic frame of hegemony towards an understanding of, and interactive process with, other cultures.

As an African Canadian, it is my belief that a curriculum that is inclusive of all students' needs would inevitably expose the realities of a system that is outmoded. It would show people as they really are. As a result, all students would be able to question authority and see the world from multiple perspectives. In that manner, students of color and other minorities could rupture the hegemony and dominance of whiteness and would no longer be silenced and marginalized in the system. They would be able to claim a space and get the education they deserve.

Present-day multicultural programs in education are showing their ineffectiveness. Hence, the need to shift to antiracism education is genuine. Emotionally, some students are still alienated in the system. Because of these considerations, policy changes and leadership in schools are badly needed. As a matter of fact, I believe that there are problems to overcome, particularly in how teachers are educated and trained.

The pre-service training of teachers does not seem to be responsive in addressing student needs. Teachers need to transform traditional ways of teaching. It is the moral and ethical thing to do since the present assessments of black students do not justly promote inclusion and equity. Schools should strive for these goals in keeping with the values and principles of a democratic,
multicultural society. An anti-racism approach in education could be instrumental in assisting all students to develop their full potential in order to make positive contributions to the new vision of Canada.
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