

CHAPTER 1

Multicultural Education as a Form of Resistance to Oppression

Multicultural education is a relatively new field that has faced a constant struggle for legitimacy, even though the issues it addresses regarding human difference, social justice, and the form education should take in a pluralistic society are as old as the United States. Conservative educators criticize or dismiss multicultural education as radical and misdirected. Twenty years ago, Harry Broudy (1975) argued that the stress on cultural diversity is divisive and will lock out minority groups from the system by failing to teach them "to participate not only in the culture of this country but also in the intellectual and artistic achievements of the human race" (p. 175). Recently conservative critics such as E. D. Hirsch (1988), Arthur Schlesinger (1992) and Diane Ravitch (1990b) have put forth the same objections, claiming that in their attempts to teach children about diverse groups, schools have produced culturally illiterate Americans who have little sense of a shared culture. Such criticisms are hardly surprising: since multicultural education challenges conservative beliefs, one would not expect it to garner much conservative support.

Of greater concern is its dismissal by many radical educators, since they also mount a challenge to oppression in society and schooling. Many critical theorists have located the main source of oppressive social relationships in the economy and relations of production and until recently rarely addressed issues of racial and gender oppression. Philip Wexler (1982), for example, in reviewing contributions by sociologists of school knowledge, repeatedly emphasized social class only:

School knowledge reflects class interest. . . . School knowledge is the unequal representation of the experience and culture of social classes. . . . School knowledge is an organizational representation of different class languages. . . . School knowledge develops as cultural representation in response to the system needs of capitalism. (p. 278)

Such theorists have simply ignored multicultural education, partly because it typically has offered a much stronger critique of race than social class relations.

Growing numbers of other radical educators occasionally string together the words "race, class, and gender," recognizing the existence of multiple forms of social oppression. However, social class and class theorists still receive most of their attention, and they too have given little attention to multicultural education.

Some radical theorists in the United States have published criticisms of the field of multicultural education (Mattai, 1992; McCarthy, 1988; Olneck, 1990; Popkewitz, 1988). Radical theorists outside the U.S. have also criticized it, but since the history of and thought within the field differs somewhat from country to country, this book will concern itself with criticisms originating in the United States; reasons why will follow. Radical theorists criticize multicultural education on the grounds that it is part of the liberal, but not the radical, tradition. Their criticisms are important to attend to because, whether others voice them in print or not, they represent grounds for failing to take multicultural education seriously. They also illustrate problems in how the field is often interpreted today, which suggests directions it should take in its development.

In this book, I argue that multicultural education can be understood as a form of resistance to dominant modes of schooling, and particularly to white supremacy. As such, radical criticisms or tacit dismissals of it fragment progressive educational advocates and practitioners, which weakens attempts in this conservative era to challenge oppressive social relationships through schooling. But at the same time, as more and more white educators have become involved in the field, much work and activity has become disconnected from its political base. This book will attempt to clarify the field's political underpinnings particularly as they relate to challenging white supremacy. In this introductory chapter, I will review radical criticisms of multicultural education and then situate the field in its historic context.

Radical Left Criticisms of Multicultural Education in the U.S.

Multicultural education has been a target of radical criticism in England, Canada, and Australia (e.g., Bullivant, 1986; Cole, 1986; Troyna, 1987). Recently criticisms of the field in the U.S. have been

produced. Cameron McCarthy (1988) described multicultural education as “a body of thought which originates in the liberal pluralist approaches to education and society,” and which is “a curricular truce, the fallout of a political project to deluge and neutralize Black rejection of the conformist and assimilationist curriculum models solidly in place in the 1960s.” He went on to say that multicultural education attempts to “absorb Black radical demands for the restructuring of school knowledge and pedagogical practices,” focusing instead on “sensitizing White teachers and school administrators to minority ‘differences’” (p. 268). As such, it advocates a “benign pluralism (‘We are all the same because we are different’)” (p. 276). This benign pluralism has resulted in two faulty analyses on which he sees multicultural education as resting. First, McCarthy argued that multicultural education advocates moving racial minority young people into better jobs by promoting academic achievement through raising their self-concepts; this is a naive approach to the job market because it ignores institutional racist practices in the economic structure (p. 269). Second, he noted that, “By focusing on sensitivity training and on individual differences, multicultural proponents typically skirt the very problem which multicultural education seeks to address: WHITE RACISM” (p. 269).

His concerns are shared by Rudy Mattai (1992), who critiqued “the seeming inability of multicultural education to address the issue of race” (p. 66). He argued that multicultural education initially grew from the ethnic revival movements of the 1960s, in which racism was clearly the main concern. Since then, however, the discourse of multicultural education has shifted away from racism and toward culture, away from systemic oppression and toward individual attitude change.

Michael Olneck (1990) agreed with McCarthy and Mattai that multicultural education concerns itself mainly with individual differences and the primacy of the individual over the collective and that it depoliticizes race relations by focusing on expressions of culture rather than sociopolitical relations among groups. In describing multicultural education as emphasizing the development of positive attitudes and intergroup harmony, Olneck argued that it serves as a vehicle for social control more than for social change. He summarized his arguments as follows:

Like intercultural education, dominant versions of multicultural education delimit a sanitized cultural sphere divorced from sociopolitical interests, in which culture is reified, fragmented, and homog-

enized, and they depict ethnic conflict as predominantly the consequence of negative attitudes and ignorance about manifestations of difference, which they seek to remedy by cultivating empathy, appreciation, and understanding. (p. 166)

These criticisms are important and need attention because they indicate consequences of a disconnection between multicultural education and political action. In this book, I argue that such a disconnection is largely a result of white educators' reluctance to address white racism. By white racism, I am referring to institutionalized systems that are controlled by people of European descent and that give those of us who are of European descent greater access than groups of color to society's resources, and to the beliefs white people use to justify such systems. At the same time, however, radical criticisms oversimplify the field of multicultural education and provide grounds on which leftist educators and activists dismiss it. I will argue that it is more productive to identify ways in which the field works to challenge oppression and to amplify and develop those dimensions of thought and practice. First, let us examine dimensions of the field's complexity that its critics tend to gloss over.

Complexities within the Field of Multicultural Education

Critics as well as advocates of multicultural education often assume that it is a fairly homogeneous set of practices and that all advocates subscribe to the same ends and the same models of social change. As a result, critics often condemn practices that many multicultural education advocates also criticize or they condemn the field for not addressing issues some of its theorists do address. The field is often treated as static and homogeneous rather than dynamic and growing, with its own internal debates. This is important to recognize, because there is much within the field that radical educators should be working *with* rather than *against*.

First, the diversity across national borders must be recognized. While there is considerable dialogue among advocates in the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, the histories of race relations in these countries are sufficiently different that debates in one country cannot simply be transplanted to another country. The United States has struggled with race relations on its home territory since its inception, in addition to sharing with England, Canada, and Australia increasing diversification of its population due to

recent waves of immigrants of color. Not only did whites in the U.S. subjugate aboriginal people, as did whites in Australia and Canada; whites in the U.S. also imported large numbers of African slaves, whose descendants have lived here for about four centuries. The United States also colonized Puerto Rico and half of Mexico, absorbing Latinos into its borders while continuing to live next to sovereign Latin nations.

This history, which has helped shape relations among racial and ethnic groups in the United States, as well as dialogue about racial and ethnic relations, differs from that of other English-speaking countries. Only since World War II has Britain experienced a significant influx of people of color, while it historically had dominated people of color outside its borders through colonialism. Australia shares with the U.S. a history of whites subjugating aboriginal people, but only very small numbers of other groups of color have been permitted to immigrate there until recently. Further, aboriginal people in Australia are separated geographically from whites to a much greater degree than in the U.S., one consequence of which is that aboriginal Australians have even less input into non-aboriginal discussions of race relations than is the case in the U.S. Neither Canada nor Australia shares the U.S. experience of enslaving large numbers of African people, or of conquering and absorbing other nonwhite nations. Unlike the United States, however, Canada has a history of struggle between two strong European language and ethnic groups.

As a result of these different histories and cultural contexts, multicultural education in the United States today has a longer history and a more varied body of thought than the field has in other English-speaking countries, and race (as opposed to white ethnicity) has longer been at its core. In addition, the involvement among different groups in the debates about multicultural education differs from country to country. In the United States educators of color have always been at the forefront of the development of multicultural education, along with some Euro-Americans; in England and Australia, debates are carried on mainly by whites, and people of color are largely excluded. In the U.S., the federal government is not a participant in debates about multicultural education; in Britain, Canada, and Australia, the national governments have appropriated the term *multicultural education* to refer to recommended interventions that many argue are too weak and assimilationist (e.g., Green, 1982). These different cultural contexts have produced somewhat different alignments of educators who use the term *multicul-*

tural education. In Britain, for example, a lively debate is being waged between proponents of multicultural education and proponents of antiracist teaching. In the U.S., many proponents of multicultural education, such as James Banks (1992), Antonia Darder (1991), Sonia Nieto (1992), and Bob Suzuki (1984), *agree* with proponents of antiracist teaching, but do so under the umbrella of multicultural education.

Second, within the United States, one can distinguish between quite different approaches to multicultural education. These have been described and reviewed elsewhere (Sleeter & Grant, 1987, 1993), but will be summarized here. One approach, Teaching the Culturally Different, attempts to raise the achievement of students of color, although more through designing culturally compatible education programs than through simply raising student self-concept (e.g., Hollins, et al., 1994; Jordan, 1985; Shade, 1989). Partly because this approach does not necessarily address structural barriers to economic access, it is not the approach most advocates of multicultural education prefer. The second approach, Human Relations, aims toward sensitivity training, and teaches that "We are all the same because we are different" (Colangelo, Foxley, & Dustin, 1979; Tiedt & Tiedt, 1986). This approach does not address institutional racism; its intent is to improve the school experience itself more than to restructure society. This seems to be the approach that resonates best with the political beliefs of most white teachers (Sleeter, 1992).

The third approach, which we call Single Group Studies, includes Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Women's Studies, Gay and Lesbian Studies, and so forth. This approach teaches students explicitly about the history of the group's oppression and how oppression works today, as well as the culture the group developed within oppressive circumstances (e.g., Aguilar-San Juan, 1994; Lather, 1991). Ethnic studies and women's studies scholars have been re-theorizing academic disciplines from standpoints of groups other than that of Euro-American men (e.g., Asante, 1990; Harding, 1991). In contrast to the first two approaches, this one is usually overtly political and its adherents are often engaged in community politics, although to a lesser degree now than twenty years ago (Omatsu, 1994). The fourth approach is most commonly subscribed to by American multicultural education advocates (e.g., Baker, 1983; Banks, 1981; Gay, 1983; Gollnick, 1980), so we called it the Multicultural Education approach. Its processes involve redesigning schooling to make it model the ideal pluralistic and equal society. Its advocates concentrate on reforming many dimensions of the school process,

such as curriculum, pedagogy, parent involvement, and tracking. Finally, the fifth approach, Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist, teaches directly about political and economic oppression and discrimination, and prepares young people to use social action skills (e.g., Grant & Sleeter, 1986a; Sleeter, 1991; Suzuki, 1984).

Advocates of different approaches debate with and sometimes criticize each other. It is important for those outside the field to identify which approach or approaches are actually being discussed, rather than assuming that all are alike. Both McCarthy and Olneck, for example, describe and cite mainly Human Relations ideas and sources. Neither mentions ideas associated with Single Group Studies or Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist, approaches within the field with which they and other radical educators might sympathize.

Third, one must distinguish between an approach as formulated by its main theorists, and superficial applications of it that one often finds in schools as well as in the literature. As James Banks (1984) has pointed out, quite often "the critics have chosen some of the worst practices that are masquerading as multicultural education and defined these practices as multicultural education" (p. 60). For example, the Single Group Studies approach as envisioned by its theorists examines a group's historic and contemporary oppression and also mobilizes its members as well as sympathetic out-group members for social action. But in schools this approach often takes the form of superficial study of the food, music, and dances of a group. Rather than condemning Single Group Studies, or the entire field of multicultural education for how an approach is often carried out in classrooms, it would be more productive to develop ways to strengthen its application and use.

Fourth, one can differentiate among advocates who address only race and ethnicity; race, ethnicity, and gender; race, ethnicity, and language; and multiple forms of diversity. Some theorists treat these as multiple layers of individual difference, while others treat them as multiple and connected forms of oppression. This is an important distinction. While the Human Relations approach stresses acceptance of a wide variety of manifestations of uniqueness, Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist searches for ways to build coalitions to combat oppression in its various forms.

Fifth, advocates often articulate their agendas for school reform using language that recognizes the resistance multicultural

education typically encounters. Therefore, one cannot assume that advocates of multicultural education spell out their entire agenda in print and that one can infer all they are thinking or doing by reading the multicultural education literature. Multicultural education has been a highly political change strategy; many of its writings can be understood as attempts to mobilize particular changes in schooling, on the part of individuals who often would resist those changes. A large proportion of active advocates of the last three approaches are educators of color who have experienced a lifetime of white racism and know fully well that this is a major issue that needs to be addressed. But schools, as well as the colleges and job markets they serve, are controlled mainly by whites, and substantive reforms must have white support. Thus, advocates have had to address white educators in order to gain space within the curriculum to teach about the experiences of Americans of color and to reduce the obvious hostility schools often display toward children of color (Banks, 1992). Much of the multicultural education literature attempts to delineate very practical changes that could be made in classrooms (Gay, 1995). Having had considerable experience with white educators, advocates have known that whites do not usually listen to educators of color, particularly when they show emotion (Delpit, 1988). Thus, the politics of bringing about change has necessitated frequently couching arguments for school reform in language that white educators would attend to. Many advocates deliberately have chosen terms such as *human relations* because nobody opposes good human relations, while the term *multicultural* signals a red flag to many people, and the term *race* literally scares many more away. A friend who is African American and a school principal recently commented to me that she can get her white teachers to do more that is consistent with multicultural education when she does not use the terms *race* or even *multicultural education*. She finds this very frustrating because important issues simply go unaddressed, yet if she tries to address them directly, her staff retreats from her.

The strategy of appealing to whites through relatively benign language sometimes has been more effective than many recognize. For example, in Minnesota under the state's term *Human Relations*, Bob Terry developed a curriculum called "Foundations of Oppression" which is used by many teacher education programs. St. Cloud State University in particular has been able to develop a very strong campus-wide program in the study of oppression based on race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation (Andrzejewski, 1993). The

same strategy has been used to create space in teacher certification programs for multicultural work in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota. Paradoxically, while terms such as *Human Relations* can be criticized for depoliticizing race relations, use of such terms can be politically quite effective. (As a colleague once put it, rather than looking for the sharpest needle, it is more strategically effective to look for the one that sews [Yamane, 1994].)

This is not to say that all advocates of multicultural education are radicals using benign language for political purposes. Many do indeed subscribe to limited visions of or naive theories about social change. But many activists who are working to make changes in education work with whatever points of entree they can gain in whatever fashion is acceptable to others with whom they work. In order to understand what any advocate really thinks or believes, one should interact personally with him or her.

Earlier I noted that criticisms of multicultural education by the left fracture a progressive potential coalition (often along racial lines) in a way that weakens it. It could be of great mutual benefit for those interested primarily in class, in race, and in gender oppression to work together as much as possible. Multicultural education can best be understood as a form of resistance to oppression; as such, it offers some help in formulating educational practices that challenge oppression. But the field also needs further development at both the theoretical and practical levels, partly due to changes in the social context in which multicultural education has been articulated.

Multicultural Education as a Form of Resistance

Over the last two decades, critical theorists have found themselves plagued by overly deterministic models of structural and cultural reproduction (e.g., Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Bowles & Gintis, 1976), and have explored implications of contradiction and resistance as a means of agency for social change. For example, Michael Apple (1982) argued:

Functionalist accounts of the hidden curriculum—accounts that sought to demonstrate both that students, like workers, were effectively socialized and that the power of technical/administrative forms used by capital was unchallenged—were part of the very process of ideological reproduction I wanted to struggle against. (p. 24)

He went on to say:

Clearly, then, workers resist in subtle and important ways, I believe. They often contradict and partly transform modes of control into opportunities for resistance and maintaining their own informal norms which guide the labor process. (p. 25)

Henry Giroux, among others, has explored the concept of resistance in some detail. He defines resistance as "a personal 'space' in which the logic and force of domination is contested by the power of subjective agency to subvert the process of socialization" (1988, p. 162). Resistance can take many forms, ranging from "an unreflective and defeatist refusal to acquiesce to different forms of domination" to "a cynical, arrogant, or even naive rejection of oppressive forms of moral and political regulation" (1988, p. 162). The power of resistance is its celebration "not of what is but what could be" (1983, p. 242) and the energy it mobilizes for social change. It is this resistance that provides an entree into education for social change; Giroux has argued the need "to develop strategies in schools in which oppositional cultures might provide the basis for a viable political force" (1983, p. 101).

Multicultural education can be viewed as a form of resistance to oppressive social relationships. It represents resistance to white supremacy and also (for many) to patriarchy. Multicultural education developed in the ferment of the 1960s and early 1970s, receiving its major impetus from the rejection of racial minority groups to racial oppression; it subsequently was joined to some extent by feminist groups rejecting sexual oppression. It was grounded in a vision of equality and served as a mobilizing site for struggle within education. However, due to changes over the past twenty years in the social and political context of multicultural education, many educators interpret its meaning quite differently today. Consequently the field needs to speak to oppression and struggle more explicitly now than it did in its inception.

Geneva Gay (1983), one of the field's major proponents and developers, has provided a useful discussion of the history of the field. She noted that it

originated in a sociopolitical milieu and is to some extent a product of its times. Concerns about the treatment of ethnic groups in school curricula and instructional materials directly reflected concerns about their social, political, and economic plight in the society at large. (p. 560)

She went on to point out connections between the civil rights movement and the inception of multicultural education. In the mid-1960s, "The ideological and strategic focus of the [civil rights] movement shifted from passivity and perseverance in the face of adversity to aggression, self-determination, cultural consciousness, and political power" (p. 560). Racial minority groups actively proclaimed and developed consciousness of their own histories and identities. On college campuses this ferment took the form of demands for ethnic studies courses and elimination of stereotypic and derogatory treatment. Some of this energy was directed toward the public school curricula and to the "ethnic distortions, stereotypes, omissions, and misinformation" in textbooks (p. 561). At the same time, the movement was aided by social science research that undermined cultural deprivation theories and suggested that "the academic failure of minority youths was due more to the conflicting expectations of school and home and to the schools' devaluation of minority group cultures" (p. 561).

Gay describes the 1970s as "prime times for multiethnic education. This was an era of growth and expansion both quantitative and qualitative" (p. 562). During the 1970s "an avalanche of revisionist materials—including pedagogies, psychologies, ethnographies, histories, and sociologies" were created in the forms of "a wide variety of ethnic books, films and filmstrips, recordings, audio-visual packets, course outlines, and study guides" (p. 562). Conferences, workshops, and policies such as the Ethnic Heritage Act and the NCATE standards for accreditation supported this activity. The activity of the 1970s can best be thought of as a good beginning. Gay cautions that, while "theory was advancing, emerging, and evolving with apparent continuity," at the same time "multiethnic practice remained largely fragmentary, sporadic, unarticulated, and unsystematic" (p. 562).

In its inception, multicultural education was clearly connected with and attempting to contribute to a much larger social and political racial struggle, and many of its originators had their own roots in black studies (Banks, 1992). According to Banks (1984),

A major goal of most ethnic revival movements is to attain equality for the excluded ethnic group. . . . Since the school is viewed by ethnic reformers as an important institution in their oppression, they attempt to reform it because they believe that it can be a pivotal vehicle in their liberation. (p. 58)

One task of the social movements of the 1960s was, as Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) put it, to create "collective identity by

offering their adherents a different view of themselves and their world; different, that is, from the worldview and self-concepts offered by the established social order" (p. 93). Multicultural education's attempt to instill in children pride in their own racial heritage was a part of this larger task of creating new collective identities that emphasize strength and pride.

The social movements were directed toward equalizing power and legal status among racial and gender groups. Omi and Winant point out that "The modern civil rights movement sought not to survive racial oppression, but to overthrow it" (p. 94). Multicultural education's emphasis on cultural pluralism was an articulation of this vision of equality in power and rights among racial groups without resorting to separatism. Multicultural education's attempts to incorporate groups of color into curricula were part of larger attempts to make social institutions more accessible to and inclusive of Americans of color; the Brown decision and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had opened the doors of white schools to children of color, but the histories and cultures of groups of color were still excluded.

Multicultural education workshops for teachers during the late 1960s and early 1970s (which was when I began teaching) conveyed the militancy of the broader social movements by dealing directly with white racism and trying to have teachers own and admit their own participation in and benefits from a racist system. Needless to say, such workshops often were not very popular among white teachers.

In the late 1970s and 1980s the political climate shifted: "For the first time in a sustained and programmatic way, setbacks in the domestic economy and U.S. reversals on the international level were 'explained' by attacking the liberal interventionist state" (Omi and Winant, 1986, p. 110). The civil rights movement had succeeded in placing race on the national political agenda and in attaining popular support for the idea (or at least the phrase) of racial equality. However, the right, which had suffered ideological losses during the 1960s, quickly began to rearticulate the nation's racial ideology. Omi and Winant describe this rearticulated vision: "With the exception of some on the far right, the racial reaction which has developed in the last two decades claims to favor racial equality. Its vision is that of a 'colorblind' society where racial considerations are never entertained" (p. 114). Its vision is also that of an individualistic society: "Racial discrimination and racial equality—in the neoconservative model—are problems to be confronted ONLY at an individual level, once legal systems of discrimination such as DE JURE segregation

have been eliminated" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 129).

The left has lost considerable visibility and momentum, and some segments of the left have shifted strategies toward working within the system. Carlos Muñoz (1987), for example, described the shift in Chicano politics "that took place during the 1970s from a politics of militant protest to a politics focused on the electoral process and the two-party system" (p. 43). Manning Marable (1987) described rifts within the black community, concluding that, "The absence of a coherent Black left program and strategy, and the contradictory and sometimes antagonistic relationship between Black elected officials and their constituents, has created a political vacuum within Black America" (pp. 11–12).

To white America, the absence of mass protest, the presence of a small number of African American, Hispanic, and Asian women and men as well as white women in new positions (e.g., administrative jobs), and passage of civil rights laws all suggest that inequalities of the past have been remedied. This is not true, of course; the persistence of poverty and discrimination among historically disenfranchised groups is well documented. However, mainstream white America today is well versed in the right's rearticulation of a racial ideology and is fairly ignorant of or indifferent to limitations to gains made by racial minority groups and women during the past twenty-five years.

Within this context, many who are relatively new to multicultural education do not see it as directly connected with political struggle. Rather, they tend to see it as a means of reducing prejudice and stereotyping among individuals—as an attempt to learn to overlook differences in an effort to allow Americans of color to "progress" in the historic manner of white ethnic groups. This is not what multicultural education has meant to most of its developers and activists, but it is nevertheless a common interpretation. It reflects the fact that the language and recommendations in multicultural education have not changed to take account of changes in the political context.

When Carl Grant and I reviewed literature in the field of multicultural education (see Grant & Sleeter, 1985; Grant, Sleeter & Anderson, 1986; Sleeter & Grant, 1987), we expected to find an evolution from less radical to more radical approaches. Instead, we found all five approaches to exist side by side since the early 1970s, with theorists writing most frequently about the Multicultural Education approach and published teaching guides most frequently employing the Human Relations approach. The field as a whole

demands changes in race relations today that are no less radical than demands of the 1960s.

What has changed is the manner in which the field is presented to teachers, and especially white teachers. Presentations that exposed teachers to racial anger have given way to more upbeat, practice-oriented approaches. To try to help white teachers understand multicultural concepts and to convince them to implement multicultural education, many educators begin with the concept of ethnicity and ethnic culture, having teachers examine their own ethnic cultures (e.g., Bennett, 1986). The assumption is that white teachers will see that the needs, feelings, and experiences of racial minority groups are not so very different from their own; this may, however, suggest that race is not different from European ethnicity. Teachers are taught to analyze textbooks for bias and to develop curricula that incorporate people of color and women. Teachers are taught TESA (Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement) strategies and increasingly cooperative learning to ensure that all their students are involved in whole-class instruction. Harold Hodgkinson's (1985) analysis of changing demographics is often used to convince teachers of the need to multiculturalize their teaching. What teachers are taking away from such workshops is a set of piecemeal strategies they can add occasionally to what they already do (Sleeter, 1992).

State support of multicultural education is another recent change. Increasingly it is becoming a state requirement for teacher certification, at the same time the teaching profession is becoming increasingly white and student populations increasingly of color and of poverty backgrounds. Omi and Winant (1986) point out that, "In response to political pressure, state institutions adopt policies of absorption and insulation" (p. 81). Multicultural education is gaining state legitimacy as a part of the preparation of teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. However, in the process it often becomes rearticulated and depoliticized. White teachers today commonly share McCarthy's and Olneck's perception of multicultural education. They interpret it as a form of individualism, a way of teaching "at-risk" children, and an extension of the ethnicity paradigm which suggests that "through hard work, patience, delayed gratification, etc., blacks [and other groups of color] could carve out their own rightful place in American society" (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 20).

The 1990s are witnessing rollbacks of gains made during the civil rights movement. Affirmative action as well as funding for social programs is under attack; at the time of this writing it is possible

that both will have been shredded by the time this book is published. Immigrants are increasingly vilified and denied services as well as legitimacy of the cultures and languages they bring; homelessness is being legislated as a crime rather than a symptom of insufficient jobs and affordable housing; and welfare recipients are subject to escalating hatred. In addition, public education at all levels is being cut. Conservative justification for increased racial and social class stratification is becoming increasingly popular, including justification on the basis of genetic grounds.

As we enter the twenty-first century, the field of multicultural education must develop in ways that are consonant with its original mission: to challenge oppression and to use schooling as much as possible to help shape a future America that is more equal, democratic and just, and that does not demand conformity to one cultural norm. It is essential that these goals be pursued in a politically powerful and strategic manner, given the growing hostility of the climate in which we are working.

Overview of the Book

This book attempts to connect political and pedagogical issues with personal experiences and reflections. I begin by reflecting on my own positioning as a white woman from a professional class background, in chapter 2. This book does not spring from nowhere: it grows from my own reflections on issues of difference and oppression, and those reflections are situated in my own lived experience. In chapter 3, I situate multicultural education debates politically. This chapter distinguishes among conservatism, liberalism, and radical structuralism, then discusses the political context of the 1980s and 1990s relative to debates about multicultural education. In chapter 4, I return to connections between personal conceptions of multicultural education and lived experience, exploring how several teachers constructed meanings of multicultural education from the fabric of their teaching experience as well as their own personal historic experiences.

Chapter 5 further probes the idea of social location by developing themes in minority position discourse that drive multicultural curriculum. In this chapter I attempt to distinguish narratives about America that are cosmetically multicultural but substantively colonizing from those that are multicultural and liberatory at their core. In chapters 6 and 7, I discuss my own attempts as an educator to

help my teacher education students grapple with discourse rooted in the lived experiences of minority positions. Chapter 6 highlights teaching strategies that have made an impact on student thinking. Chapter 7 critiques the degree to which formal education can change how we think, given the profound impact of lived experience, vested interest, and social location; I focus my attention in this chapter on whiteness and white supremacy.

In chapter 8, Carl Grant and I explore how adolescents interpret their own lives relative to race, social class, and gender. We argue here that while formal schooling may not be able to completely transform how young people think, it plays a much greater role than educators often take responsibility for. Chapter 9 offers ideas regarding the teaching of science for social justice. This chapter came about as a result of being invited to talk with some science teachers about what multicultural education might mean for them. I have never been a science teacher, but through my examination of science teaching materials I can suggest directions for their use.

In chapter 10, I turn to complexities of power and position along multiple axes of power. In this chapter, I critique power relations in which white professional women often use our racial and class privileges to advance our own agendas at the expense of women of color and women from lower-class backgrounds. Chapter 11 returns to the issue of political power, using the metaphor of social movement to explore directions for multicultural education. This chapter moves from the classroom back to the larger society, linking the activism of the 1960s with the conceptual development of multicultural education literature in the 1990s. I close this book with the questions: What and whom is multicultural education for? Given very unequal power relations and our own locations in those webs of power, how can we participate in social change in ways that do not compromise the original intent of multicultural education? Finally, in chapter 12, I fantasize about the form multicultural education might take, presenting this fantasy in the form of a play.