

# **A Re-Examination of Magnet and Professional Development Schools Through Critical Multiculturalism**

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## **Introduction**

This paper is part of an ongoing ethnographic endeavor; the end result of which is supposed to be a dissertation on a school that is both a magnet and professional development school. The major focus of the dissertation is to find out what the culture of a school that has both PDS and magnet features looks like and what is going on within such a culture in terms of social difference and social justice issues since there are some progressive goals behind the development of both the PDS and magnet concepts.

For instance, magnet schools while being school reform projects are also an attempt to desegregate America's schools. The Magnet concept evolved from the desegregation plans of the 1970s to prevent "white flight" to the suburbs from defeating these plans. Magnet schools are schools with educational offerings so promising that, it was hoped that, parents would overcome their fears and concerns about interracial contact and place their children in desegregated settings. The desegregation of America's schools has been one of the country's most explosive social issues for more than a century.

The creation of Professional Development Schools (PDSs) was proposed by the Holmes Group, a consortium of 100 of the nation's leading teacher education institutions. In three seminal publications (1986, 1990, 1996), the Holmes Group proposed the creation of PDS as a means of simultaneously reforming teacher preparation and school practice. Instead of just being a laboratory school for university research, or a demonstration school, or just a clinical setting for preparing student and intern teachers, a professional development school is supposed to be all of these together. It is a school for the development of novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals, and for the research and development of the teaching

profession. Although the concept of school-based teacher education is not new, the PDS movement is different from the traditional school-based approach because of its focus on individual public schools as well as the depth of collaboration between university and school-based educators (Lecos, 1997).

Just like the magnet school programs, PDSs are educational reform projects but with a specific emphasis on teacher education. Just like magnet schools, social difference has played and continues to play an important role in the idea of, rationale for, and workings of PDSs. They are an off-shoot of the wave of education reform which swept across the United States in the mid-1980s. These reforms were stirred by the major concerns of country's educationists and leaders about improving the country's economic power by better educating the workforces through rigorous and relevant education for (in as much as possible) all America's children.

Another concern during this reform movement was rooted in social justice considerations. The growing disparity between the economically advantaged and the economically disadvantaged was reflected in the widening gap between the academic achievement levels of children from these two groups and there was the fear that succeeding generations of children were destined for welfare rolls, drug addiction, premature death, prison, and joblessness. Better schools and better teachers were viewed as crucial to America's social and economic well-being. PDSs emerged in the mid-1980s as a potentially significant vehicle for advancing both teacher education and school restructuring (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). However, the basic concept underlying the PDS - that is, an elementary or secondary school where teachers learn and research as a part of practice - is not a new idea. PDSs are rooted philosophically in the progressive education movement (Levine, 1992). Antecedents of the PDS are rooted in John Dewey's Laboratory School, in the work of Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1950) and in Schaefer's "schools of inquiry" (Schaefer, 1967). As mentioned earlier, education reform and school restructuring of the 1980s rekindled interest in this concept.

### **Methodological Background**

In order to critically examine the two concepts, i.e. PDS and magnet programs, and how they worked in practice at the school level, I chose to utilize multiculturalism and anti-racism as my theoretical foundations and analytical approach in an ethnographic research to examine and describe the culture of a school (that houses both programs) and the workings of the two programs and what is happening in terms of social difference.

The study is about an urban elementary school with a predominantly black student population. My major attraction to the school was its magnet and professional development school programs and how promising both programs sound as far as school improvement for the less privileged is concerned. However, as I reviewed the literature on these programs and began to reflect more on my preliminary observation of the school, I could not help but notice the relevance of fieldwork and how so appropriate the words of one of the earlier ethnographers still sound even after almost a century:

"Good training in theory, and acquaintance with its latest results is not identical with being burdened with 'preconceived ideas'. If a man sets out on an expedition, determined to prove certain hypotheses, if he is incapable of changing his views constantly and casting them off ungrudgingly under the pressure of evidence, needless to say his work will be worthless. But the more problems he brings with him into the field, the more he is in the habit of moulding (sic.) his theories according to the facts and of seeing facts in their bearing upon theory [what better way is there to explain the use of praxis in research than this], the better he is equipped for the work. Preconceived ideas are pernicious in any scientific work, but foreshadowed problems are the main endowment of a scientific thinker, and these problems are first revealed to the observer by his theoretical studies. (Malinowski 1922:8-9, quoted in Hammersley and Atkinson 1983:25).

How else to get a better grip on the issues at stake than to go into the field and get first hand knowledge about the school? After all, social scientists have long rejected armchair theorizing in favor of systematic data collection in the research site.

There was no other way in which to acquire an in-depth knowledge on what was going on at Downtown Elementary School - DES (a pseudonym for the school under study) as far as the PDS and magnet programs were concerned but to become part of the school. Consequently, I have done a type of qualitative research referred to as an in-depth step by step ethnography (Fetterman 1998). It is a long term study in which the researcher immerses herself/himself in the community or institution being studied in order to gain a rich and clear understanding of the cultural processes involved. This is done by observation, participation and interviewing with an emphasis on face to face interaction. The intention is to provide a whole, complete picture of what is going on.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

Some of the methods of data collection used include observation, interviewing and documentary information. Participant observation was used for the purpose of being there to catch the "moments," developing an understanding of my research participants and acquiring the status of "trusted person" to facilitate the collection of data. As one that eventually became a substitute teacher in the school, I began as a dormant onlooker without a notepad who eventually became part dormant and part active, attending major events such as school carnivals and speeches on Martin Luther King Jr. day, etc. Through participant observation (through being part of the social setting of the school) I tried to learn firsthand how the actions of my research participants correspond to their words; see patterns of behavior; experience the unexpected; develop a quality of trust with my research participants that motivates them to tell me what they might not otherwise tell an outsider or a stranger.

**Participatory observation** served as the essential means of gathering ethnographic data. Besides being useful as a tool for establishing rapport, it is also useful as a method of gathering data. Participatory observation covers a continuum of different kinds and degrees of participation. The type of participatory observation that I used during the first few weeks of the research was mostly observation without note-taking, in order to give my research participants the chance to become used to my presence. I then gradually began to take notes and make arrangements to observe certain individuals and functions of the school. My approach eventually became as

interactive as possible depending on the type of rapport I was able to establish in each instance/situation or moment of the research process.

Besides day to day observations and interactions with individual teachers and staff throughout the two year study, I had the opportunity to observe five major events, the carnival, the launching of the school coupon book, the Martin Luther King Birthday celebrations, and the black month cultural celebrations. Each event, although not a one day celebration, ended with a moment of gathering of the entire school for an hour or two of exuberant performances such as dances, speeches, recitals and pep-rallies. I have also had the chance to interact with the whole school population on a day to day basis in the capacity of a substitute teacher, get the feel of what is going on, observe and learn the "language" of my new environment as I became fully immersed and my presence no longer bothered anyone.

The second major data collection method that I employed is **interviewing**. Informal conversational interviews were carried out randomly throughout the research. That is to say that I asked questions on the many occasions when something was happening that I wondered about, as well as probe during conversations in informal settings without formally arranging a time to ask my questions. Apart from this, open-ended and semi-structured interviews were conducted whereby I set up appointments with selected research participants to ask about that which I could not see or could no longer see. Ten sets of such interviews were conducted with two University representatives, the principal, an administrative personnel, two parents, two interns and two mentor teachers who were willing to have an in-depth conversation with me.

The University officials that I interviewed have a longtime relationship with DES as well as expertise in teacher education, magnet schools and professional development schools. One of them has worked as a representative of the University in its collaboration with DES in the training of preservice teachers by assigning them as interns to various mentor teachers. The other University official I studied is an expert in teacher education and has served for a long time on various committees that represent the University in the PDS consortium of universities and is behind the beginning of the University of Tennessee's collaboration efforts with the neighboring public schools.

The principal and the administrative staff that I interviewed have both been with DES for a very long time and have seen it move from being magnet school as it was originally intended to also being a professional development school. In fact, the school administrator has been with the school since it was founded, first as a classroom teacher, and then a curriculum supervisor. The two parents I interviewed have first hand knowledge about their children's school because they both work there and so are well informed about issues of concern and the advantages of having their children enrolled in DES. The fact that they are parents and teaching assistants rather than classroom teachers makes their perspective a useful addition to the picture because they are able to view issues from different angles and appreciate issues that may not be of much concern to the teachers and other members of staff of the school.

Two mentor teachers were also interviewed. One of them used to be an intern at the school who got recruited after her program. So this teacher has a lot of experience base that consists of knowing what it means to be an intern and what it means to be a mentor and therefore offered a lot insight on the issues at stake. The other mentor teacher has several years of experience as a teacher and a mentor and is a recipient of several teaching awards and so speaks with authority on the issues that were discussed. At the time of the interview, she had just won an award for her good teaching skills. She had a lot of insight to offer as to what the school was doing with the interns and teaching in DES in general.

The two interns, from the University that is collaborating with DES that I interviewed, were at different stages of their program and worked at different grade-levels so I was able to tap into their different perspectives based on the length and type of interaction with the school and length of time spent in their teacher training program thus far. All in all, therefore, I had a diverse population of respondents with different perspectives that I hope will provide a bigger glimpse of the broad picture.

**Documentary information** was gathered from various publications and manuscripts such as affiliated university students' term papers, local newspapers, DES's handouts, application forms, announcements about events and agenda of events, description of programs and activities of the

school, etc. I was also able to obtain and study documents that guided the development of both programs at the school.

### **Theoretical Framework**

After having reviewed some of the literature on magnet and professional development programs, and having done a preliminary data analysis of the DES study, the author concluded that although there are a lot of benefits and a lot of good intentions behind the rationale for both programs, there are also several challenges and short-comings associated with both programs. For instance, issues of social difference (race, class and gender) and social justice are implied but not sufficiently and explicitly examined in the actual context of magnet and PDS school models. This led the author to seek other ways of appreciating and examining the discourse on these two school reform programs.

In this paper therefore, I re-examine, and undertake a second and critical look at the discourse on magnet and PDS programs by exploring how we might begin to explicitly engage issues of social difference and social justice through the dual lens of two conceptual frameworks, namely multiculturalism and anti-racism. Thus, confronting some of the challenges and short-comings associated with magnet and professional development programs that impede them from attaining their highest potential. For instance, issues of social difference (race, class and gender) and social justice are implied but not sufficiently and explicitly worked with in the actual context of magnet and PDS school models. The paper also takes a second and critical look at the discourse on magnet and PDS programs by exploring how we might begin to explicitly engage issues of social difference and social justice through the lenses of two conceptual frameworks, namely multiculturalism and anti-racism.

What are the other angles from which one may approach the dynamics of having, in the same school, two programs that may be contradictory and yet complimentary at times? Who are the true beneficiaries of these programs and why? Is everyone actually a winner in the PDSs as some of the developers and proponents claimed? How else may the issues of gender, race, class, social difference in general, be viewed? As I reflect on some of these questions, two concepts come in

mind and seem to provide a lens through which one may critique the issues at stake, i.e. multiculturalism and anti-racism.

Multiculturalism has been interpreted as a curricular and pedagogical movement of the late 1960s that sought to increase educational equality by taking into account the diverse values and interests of ethnic groups (Appleton, 1983). There are several distinct approaches to multicultural education and together they constitute a range of curricular, pedagogical, and social justice perspectives each with different political, social, and economic goals (Vincent, 1992). Multiculturalism deals with issues of school desegregation and the need to improve minority chances in schooling and employment (Banks, 1985, 1987). Anti-racism is an approach that focuses on the issues of social justice and inequality and argues for the need to focus not only on curriculum and the classroom but to examine social inequality in the context of the entire society rather than limit it to culture (Vincent, 1992). The biggest argument for anti-racism is about the inadequacies of some variants of multiculturalism (e.g. liberal multiculturalism) to address race and racism as central issues.

These two theories, therefore, seem to provide an appropriate platform from which to take a second and critical look at magnet schools and PDSs because they (i.e. multiculturalism and anti-racism), not only share the same educational improvement and equity goals with magnet and PDSs, but also focus on social justice, the wider social, political and economic influences of schooling on racism as well as gender and socio-economic inequality. The author addresses each approach and concludes with a recommendation of critical multiculturalism as most appropriate tool of analysis. First of all, I provide an overview of the two respective concepts: multiculturalism and anti-racism. Then I put forward an analysis of how the concepts intersect and interrelate ideologically and in their engagement with issues of social difference and critique of school reform policies. Throughout the paper, multiculturalism and anti-racism serve as a forum for me to critically examine gender, class and race (social difference) issues in the context of magnet and PDS educational reform programs. A critical examination of PDSs and magnet schools from the point of view of critical multiculturalism is presented in the conclusion.

### **Multiculturalism: An Overview**

As Goldberg (1994:1) rightly spells out, "for almost two decades now, multiculturalism as a concept and ideology has been both championed and maligned, both idealized and dismissed as pedagogical instrument and political purpose . . . The multicultural condition, perhaps not unlike the condition of postmodernity, nevertheless cannot be reductively defined." As such, there are several varieties of multiculturalism. The concept is sometimes referred to as everything and nothing at the same time. Hence, a phenomenological description of the variant of multiculturalism (in question), its conditions of possibility, description of its characteristic modes of expression and historical transition is a necessary point of departure in the analyses of this concept and what it has to offer (Goldberg 1994). Broadly speaking, multiculturalism in its various forms may be viewed as " . . . an intellectual paradigm, or philosophical episteme, pedagogical framework . . . radical critique (Goldberg 1994:1)." The version in question here may be referred to as a pedagogical framework and radical critique.

Multiculturalism is conceived and operationalized differently in many parts of the world, including the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia, depending on its historical beginning and the goals that it was meant to obtain in each case. Also, in each of these countries various forms of multiculturalism have been developed along a political spectrum as they each experienced immigration and various movements of racial and gender awareness that forced them to reconsider how they define themselves and other social institutions.

In the case of North America, multiculturalism/multicultural education has a longer history in Canada than in the United States. In 1971, a national policy on multiculturalism was introduced in Canada by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau. By so doing, Trudeau criticized the then assimilationist ideology and called for a Canadian society that was proud of its multicultural diversity. He unequivocally stated,

There cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origins and one for aboriginal people and yet a third for all the others. For although there are two official languages there is no official culture, nor do any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or

group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly. (Trudeau, 191:1; quoted from Ng et al. 1995:3).

From being a state policy, multiculturalism became a law in 1988 and has since been a major part of the educational agenda since the 1970s in rhetoric and/or reality, while generating great debate, controversy and confusion, while having a great impact on educational reform in Canada. Thus, multicultural education in Canada is a government policy.

In the United States however, multicultural education is not a government policy but has been one of the powerful educational slogans since the 1990s. According to Cameron McCarthy (1995), multicultural education emerged in the United States, in part as a minority response to the failure of compensatory education programs launched by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s. Multicultural education is therefore a product of a particular historical conjuncture of relations among the state, contending racial minority groups, and policy intellectuals in the United States, in which the discourse over schools became increasingly racialized. McCarthy (1995) further explains that, the 1960s represented a period in which minority challenges to inequality in American society focused centrally on educational opportunity as well as the very construction of what was good knowledge in the school curriculum. When school critics influenced by Latino and African-American organizations such as SNCC (the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) began to draw attention to the racial exclusion of minority history from the textbooks used in schools, a whole new avenue of curriculum and pedagogical critique opened up - one that called attention to the way in which the organization of the school curriculum reproduced inequality in society by de-legitimizing the culture, history, and language of minority groups. Minority school critics maintained that existing curriculum and pedagogical practices helped to foster a highly racially selective tradition that valorized white, middle-class values (sometimes referred to the assimilationist model of education). These critics therefore sought to emphasize the way in which U.S. schooling itself constituted a racial order. Hence, the "racialization" of debates over the organization of schooling (McCarthy, 1995).

Historically speaking, therefore, multicultural education constitutes a series of reform proposals for preserving the cultural heritage of individual groups and lobbying for equality and social justice in a society where all cultural groups are valorized. Its assumption is that society comprises a macroculture that is divided into microcultures, and its clarion call is cultural inclusiveness. Because groups are usually protective of their heritage, the demand for multicultural education cannot be just a contemporary phenomenon. Some historians, therefore, trace its origins to the culture-ferment in the 1920's assimilationist-pluralist debates over the place of cultures in schools. Nathan Glazer (1995) notes links between the renaissance of contemporary disputes over multicultural education and the school wars of the 1840s, and concludes that multicultural education represents "a new word for an old problem." Glazer indicates that one reason for the abiding disputes over multicultural education is the recognition by all sides that how children are taught has consequences for their identities, intellectual development, and social mobility (Nathan Glazer 1995). From a historical point of view, therefore, societies are de facto multicultural but as in its present and most recent form and conception, multiculturalism represents a policy, theory, and a response to decentralizing power and moving beyond white privilege and monoculturalism.

Thus, multiculturalism and commitments to cultural diversity emerged out of a conflictual history of resistance, accommodation, integration, and transformation. Accordingly, no sooner had multicultural demands and aspirations begun to be articulated than they were imparted multiple and conflicting interpretations, meanings, and implications. Broadly conceived, multiculturalism is critical of and resistant to the necessarily reductive imperatives of monocultural assimilation. But this critical realignment assumes multiple forms. (Goldberg 1995).

As Peter Caws (1995) depicts it, multiculturalism may be used in descriptive fashion to reference the undeniable variety of cultures inter- and intra-nationally. By contrast, Charles Taylor (1995) identifies a normative conception: the discourse of multiculturalism here is about stipulating the procedural and substantive principles ordering a multicultural society (in the descriptive sense). In this latter regard, Peter McLaren (1995) distinguishes between various kinds of multicultural

orientation: conservative, (left-)liberal, and critical. Cedric Robinson's (1995) vigorous critique of the social sciences adds historical depth to McLaren's distinctions. Robinson insists that the Western tradition of knowledge formation has always been marked by a multicultural constitution. In the past, however, this multicultural heritage has been represented by, for, and in the interests of those wielding ethnoracial powers. Thus, what Robinson identifies as "premodern" and "modernist" multiculturalisms served dominant and exclusionary interests. Their prevailing and once hegemonic forms only now are being challenged by "anti(post)modernist multiculturalism" (Robinson 1995).

On the extreme end of the spectral range, then, are managed multiculturalisms- what the Chicago Cultural Studies Group (1995) characterizes as "corporate multiculturalism" and what Terence Turner (1995) identifies as "difference multiculturalism." These are the multiculturalisms of a centrist academy and multinational corporations that take themselves to be committed to the broad tenets of philosophical liberalism which are unconcerned, as Michele Wallace (1995) indicates, with redistribution of power or resources. Here, multiculturalisms assume the mantles of institutional logic, self-promotion, and ideological practice in one of the following two ways: they may be celebrated in the name of standard pluralism that not only leaves groups constituted as givens but entrenches the boundaries fixing group demarcations as unalterable or, multiculturalism and cultural diversity are assumed as administrative instruments that serve to contain and restrain resistance and transformation as they displace any appeal to economic difference by paying lip service to the celebration of cultural distinction. Thus, one important characteristic feature shared by "difference multiculturalism" and "corporate multiculturalism" is the fact that "difference" is used for corporate ends and power is not challenged. Additionally, "difference" is merely managed and not used to create social change and social justice in society (Goldberg 1995).

Other forms of multiculturalism, liberal, left-liberal, and critical, are rooted in more progressive conceptions of freedom and justice. Liberal multiculturalism asserts that natural equality exists among whites, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other racial populations based on the intellectual "sameness" among races. According to liberal multiculturalism, however, the

absence of equality in the United States is not due to cultural deprivation among blacks and Latinos but rather due to lack of social and educational opportunities that make it impossible for everyone to compete equally in the capitalist market place. This view therefore sanctions ethnocentric norms that are identified with Anglo-American cultural-political communities. (McLaren 1995:51).

Left-liberal multiculturalism, on the other hand, emphasizes cultural differences and recommends that the stress on the equality of races overshadows those important cultural differences between races that are responsible for different behaviors, values, attitudes, cognitive styles, and social patterns. This viewpoint tends to exoticize "otherness" while down-playing the importance of history, culture, and power. Left-liberal multiculturalism, therefore, treats difference as an "essence" that exists independent of history, culture, and power. (McLaren 1995:52). However, how do we explain the relationship between slave trade, racism, poverty, white privilege, the male patriarchy system and the control of political power by one dominant group to almost a complete exclusion of "others"?

Of all the forms of multiculturalism, which by the way, reflect the values and assumptions of those who construct them, critical multiculturalism seems to be worthy of special attention because it deals with issues of justice, social difference and social change as they relate to the pedagogical (issues that are considered crucial in the design and execution of both magnet schools and PDSs). Advocates of critical of multiculturalism make no pretense of neutrality. I do concur with Peter McLaren's (1995) perspective of critical multiculturalism as: "representations of race, class, gender are understood as the result of a larger social struggles over signs and meaning (. . .) Residence [critical] multiculturalism doesn't see diversity itself as a goal, but rather argues that diversity must be affirmed within a politics of cultural criticism and commitment to social justice. (. . .) Difference is always a product of history, culture, power, and ideology. (. . .). Critical multiculturalism interrogates the construction of difference and identity in relation to radical politics . . . ." (Pp. 52).

Thus unlike most theoretical approaches, critical theorists expose their values and openly work to achieve them. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) have described these values so eloquently and in such detail that it is worth quoting them at length:

Critical multiculturalists are therefore dedicated to the notion of egalitarianism and the elimination of human suffering. What is the relationship between social inequality and the suffering that accompanies it and the schooling process? The search for an answer to this question shapes the activities of the critical teacher. Working in solidarity with subordinate and marginalized groups, critical multiculturalists attempt to expose the subtle and often hidden educational processes that privilege the already affluent and undermine the efforts of the poor. When Western schooling is viewed from this perspective, the naive belief that such education provides consistent socio-economic mobility for working-class and non-white students disintegrates. Indeed, the notion that education simply provides a politically neutral set of skills and an objective body of knowledge also collapses. This appreciation that both cultural pedagogy and schooling don't operate as neutral ideologically innocent activities is central to a critical theory grounded form of multiculturalism. When this historical critical theoretical base is submitted to an analysis by recent innovations in social theory shaped by feminists, critical race theorists, advocates of cultural studies and postmodernist and poststructuralist scholars the grounding of the notion of how critical multiculturalism may serve as an analytical tool in the analysis of the discourse on magnet schools and PDSs is further revealed. (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997:24).

For these authors, multiculturalism is used not only in relation to race, but is also commonly extended to other categories of diversity, rendering it a code word for race, much in the way that "inner-city issues" signifies that race is the topic being referenced. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) rightly indicate that, "multiculturalism is a term of derision, deployed to represent a variety of challenges to the traditional European and male orientation of the educational canon." (Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997:xi). Hence, issues of social difference (i.e. race, gender, social class) as viewed in multiculturalism and anti-racism, have some crucial implications for educational reform programs such as magnet schools and PDSs. We shall return to this in

another section of the chapter. For now however, let us take a look at the second concept mentioned, namely anti-racism.

### **Anti-racism: An Overview**

The theory and practice of anti-racism education, as George J. Sefa Dei puts it, "is a proactive, process-oriented approach to helping educators and students negotiate and gain an insight into the racial and ethnocultural differences they may bring to the classroom. Anti-racism education has a rich theoretical base, and an everyday practical grounding for educators who wish to both understand and engage issues of racial and ethnocultural differences in their classrooms" (1996:9).

According to Cheng and Soudack (1994), a review of the current literature from Canada, the United States and Britain shows that different terminologies have been used to label the concept anti-racism. Cheng and Soudack summarize the "underlying assumptions implicit in this concept as articulated by various authors (Thomas, 1984; Lee, 1985; Brandt, 1986; National Union of Teachers, 1989; OSSTF, 1991; Allingham, 1992; Endicott and Mukherjee 1992; Epstein, 1993) as follows:

racism is structural and institutional, not just an expression of individual bigotry;

racism is caused by concrete historical, social, cultural, political and economic factors which result in the unequal distribution of rights and privileges among all people in our society;

racism is defined by its effects (rather than its intent) which result in ethnic minority groups being disadvantaged in many areas of their lives;

racism exists in the education system because it exists in society;

racism has an impact on all children and is often believed to be linked to the underachievement of ethnic minority students;

schools are accountable for addressing the academic inequity of opportunities and outcomes for racial minority students;

schools, as agencies of 'socialization' and 'cultural transmission' can make a difference: they can produce, reproduce and transmit racism, but they can also dismantle racism through appropriate policies, curriculum, pedagogy, and climate;

racism is learned and therefore can be unlearned;

the dismantling of racism involves both individual and collective action to address individual attitudes and prejudice as well as institutional and structural discrimination; (Cheng and Soudack, 1994:4).

From the above, therefore, the conception of anti-racism was generally emphasizes race and racism with little reference to culture and social difference. This scope has been broadened by critical anti-racist theorists to include issues of culture, power and justice in the educational system. As George J. Sefa Dei so eloquently puts it:

. . . the theory and practice of anti-racism education, . . . is a proactive, process-oriented approach to helping educators and students negotiate and gain insight into the racial and ethnocultural differences they bring to the classroom. Anti-racism education has a rich theoretical base, and an everyday practical grounding for educators who wish to both understand and engage issues of racial and ethnocultural difference in their class rooms. It is also about investigating and changing how schools deal with issues of White privilege and power-sharing. (1993:9).

Also noteworthy is the fact that anti-racist education emphasizes the vital importance of a commitment to both equity and academic excellence for all students. Anti-racist education is therefore quality education, good education that "exemplifies sound educational principles which will prepare all learners to live in the global village" (Newton, 1992). Anti-racist theorists would therefore tend to look on magnet and PDS programs as steps in the right direction toward attaining a non-racist egalitarian world through education because of the commitments these programs make to quality and equal educational opportunity to all children.

However, making race the central issue, in my opinion, does not broaden the focus enough to cover gender and socio-economic issues such as the feminization of the teaching profession and how that plays out in the PDSs, how girls are still short-changed at our schools; the connection

between a child's socio-economic background and their access to magnet schools, etc. These are all complex issues that are so interrelated that they can only be properly appreciated in their entirety as an intricate web or puzzle that can only begin to make sense under the scrutiny of the lenses of both anti-racists and multiculturalists.

Consequently, anti-racism has increasingly come to include a critique of the "interlocking systems of oppression in society and to work towards comprehensive social justice" (Dei, 1993:6). When anti-racism takes this stance, it addresses the way class, gender, religion and language differences are interrelated with racism in our society (Cheng and Soudack, 1994). As far as educators are concerned, this anti-racist education, in a broad sense, has to embrace challenges against any "systemic barriers which marginalize groups of people. It includes globally-based school curriculum, system-wide equity programs, and the analysis of social systems and their relationship to power . . . [It] seeks to empower individuals to maximize participation in society through non-sexist/non-racist educational strategies at all levels throughout the education" (OSSTF, 1991:133, quoted in Cheng and Soudack, 1994:4). This sounds more or less like a radical version of multiculturalism - critical multiculturalism - and it probably is. The next section is an elaboration on some of the commonalities between multiculturalism and anti-racism in relation to school reform programs.

### **Multiculturalist and Anti-racist Education: Some Commonalities.**

How then can anti-racism assist theorists and practitioners involved in magnet programs where different groups of people, different races come together to learn and teach, interact and research and work for social change? Does anti-racism have a bearing on multiculturalism? What do anti-racist education and multiculturalism have to offer as far as theorizing on racism, gender and socio-economic difference in the context of our two types of school reform: i.e. magnet and professional development schools?

Briefly, anti-racism seems to concretize, and attempts to offer ways of realizing the ideals of multiculturalism. For instance, multiculturalism seeks to expose, recognize and appreciate/analyze cultural, racial differences, and anti-racism seeks to provide a way in which

these differences may be understood and negotiated. Anti-racist education is often considered one of the functions of multicultural education (Wilson, 1991). Additionally, anti-racist education is a separate and self-claimed more radical school of thought that argues that recognizing and removing racism from schooling must be the most viable reform agenda in schooling (Troyna and Williams, 1996). Anti-racist approaches claim to be more confrontational (McCarthy, 1990b). This is so because, although there is an existence of a wide continuum of commitment to political action in multicultural approaches, only one form of multiculturalism may be able to stand the test of anti-racism. For instance, critical multicultural education may not live up to the ideological expectations of anti-racism and yet it represents enough ideological threat to the status quo. [Critical] multicultural education is progressively becoming a site for confronting and developing reform agendas on issues of racism, sexism, handicapism and sexual orientation (Vincent, 1992).

According to Vincent (1992), multicultural education and anti-racist education are not two incommensurable approaches to inequality in schooling; rather, the two approaches are closely related. In a literature review, Vincent (1992) indicated that both multicultural education and anti-racist education are firmly connected in their commitment to work for reform, equity, and social justice and that "an alliance between anti-racist educators and multicultural educators seems not only natural but essential to the continuing growth of the field" (1992:31). There is actually, evidence that some multicultural approaches consider anti-racist education to be a defining component of their programs (Todd, 1991; Nieto, 1992).

Another example is Sleeter's (1991) edited volume, *Empowerment through Multicultural Education*. Vincent (1992) rightly describes the cases in this volume as "the Freirian vision of empowerment filtered through the writings of Giroux (1983, 1988) and McLaren (1989) constitutes the ethical, theoretical, and practical underpinning for the case studies and essays presented in this volume. These case studies describe ability grouping, knowledge selection, gender stereotyping ( to name a few) and implicate the whole school environment in the maintenance of inequality" (1992:15) Such approaches may prove to be more appropriate, both at the practical and theoretical levels, tools for taking a second look at magnet and professional

development programs. In the next section, referring to them (the approaches and their underlying principles) broadly as critical multicultural education, these kinds of emancipatory approaches to multicultural education set the stage for a critical examination of power and issues of social difference in the contexts of magnet and professional development school programs.

### **A Critical Multiculturalist View of PDS and Magnet Programs**

School reform efforts have been both informed and complicated by the historical and intricate relationship between race, gender, class, power and sexual preference issues in this nation and in the world for that matter. It is no more an issue of segregation and/or desegregation, separate but equal, integration, equality and/or excellence; neither is it as simplistic as an issue of sexism and/or racism, cultural domination, ethnocentrism, Eurocentric imperialism, ethnocentric diversity, homophobia, etc., but a combination of all the above delicate and sensitive issues.

As George Sefa Dei (1996), clearly spells out:

. . . everyday in North America, educators walk into classrooms which are profoundly different from those they attended when they were children. For some teachers it is as if they experienced learning as children and young adults in a different universe from that experienced by the children they teach. No matter what a teacher's social location might be in terms of race, ethnicity, class and gender, that educator is most likely interacting on a daily basis with learners with backgrounds and experiences different from his or her own. (1993:9).

Students negotiate, in the course of interacting with one another, issues around race, class, gender and ethnicity. One child calls another a racial or sexist name, and a fight breaks out in a playground. Students surround and comment on a little girl whose hair looks "different." High school students meet to discuss a push for African Studies classes, or the integration of Black/African history courses into the curriculum. An opposing group says they feel excluded. A student who feels her religion is misunderstood by others talks about her religion in class (George Sefa Dei 1996:9).

It is common knowledge that school teachers, counselors, administrators, janitors, cafeteria workers, staff members are faced with and address (or fail to address) racial and ethnocultural difference in their schools daily. One way to do so is by attempting to "keep difference from being explosive." One way they do this is by attempting to ignore and erase the differences which students bring to the classroom. However, increasing numbers of educators and administrators are tending to more equitably address racial and ethnocultural differences which students bring to the schools. But is that enough? This is where anti-racism and multicultural education with their rich theoretical base, and everyday practical grounding for educators who wish to both understand and engage issues of racial and ethnocultural difference in their classrooms, come in handy. Our attention is also drawn to the need for investigating and changing how schools deal with issues of White privilege and power-sharing. (Dei 1993). How are issues of "Whiteness" dealt with in schools with majority black students and minority white students? What does it mean to be "white?"

The increasing racial diversity in North American classrooms means that the everyday classroom interactions of students and instructors are not only richer in variety, but more complex. The increasing ethnocultural diversity in our schools means that the histories, cultures and everyday experiences students, teachers and administrators bring to the classroom are often quite distinct and separate, even distanced by time and space. Teachers, in particular, are faced with the task of helping one another, and their students, to engage positively, negotiate fairly, and intellectually come to understand "difference" in their classrooms. The importance of this daily task cannot be stressed enough. The ways in which the next generation learns to engage, negotiate, struggle over and understand "differences" are crucial to the future of North America. (Dei 1993:10).

The "social crises" (budgetary, political and medical) that North Americans face are indeed imperative concerns, yet we often ignore this real question: How can we value our differences and equitably share power? This may be the determining question of the twenty-first century. Multicultural and anti-racist theories and practices offer some ways in which we can confidently address this question in our classrooms, schools, playgrounds and neighborhoods. (Dei 1993:10). Education has always been more than a theoretical discourse or abstract set of propositions. There is the need for a commitment to political and academic education social change. All

education involves social and political relations. Multicultural and anti-racism education is no exception. Therefore, unless multicultural and anti-racism education is integrated with family life, home-schools and the various communities in which we live and work, the best we can hope for is a fragmented and/or stagnated top-down approach to social change.

I have had the chance to work and study at some of the nation's public schools lately and the experience has been humbling and an eye opener. I have often stopped to reflect on the intersection between theory and practice - praxis; sometimes the issues are a lot clearer, other times, conflicting, and on yet, other occasions, very confusing, if not ridiculous and outrageous (especially when one imagines how one would have reacted based on the knowledge of theory to the exclusion of that of practice or vice versa). How would practical knowledge benefit from theoretical principles? It is only with the aid of praxis that they can become valuable to lay people such as students, teachers and other practitioners. Although I have not lost my sympathy for the enormous burden that confronts teachers and the school system, I have come to believe that it is not an impossible task. My admiration for public school teachers is higher than ever, and I have come to appreciate, more and more, how invaluable an asset they are to every nation. In order to attain praxis and to be better educators, we need to bring practical and theoretical knowledge together in our attempts to reform schools and teacher education.

A review of various writings, in chapter three, shows that social difference plays an important role in the idea of, and rationale for, and function of both magnet and PDS programs. Issues of race, socio-economic background, issues of power and gender, the meaning of knowledge, ownership of knowledge, the relationship between knowledge, race, class, gender, power, and the ownership of knowledge have been brought up in the above reviews and discussions on the programs. For example, one of the reasons why these programs have been instituted is because of the recognition that too many of America's children are not learning and that what they are learning is not enough. The magnet schools are especially meant to provide or make room for those who are most likely not to be learning or not learning enough. However, the critic in me questions, who are the ones actually learning because of the existence of magnet and PDSs programs; who are the actual beneficiaries of these projects? In order for any of these programs

to reach full potential, attain maximum yield of their goals, I would argue that they would need to incorporate in them principles and aspects of critical multiculturalism.

Critical multiculturalism may be described as "a perspective from which representations of race, class, and gender are understood as the result of larger social struggles over signs and meanings and in this way emphasizes not simply the textual play or metaphorical displacement as a form of resistance . . . but stresses the central task of transforming the social, cultural, and institutional relations in which meanings are generated" (McLaren, 1994:53). McLaren continues two pages later, "The liberal and conservative positions on culture also assumes that justice already exists and needs only to be evenly apportioned. However, both teachers and students need to realize that justice does not already exist simply because laws exist. Justice needs to be continually created, and constantly struggled for. . . . Do teachers and cultural workers have access to a language that allows them sufficiently to critique and transform existing social and cultural practices that are defended by liberals and conservatives as unifyingly democratic?" (1994:55). A similar question may be posed if we take a second look at magnet and PDS programs.

In the case of the PDSs, for example, power is said to be equally distributed and everyone is said to be a winner. However, there is virtually no in-depth discussion on how one acquires the title of the "best teacher", "teacher of teachers", novice, mentor, student, etc. How long does one remain in each position, how do they intersect, how fluid are their duties, responsibilities in relation to power and authority? Whose voices are the loudest and where is the voice of the voiceless? What kind of hegemonic relationships are being developed between mentor teachers and preservice teachers; between teachers and University staff and professors, etc? In other words, how else may all these issues be viewed, is there another lens through which to critique, appreciate or review magnet and professional development schools? A critical multiculturalist approach will mean a break down of false barriers between theory and practice making possible for the University professors and teachers to research together and allow theory to inform and feed off practice and vice versa in the production of praxis. Some of the writings revealed that at the PDS sites, the University was still viewed as the authentic site for serious research and knowledge.

As far as critical multiculturalism is concerned, there is no room for this kind of myth to exist among educationists. The PDS program is an ideal site, for the multiculturalists reach their full potentials by constantly engaging in research, brainstorming on their strategies and challenging the meaning of knowledge in general. Through critical multiculturalism, the mainstream white-male hegemonic nature of what is considered knowledge is challenged.

Are girls getting as much attention as boys? How are the children of different sexes, races, ethnicities and cultures treating each other? A critical multiculturalist will make sure that all students are treated equally and will allow the use of any racial slurs in the classroom or the playground. The dolls that are in the class are not just one kind but of different races and the children spend the same amount of time on the computers, with the dolls and on blocks, etc. The multicultural teacher is constantly confronting her/his biases and never claiming to be neutral or hiding behind the color blind facade for that is averse racism.

As good as it is to have a desegregated school with good curriculum and lots of technology I hold that it is not enough when one of the aims is educational equity and quality. We will need to also overtly focus on social difference and equity issues. Especially in this age of cyber-terrorism, it is not just a matter of what the children are learning but how they are learning. Hence the importance of the diagram on the next page cannot be overemphasized. Reproduced from Karen Mock's (1988) article, the diagram does not only describe the practical implications of multicultural, anti-racist combined (what I prefer to call critical multicultural), but also highlights the importance of praxis. A teacher's knowledge of various theories helps her/him to design a way of teaching a particular subject matter.

However, just because the same material is presented does not necessarily mean that all the children for whom it is intended will learn the same thing (Mock 1988:1). The multicultural teacher is not only aware of her/his students' different cultural background but also their socio-economic status and the cultural capital that each of them brings to the classroom. Rather than tracking or ability grouping, it is only by being sensitive to these differences that an approach

may be developed that will be suitable for the different learning styles of the children. A successful magnet school or PDS would encourage such strategies.

In sum, although there have been a lot of success stories about magnet schools and PDSs, there are cases of failure that have to do with the very innovative nature of these programs. Taking a critical look at these challenges would lead to more successful PDSs and magnet programs. The benefits far out-weigh the challenges involved in these innovative approaches to teacher education and school improvement. This conclusion raises important questions: how do we confront the challenges of PDSs; what accounts for the success of some PDSs programs as opposed to the failure of others? What would a study school that is both a magnet and professional development school look like? How many of such schools are out there and what can we learn from their experiences? Although there is enormous literature on each of these two programs, there is hardly any on the co-existence of both at the same site and how they impact one another. These are all issues that need further research and investigation.

For now, however, my ultimate concern is that the emphasis on teacher-training and the professional development of teachers who are already in service should try not to shy away from the complexity, exciting, enticing, embarrassing and sometimes curious, uncomfortable, if not harmful, oppressive, etc., nature of the cyber-globalization and proliferation of the inter/intra cultural as well as the social difference and social justice issues of today's global village. I also do recognize that school reform is an enormous task that needs to be shared by all sectors of the nation, family, church, the communities we live in, the government, the educational system, and so on. Every one of us should be able to answer an innocent child's questions such as: Why do you talk funny? Why are you always special; given all the awards; always smiling; wearing your hair different . . .? A frank and open mind approach, I presume, is usually the best. We all need each other's innovative ideas in designing our own personalized approaches and we need to stop once a while to learn from the children in the process. How do we learn, share and enjoy our different similarities and similar differences? It is only a study of a real life situation that can help us attempt to answer some of these questions - in this case, an ethnography of a school that is boldly confronting some of these questions in its magnet and PDS programs. Therefore, as I try

to complete my dissertation, which is based on an ethnography of the Downtown Elementary School - DES (pseudonym), these are some of the questions I ponder over as they make themselves center-stage in the research process. Education (Orlando, Florida, February 1992)

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