

Donatille Mujawamariya  
University of Ottawa

and

Gada Mahrouse

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

## Multicultural Education in Canadian Preservice Programs: Teacher Candidates' Perspectives

*This report examines Canadian teacher candidates' perspectives on the multicultural education component of the preservice teacher education program they attend. The data we analyze were collected through a questionnaire that set out to explore whether teacher candidates were satisfied with the multicultural education preparation they received and their ideas on how it might be improved. We present the findings in two parts. First we consider the teacher candidates' critiques and suggestions on multicultural education to reveal that the majority of respondents did not feel adequately prepared to the challenge of teaching in ethno-racially diverse classrooms. Their responses point to specific programmatic and structural shortcomings of current multicultural curricula in Canadian teacher education programs. They suggest ways to improve the multicultural education curriculum including compulsory courses, more diversity among faculty and teacher candidates in the program, and an integrative approach across the teacher education curriculum. We then analyze the discourses embedded in their responses to examine how multicultural education is being understood by teacher candidates. Here we show that their common understandings are often articulated through the paradigm of difference, through which the problems and the solutions are believed to be about the Other. We argue that these understandings promote rather than disrupt practices that sustain white hegemony. The article concludes with a discussion of the practical implications of the research.*

*Cet article porte sur les points de vue de stagiaires canadiennes sur la composante "éducation multiculturelle" de leur formation. Les données que nous analysons ont été recueillies par le biais d'un questionnaire cherchant à connaître dans quelle mesure les stagiaires étaient satisfaits de la formation qu'ils avaient reçue en éducation multiculturelle et leurs avis sur des façons de l'améliorer. La présentation des résultats se fait en deux parties. D'abord, nous nous penchons sur les critiques et les suggestions des stagiaires quant à l'éducation multiculturelle ; celles-ci indiquent que les stagiaires ne se sentaient pas suffisamment bien préparés pour enseigner dans des contextes où les élèves avaient diverses origines ethno-raciales. Les réponses des stagiaires font ressortir des lacunes relatives aux programmes et aux structures portant sur la formation en multiculturalisme au sein des études en pédagogie au Canada. Les stagiaires proposent des façons d'améliorer la composante "éducation multiculturelle" y compris des cours obligatoires, davantage de diversité au sein du personnel enseignant et des stagiaires dans les programmes de pédagogie, et une approche intégrative appliquée aux programmes d'études. Dans un deuxième temps, nous analysons les discours intégrés dans leurs réponses dans le but*

---

Donatille Mujawamariya is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education and a regular researcher with the Centre interuniversitaire sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE). Her teaching and research interests include teacher education, the pedagogy of teaching science, multicultural education, and women in science.

Gada Mahrouse is a doctoral candidate. Her areas of interest include antiracism, racialized subjectivities, social justice pedagogies, and foundations of education.

*d'étudier l'interprétation que font les stagiaires de l'éducation multiculturelle. Nous révélons que leurs connaissances communes s'articulent souvent en relation avec le paradigme de la différence et selon lequel les problèmes et les solutions sont tenus porter sur l'Autre. Nous maintenons que, plutôt que d'aller à l'encontre des pratiques qui soutiennent l'hégémonie des Blancs, ces attitudes la promeuvent. Une discussion des implications pratiques de notre recherche vient conclure l'article.*

### *Introduction and Background*

Over the past two decades teacher education programs have undergone some changes in response to the increasingly diverse ethnoracial backgrounds of students in Canadian schools. Curriculum has been developed and is now being implemented in teacher education programs across the country to ensure that teacher candidates learn approaches to education, often referred to as multicultural, which are designed to give future teachers knowledge of and preparation for responding to the educational needs of the diverse student population. For the purposes of this project, the term *curriculum* encompasses a broad range of structural, programmatic, practical, and attitudinal aspects of the learning process.

This study seeks to encourage critical questioning of curricular and pedagogical practices and approaches that are intended to promote an inclusive and equitable educational system by examining teacher candidates' perspectives on how multicultural education is being implemented in teacher education programs. As we show, teacher candidates perceive the current curricular initiatives developed by Canadian faculties of education to engage and instruct them in equitable and inclusive teaching strategies as lacking, and much ambivalence shapes their understandings of, commitments to, and preparedness for multicultural approaches to education.

The data examined in this report were collected as part of a larger study that described, analyzed, and explained how the multicultural education curriculum in faculties of education in Canadian urban centers prepare teacher candidates to respond to the needs of diverse student populations.<sup>1</sup> The central objective for this article is to consider this curriculum from the points of view of Canadian teacher candidates. As such, this article is not an investigation of the multicultural education curriculum, but rather an inquiry into how teacher candidates perceive it. At a later stage in the research project we examine the formal multicultural education curriculum itself, that is, specific courses, methods, materials, and pedagogical approaches currently being used to prepare future teachers for the diversity of students they will encounter. The specific focus here is on the perspectives and opinions of teacher candidates who were surveyed while enrolled in a one-year teacher education program at the University of Ottawa, which was chosen as a starting point for this study. Although the University of Ottawa is a bilingual institution, and the broader study explores the perspectives of Francophone teacher candidates at this university as well, this report focuses exclusively on data collected from teacher candidates in the Anglophone division.

We begin by examining literature that addresses the distinctions and the overlaps between multiculturalism and antiracism. It is through this review that we develop our conceptual framework and are thus able to explain our use of the term *multicultural* as a strategic one and as one not intended in opposition to antiracism. In presenting the findings, we begin by examining whether

teacher candidates who were enrolled in this program perceived the multicultural education component of their teacher education as important, whether they were satisfied with how it was addressed in the teacher education program, and their comments and suggestions on how it might be improved. We then analyze the discourses embedded in the participants' responses to reveal how multicultural education is being understood by teacher candidates and discuss the effects of such conceptions. Here we argue that how multicultural education is conceptualized by teacher candidates promotes pedagogical practices that sustain white hegemony by reproducing power relations through which the problems and the solutions, often articulated through the paradigm of *difference*, are believed to be about the Other. In the final section we explore some of the implications of these findings both in terms of teacher education program structure and of the challenge to transcend dominant paradigms in education that perpetuate rather than challenge inequity.

To contextualize the findings we present, we first offer some background information on the specific demographics and structure of the teacher education program we examined. Although the Faculty of Education of this university has implemented a preferential admissions policy since 1994 to encourage applicants from underrepresented groups, most students entering this teacher education program still identify as white. Preferential affirmative action programs give priority to members of target groups when candidates are equally qualified. Through this access policy, 14% of places in the teacher education program are reserved for qualified Aboriginal (2%), visible minority (9%), and people with disabilities (3%) (University of Ottawa, 1999). Although student demographics are not collected by the faculty, according to the sample used in this study that reflects the larger student population, 90% identified as white. This is more or less consistent with the ethnoracial demographics of teacher education programs across the country (Finney & Orr, 1995; Hesch, 1999; Schick, 2002; Young & Buchanan, 1996) indicating that teaching continues to be a predominantly white profession, despite the ever-increasing ethnoracial diversity of the student population.

Although no formal model of multicultural education for teachers presently exists in this teacher education program, faculty members must issue the following formal commitments in the documents that describe the mandate and the objectives of the program:

Promotion of the use of diverse knowledge, experiences and understandings of the world that engage student teachers' conventional notions and prepare them for the multiple contexts of teaching, for example, sensitivity to broader cultural, social and organizational contexts.

A setting where student teachers are encouraged and informed in their efforts to successfully teach every learner. Support for the aspirations of under-represented groups with respect to the policy of the university on access and equity. (University of Ottawa 2000, p. 13)

It is also important to note that all courses are compulsory in this program, with the exception of one that teacher candidates select from a number of specialized topics. For this optional course, one can choose between either *Teaching in Roman Catholic Separate Schools* or *Contemporary Issues in Education*, worth three credits each. Those who opt for the *Contemporary Issues* course are

then asked to select two half-courses from special interest courses such as *Antiracism and Multiculturalism*, *Gender Equity in Education*, *English as Second Language*, *Values Education and Popular Culture*, and *Technology in the Classroom*. It is important to recognize that some course instructors do make efforts to address multicultural education in courses that are not directly related to these issues. These initiatives come from the course instructors themselves and not requirements set by the administration.

#### *Multicultural and/or Antiracism Education*

We report here on data that were collected as a pilot study for what became an extensive project that explores areas of the teacher education curriculum commonly referred to as multicultural and/or antiracism.<sup>2</sup> The instrument we used for the pilot study was a questionnaire in which just the term *multicultural education* was used. Recognizing that the idea of multicultural education has been controversial and even contentious in some Canadian academic circles, it is necessary to explain how it was operationalized in this study. Thus we begin by delineating the conceptual and political distinctions theorists have made between these two theoretical approaches and the overlaps between the two, particularly in a Canadian context.

It has been widely argued that one of the problems with the multicultural discourse in Canada is that it downplays inequity and often disguises the fact that racism is currently an everyday reality for many Canadians (Bannerji, 2000; Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 2000; James, 1996; Javed, 1995; Satzewich, 1998). For example, Bannerji has shown that in this discourse there exists a contradictory process of recognition and of denial. Furthermore, she claims that the discourses of multiculturalism evoke only part of the history of racially minoritized groups in Canada. Similarly, in exploring the psychological implications for members of the groups defined as multicultural, Javed argues that the illusion of change the Multiculturalism Act has brought forth makes individuals identified as visible minorities deny their own reality and accept the discourses imposed on them by the dominant group. This false consciousness, he contends, creates a contradiction between lived reality and the images presented by the rhetoric.

These critiques of multiculturalism have entered into the field of education and have provoked academic debates on various approaches to schooling that best meet the needs of the changing student population. Overviews on the history of multicultural education in Canada show that the official acknowledgment of the needs of students from diverse backgrounds can indeed be traced back to the federal policy on multiculturalism, prompting a different-but-equal approach to be adopted in schools (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997; Henry et al., 2000; Kehoe, 1994; Lund, 1998). By the 1980s, leaders of minority communities began to challenge this approach by drawing attention to inequity in educational opportunities for students of ethnoracially diverse backgrounds and calling for more politicized antiracist educational approaches to replace multicultural education (Dei, 1996; Henry et al., 2000; Kehoe, 1994; Lee, 1994).

Although the conceptual division between antiracism and multicultural education persists, some recent educational research shows that the two approaches cannot be thought of separately and that although distinctions be-

tween the two approaches may be made in theory, they are much more blurred in practice (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997; Hesch, 1999). These studies suggest that, depending on the specific context in which it is being considered, there is often conflation and contradiction in the meanings attributed to multicultural and antiracist education and that the two paradigms may now be regarded as largely complementary. As Carrington and Bonnett state, conceptualizing antiracism and multicultural education in terms of a dichotomy is no longer an acceptable position in much educational equity scholarship. "Despite their differing antecedents and ideological concerns," they state, "over the years, antiracists and multiculturalists have come to share a number of areas of common concern and to espouse similar organizational, curricular and pedagogical strategies to counter racism and ethnocentrism" (p. 428). Furthermore, elaborating on this point, they show that these issues resonate differently in various parts of the country. Focusing on British Columbia and Ontario, they claim that at the level of rhetoric the boundary between antiracism and multiculturalism remains much more delineated in Ontario. However, in practice, they argue, the boundary is not as apparent because "you have a lot of people talking about anti-racist education, but in fact doing multicultural education" (p. 428).

Situating our study in this theoretical context, we wish to make clear that underlying our use of the term *multicultural education* was the explicit goal of working toward social justice and equity. Our decision to employ the term *multicultural education* at this stage of the project was informed by Sleeter and McLaren's (1995) recognition that antiracism can be off-putting to many and that the seemingly less politicized use of multicultural education can be a strategically effective way to engage white educators. It is also important to note that during the data analysis stage, we became even more cognizant of the ambiguous and contradictory ways these approaches are commonly understood. Our participants' responses were clear examples of the extent to which the two terms were used interchangeably by some and sharply distinguished by others. (These understandings are discussed below as we present specific findings on how the term was conceptualized by participants.) Because these data were collected as a pilot study, our increased awareness of the slipperiness of the two terms allowed us to adjust our research instrument for subsequent data collection. We later revised the questionnaire and replaced *multicultural education* with *multicultural/antiracism education* to better capture participants' insights into the meanings attributed to these terms. We also added a section encouraging respondents to give us *their* definitions of the terms.

### *Methodology*

A random sampling method was used to collect data from a broad range of teacher candidates enrolled in this one-year teacher education program between 1999 and 2001. Two attempts were made to recruit volunteer participants through announcements in all sections of the mandatory *Schooling in Society* course, first in April 2000 and then in February 2001. A brief announcement explaining the study was given, and the questionnaire was then distributed to the teacher candidates. A consent form was given to all participants that made clear that participation in the study would be kept con-

fidential, was completely unrelated to their course requirements, and participation was entirely voluntary.

The questionnaire had three components: (a) autobiographical data on age, ethnoracial background, sex, and the teacher education division in which they were enrolled; (b) their opinions on multicultural education rated on a Likert scale; and (c) a *suggestions* section consisting of two yes/no questions about the importance and quality of the education they received, followed by a blank space for comments. This report focuses exclusively on the *comments* section. Data analysis centered on commonalities or recurrences of key ideas; salient themes, patterns, and categories were identified and interpreted from the participants' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions.

In the first section of the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate which of the three groups they belonged to: visible minority, white, or Aboriginal.<sup>3</sup> We had some trepidation about asking participants to self-identify their ethnoracial membership through the specific categories we provided. We were concerned that this might inadvertently give the impression that we considered these categories unproblematically or as *fixed*. We recognized, for example, as Synott and Howes (1996) have shown, the flaws in the use of the term *visible minorities* in Canada because it erroneously homogenizes differences in power, status, history, culture, and even visibility. Informed by Hall's (1992) work on identity, we see these categories rather as shifting and contextual. Indeed, these features of identity became evident in our participants' responses. Some chose not to identify in any of the categories we provided whereas others checked off more than one box. This suggested to us, as Yon's (2000) study of the ethnoracial identities of Toronto high school students has shown, that "people know how to work with the representations, both negative and positive, through which they imagine themselves, but they also know how to discard them or to refuse their disciplinary effects" (p. 131).

Why, then, did we use these categories at all? As Yon's work (2000) has shown, when considered in relation to the specific contexts in which they occur there is a relevance to the use of such categories. Furthermore, given our objective of understanding teacher candidates' perspectives, we deemed it necessary to employ these categories on the basis of studies that suggest that teachers' ethnoracial identities can influence their approaches to multicultural education (Carr & Klassen, 1997; McAllister, Irvine, & Jordan, 2000; Sleeter, 1993; Tatum, 2002). Therefore, despite the reductionist risks involved in employing such a framework and the ambiguity of such categories, we determined that considering the teacher candidates' responses alongside their self-defined ethnoracial identities offered potential for a deeper understanding of their conceptions of and commitments to multicultural education.

Most teacher candidates completed and returned the questionnaire. From 260 teacher candidates approached to participate, 216 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a sample of 83.1% of teacher candidates. Proportionate to the enrollment of the student body as a whole, participants mostly comprised white women in their 20s. Ages ranged from 22 to 52, with 69.7% in their 20s, 19.4% in their 30s, and 10.9% in their 40s and 50s. Men represented 29.6% of respondents. Teacher candidates who self-identified as visible minority or Aboriginal completed only 22 of the total 216 questionnaires.<sup>4</sup> To respect con-

fidentiality, direct quotes presented in the findings section are identified by a number assigned to the respondent, followed by the letters W for those who identified as white, VM for visible minorities, and A for Aboriginal. The respondents' sex, age, and the division in which they were enrolled are also noted.<sup>5</sup>

The approach taken in this study is premised on the idea that research always involves acts of human judgment and interpretation and that there is no such thing as neutrality (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus we recognize that our world views, social positionings, and political commitments as researchers influence not only the research topic, but also how the data are interpreted and presented. We have both had direct involvement in various capacities in the teacher education program examined here, and as such wish to make explicit that the motivation for this study stems from our personal and professional knowledge of and experiences in it. On the basis of numerous informal discussions with teacher candidates and our own experiences with this curriculum, we believe that the multicultural education component of this teacher education is generally lacking. We wished to collect empirical data to determine if the overall perspectives of the teacher candidate cohort would match our own. As we show through our presentation of findings in the following section, they did concur on the whole. By exposing the dissatisfaction with the multicultural education curriculum articulated by our respondents as well as some of the problematic underpinnings of their responses, our goal is to contribute understandings on effective curricular and pedagogical approaches that enable equity in education.

#### *Teacher Candidates' Opinions and Perspectives*

The first objective of this study was to explore teacher candidates' perspectives on the education they received in multicultural issues. The section of the questionnaire examined here asked the following two yes/no questions: (a) As a teacher candidate, is education on multicultural issues important? And (b) Am I satisfied with the way multicultural issues were taught to teacher candidates? Although most (96%) of the respondents stated that education on multicultural issues was important, 71% reported that they were not satisfied with how multicultural issues were taught in the program. The predominant criticism related to program structure. Three main criticisms of how multicultural education curriculum was structured into the program were identified and are discussed below.

#### *Optional versus mandatory courses that specifically address multicultural education*

An overarching criticism of how multicultural education was implemented in the program related to how it was structured into the program through courses. As described above, the one mandatory course in the program that explicitly addresses these issues, *School in Society*, was for many their only exposure to these issues. Although their responses did generally indicate that this course enhanced their understanding of multicultural issues, it was perceived as insufficient by many. For the most part the problem was attributed to the limited time spent on multicultural education in this course and/or the superficial ways it was addressed.

The data also reveal that the participants' views of the effectiveness of this course largely depended on the course instructor. This was not surprising in the light of other studies that have shown that course instructors bring their own interpretations of multicultural education to their pedagogies, and individual instructors' understandings of these issues result in radically varying conceptual and practical approaches to the issues (Carr & Klassen, 1997; Mujawamariya, Cuffaro, & Tardif, 2001). For example, as Mujawamariya et al. have shown, some course instructors ascribe an emphasis to similarities that minimize attention to ethnoracial difference, whereas other more critical approaches encourage students to question their privilege and complicity in systems of oppression.

Although other courses that address multicultural education issues were available to teacher candidates as electives, many expressed frustration at having to choose between these and others that they felt were also important such as teaching ESL students, technology in education, and gender equity. Furthermore, nearly half the respondents were primarily critical of the fact that the two available courses that focus exclusively on multicultural issues were optional. Those who elected to take one or both of these expressed a sense of relief that they taken the course or courses. They also expressed a concern that as many as one third of their peers had not been exposed to these issues in any depth.

I was fortunate enough to enroll in the multiculturalism and ESL classes. They were invaluable. Without them I would be ill prepared to enter a classroom. Include them in everyone's teacher curriculum. (66—W f-42 PJ)

I feel that I was fortunate to have attended the antiracism education course. If it wasn't for that course, I would feel completely uneducated in the area of multicultural education. The antiracism course should be mandatory. The other courses did not prepare me for a multicultural classroom. (87—W f-23 PJ)

I took the antiracism "elective" course and am very upset that it wasn't mandatory.... If it is made an elective it is relegated to an inferior status, and is viewed as an "asset" rather than a "requirement." I feel that ALL prospective teachers (including Catholic) should take this course. I also don't feel that our regular courses dealt with it in a meaningful way, and talking with many of my colleagues, I feel they and the education system would benefit from it. (88—W m-29 PJ)

Some respondents expressed concern that they could not take either of these courses because they felt compelled to take other optional courses. Those who opted for the full year *Teaching in a Roman Catholic School* course were particularly concerned because this made it impossible for them to take the *Multicultural Education/Anti-Racism* course or any of the other optional courses:

Due to the fact that I was in the religion course [Teaching in the Catholic Schools] I was not able to take Antiracism—this should be changed so that I can take both courses—I feel as though I have missed out. (92—W f-25 PJ)

I could not take the multiculturalism course because I was in the Catholic studies course. I think this is a big shame because such courses as multiculturalism and gender issues are so crucial for teachers to take. These issues need to be addressed. And we need to be aware of what role this has in our schools/society. (67—VM f-25 PJ)

*Multicultural education was not integrated across the teacher education curriculum*

A second common criticism of the teacher education program was the idea that multicultural issues were often presented as an appendage to the main curriculum. It has been argued widely that simply adding multicultural approaches to the existing structures is ineffective because it further marginalizes issues of equity and therefore does nothing to disrupt the Eurocentric systems of education (Dei, 1996; Lund, 1998; Phillips, 1995). Many of the respondents in our study echoed these concerns. In their views, the multicultural education efforts made in the program were added on, at times awkwardly, rather than integrated throughout.

Schooling in Society and the Antiracism course (which is an elective) are the only courses that gave me any opportunity to explore race, racism, multiculturalism, or ethnicity. This is a major problem with the program. There is not an integrated approach to multiculturalism/anti-racism. They are segregated subjects and not dealt with substantively in any other core course. (113—W f-30 IS)

There should be discussions in every class on the different ways of learning and how it could be adapted to a diverse population.... I think multicultural, gender and racism issues should be stated and discussed in all classes. (39—VM? 26 JI)<sup>7</sup>

We study integration, but multicultural issues are isolated in the program to PED 3102 and a few electives (not even available to Roman Catholic students). There seems to be such an irony to this. (109—W f-25 IS)

According to the teacher candidates we surveyed, a more integrated approach is needed whereby multicultural issues are dealt with comprehensively, not just in one or two courses. As one respondent stated, separating these issues into optional half-credit courses makes them seem like an afterthought. Furthermore, a few observed that their peers who most needed to be exposed to these issues were the least likely to take those optional courses, either because they deemed them unnecessary or because of their resistance to them.

*The faculty and teacher candidates in the program need to better reflect the diversity of the population*

A substantial number of our respondents saw the largely homogeneous faculty and student population as a reason for the limited ways issues of equity were addressed in the program and as evidence of structural barriers that continue to prohibit the entry of minorities into the teaching profession. Their comments indicated a skepticism regarding the faculty's ability to prepare them on multicultural issues when the teacher candidates and the teaching staff in the program were predominantly white.

It's next to impossible to teach it [multicultural issues/anti-racism] in a classroom setting where there is really very little diversity.... I did not take the specific "multicultural" class here, and my practicums were at schools with relatively small minority populations. I effectively learned nothing. Maybe more of an attempt could be made to place us where we will be exposed to diversity. (6—W m-25 IS)

One of the greatest weaknesses of the program is that most B.Ed. students are white middle-class. (116—W f-35 IS)

I think we need a more diverse teaching faculty and student body. Greater effort needs to be made to encourage diversity in both these populations.  
(169-W f-24 IS)

Many of the respondents believe that effective preparation on multicultural issues requires an education environment that is inclusive and representative of the diversity in Canadian society. Their suggestions clearly reveal the assumption that by increasing the numbers of minorities, better multicultural teacher education would ensue. To consider this idea further, we examined some secondary literature on minorities in the teaching profession. Consistent with our respondents' views, many studies we found emphasized the value and benefits of having more minorities in the field. By and large, they claimed a value to diversifying the teacher workforce and suggested that the presence of minority teachers helps improve the educational system (Carr & Klassen, 1996; Cheng & Soudack, 1994; Darder, 1995; Sleeter 1993; Solomon, 1997; Thiesen, Bascia, & Goodson 1996). Underlying these studies was the idea that minority teachers have heightened awareness of and commitment to multicultural education and can therefore help sensitize their white colleagues, thereby enabling them to become better practitioners. Divergent views on this matter, although not as common, have also been written. Monticenos (1995), for example, has argued that assumptions about the benefits of having minority teachers are essentialized and simplistic. In her view, one cannot take for granted that minority teachers will necessarily be more critical or have more developed understandings of multicultural issues.

Interestingly, our own findings alluded to both positions. Although it is not possible to draw conclusions from our limited sample of minority respondents, it is important to note that the overall perspectives of those who identified as visible minority and Aboriginal did not differ significantly from those who identified as white. One notable difference, however, was that although the majority of our sample indicated that they believed multicultural issues were important, not all respondents did. However, without exception, all who identified as a visible minority or Aboriginal stated emphatically that they believed multicultural education to be important. Apart from this discrepancy, no differences were detected in the overall ways members of any of the particular groups conceptualized multicultural education. In fact some of the more critical views came from respondents who identified as white. In speculating as to why this was so, we turned to literature that has explored the assumption that one's own experience of marginalization results in social sensitivity or insight into systems of oppression.

Brush's (2001) work has challenged the taken-for-granted notion that members of minority groups have a heightened political understanding of equity. The development of race consciousness and responses to racism, she claims, depend on available political discourses in individual contexts. According to this argument, if the minority teacher candidates we surveyed are exposed for the most part to dominant paradigms that deny racial injustice, their articulation of these issues will follow suit. hooks (1995) offers a different explanation. By drawing attention to the tensions marginalized people face in challenging racism, she suggests that a delicate negotiation is involved that may hinder the ability to be forthcoming about knowledge and experiences of inequity. In her

words, minorities are "faced with the peculiar dilemma of developing strategies that draw attention to one's plight in a way that will merit regard and consideration without reinscribing a paradigm of victimization" (p. 58).

These theories provide some possible explanations as to why there was no noticeable divergence in the levels of awareness between the groups we surveyed. In response to our respondents' suggestions that increasing the number of minority teachers would help improve the multicultural education curriculum, this suggests that although removing barriers to access does indeed constitute a key step, in isolation it is not necessarily a way of contributing to equity in education. As we show in the following section, much more complex change is needed.

#### *Teacher Candidates' Conceptualizations of Multicultural Education*

The data we collected reveal more than weaknesses in the multicultural education curriculum. They also reveal the respondents' ideas and beliefs about what multicultural education is and what it should be. Examining the paradigms embedded in our respondents' comments reveals that the general conceptualizations of multicultural education held by the current cohort of Canadian teacher candidates is ostensibly void of any awareness of systemic barriers, power, or issues of social justice.

Some of our respondents expressed notions of egalitarianism that are common in dominant liberal ideologies, suggesting that an emphasis on how we are all the same rather than different would be a more effective approach. Others indicated discomfort with multicultural education altogether.

I believe that we should be taught how to see every student as a student and focus on understanding how they learn and develop ways to teach them.... Students in Canadian schools are or will be Canadians. We need to accept all positive attributes that come with them and deal with the negatives (be they fatigue from a poor family environment, negative views towards women, intolerance based on prejudice—be it against someone who looks different, behaves different, learns differently, is less or more athletic). (85—W f-40 PJ)

Let's not make cultural diversity our main concern rather than the similarities between all. There is too much "let's see how we differ and make accommodations." We are all different including white people. I feel the more we point out specific groups under the pretence of, "they are different, let's accept it" the more we draw light to it. Let's not ignore it, rather educate various cultures through studies like the way we study ancient civilizations. We can teach, without making multiculturalism our main focus. (72—Wf-? PJ)

These suggestions to deemphasize difference and focus rather on how we are all the same clearly indicate no awareness of issues of systemic power. As we see the issue, ethnoracial differences are being equated with characteristics and attributes that are as seemingly insignificant to social justice as athletic ability. Other Canadian studies that have explored ideological barriers that prevent white middle-class teachers from "getting it" were helpful in revealing what may be informing such views. Finney and Orr (1995), for example, found that the difficulty for teacher candidates to move beyond idealized and liberal-individualistic perspective of social change lies in a firm belief in meritocracy. Those who adhere to the idea that anyone can succeed regardless of different

ethnoracial backgrounds would understandably be dismissive of a focus on multicultural education.

The comments of some of our respondents, however, seem to hint at more than just dismissiveness. The emotive ways some insist that multicultural education is not only insignificant but also detrimental suggests that they are quite resistant to the idea of it. Although many studies on multicultural education do note the significance of student resistance, few offer explanations as to why this happens. The work of Schick (2002) is one exception. Interviews she conducted with white preservice teachers in Saskatchewan revealed that they perceived the university as a whole, and the teacher education program in particular, as a space where white students belong. Her research shows that multicultural types of initiatives are often perceived as posing some type of threat and appear to be disruptive no matter how carefully worded or ideologically mild the agenda, because they implicitly undermine and endanger claims of white entitlement. It is for these reasons, Schick suggests, that a multicultural education curriculum is often met with resistance. This explanation helps shed light on the resistance we perceived in some of our respondents' comments. A sense of entitlement ran through their comments not only in terms of not questioning their rightful place in the institution, but also in deeming what has curricular value on the basis of their own interests and comfort levels.

Of those respondents who were open to the idea of multicultural education, many were critical of the approaches taken by the instructors. Instruction was perceived to be lacking in specificity and guidance. Many complained about approaches that were based on theory and not on practice. Several individuals noted that they were left to figure out the *how* of multicultural education on their own, indicating that they were not given enough practical information, either knowledge or skills-building, to teach a diverse learning student body effectively. They felt that they should have been given specific pedagogical tools to equip them to respond to the needs of the diversity of students in their classes.

More concrete strategies regarding how to help students feel included and succeed. (27—VM? 28 IS)

Although we learned how to address the issues, we did not learn how to teach to them. (132—W/m-25 IS)

Endless theory is not practical. Simulating everyday situations (the modern classroom would help us to learn how to respond, mediate and generally focus on the issues. We would take note of where we fall short, and help us learn techniques to better work through the issues. (125—W m-51 IS)

The Antiracism and Multiculturalism class does not deal with issues a teacher may face in a classroom. This course has nothing to do with how to teach antiracism and life in a multicultural class. This aspect is not discussed to any great detail in other classes and our practicum is the only opportunity to learn and deal with these issues. (105—Wm-29 PJ)

Researchers who have grappled with addressing these issues with a predominantly white teacher candidate population (Montecinos, 1995; Roman, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) have found that multicultural education cannot be accomplished through practical approaches. For multicul-

tural education to be effective, it has been widely argued, teacher candidates need to be given opportunities for self-reflection to understand their own complicity in the existing structures of education that marginalize members of certain groups. Sleeter (1995), for example, argues that multicultural teaching is not simply a list of teaching strategies. Rather, it is an orientation that requires building dialogue and learning to share decision-making power with marginalized communities. Otherwise, she contends, how multicultural education is conceptualized and practiced simply maintains the status quo.

The problems with the desire for more practical approaches were also evident in the teacher candidates' views on how they should be taught about these issues. Although most respondents did articulate the value of multicultural education, their ideas about what this would entail were often explicitly expressed in terms of learning about the traditions, customs, and characteristics of specific groups. Respondents repeatedly suggested approaches whereby members of marginalized groups act as native informants to educate them on different customs and characteristics.

Guest speakers from various cultures who might [offer] some insight about how other cultures learn. (5—Wf-23 IS)

Provide more information regarding lifestyle, religion, and cultural customs of different cultures. (70—Wf-31 PJ)

To have more guest speakers that teach presently at the high school or primary levels. Maybe also to invite multicultural students so they can explain their views. (9—VM f-32 IS)

More specifics about ethnic groups would be helpful, e.g., their language, religious beliefs, outlook on education, attitude toward gender roles, things (words, actions) that may offend. (10—Wm-23 IS)

Teach about details of others' culture ... holidays, cultural beliefs, practices, in order for preservice teachers to better understand! (93—Wf-29 PJ)

Scholarship on multicultural teacher education has emphasized the need for the complexities and richness of a group's cultural life to be presented rather than an essentialist view of culture where patterned depictions are used (Montecinos, 1995). Despite all that educational research has shown about the problems with teaching about the alleged characteristics of certain groups that dismiss questions of gender, class, sexuality, and other social divisions (Dei & Calliste, 2000), our respondents' understandings of these processes were somewhat simplistic. This led us to theorists who have problematized approaches to multicultural education that do not disrupt the accepted notions of whiteness as neutral and universal (Haymes, 1995). It is this idea of whiteness as integral to understandings of racial inequity that we discuss below.

To practice pedagogies that are liberatory, hooks (Haymes, 1995) argues, "studying the 'other' is not the goal, the goal is learning about some aspect of who you are" (p. 122). Our respondents did not articulate an understanding or a critical questioning of the need to examine their own biases, privileges, or issues of power in any way. Rather, their responses indicated, as Fine (1997) states, that "the gaze of surveillance, whether it may be a gaze of pity, blame, or liberal hope" (p. 64) was always on Other.

By uncovering some of the assumptions that underlie perceptions of initiatives used to engage and instruct equitable and inclusive teaching strategies, we wish to highlight that our respondents' conceptions of multicultural education recreate a situation whereby those from the dominant group consider members of minoritized groups as *objects* of study. Embedded in this perspective is what Smith (1999) refers to as a "positional superiority" (p. 60), that is, the process whereby the dominant group comes to *see*, to *name*, and to *know* the minority. We argue, therefore, that how multicultural education is understood by teacher candidates promotes educational practices that sustain and reproduce inequity. By keeping the focus on the Other, multicultural education effectively becomes antithetical to shifts in power.

The focus of this article thus far is primarily to examine the perspectives and understandings of respondents who articulated both dissatisfaction with the program's multicultural education curriculum and conceptions of it that sustain the systemic barriers that hinder any progress in this area. A small number of respondents, however, were noteworthy exceptions. At the beginning of this article we provide a theoretical framework explaining our usage of the term *multicultural education* as not in opposition to, but as existing and overlapping with critical approaches to equity. In analyzing our data, we found that although most respondents collapsed and conflated the two terms, for a few there were important distinctions between multicultural and antiracism education. This provides further evidence of the ambiguous ways these terms are understood. In these cases, the understandings went beyond the *difference* paradigm, and their responses sought to interrogate simplistic responses to the gaps in multicultural education. Indeed several used the questionnaire itself as an opportunity to challenge the Faculty to be more critical in its approach to teaching multicultural issues.

Multicultural education is a term that is far from the reality and diversity that exists within a classroom. Educators must be taught how to move beyond multicultural education and begin to explore the meaning of antiracist education. (87-W f-23 PJ)

"Multiculturalism" as conceptualized in this program, is presented, in my opinion, as a "token minority" system. We fail to address the underlying issues of acceptance, celebration of perspectives, variety of ideals, and focus, instead, on shifting subcultural paradigms and over-generalized details. (157—W m-26 IS)

I am answering this question based on my belief that antiracist education is better than multiculturalism.... Multicultural education will not meet the needs of student teachers in Ontario Schools. Antiracist education is a more appropriate approach. (123—W f-28 IS)

As the above quotes indicate, some of the respondents had clear and determined views about the limitations of multicultural approaches. We were encouraged by these responses that indicated awareness of the need to go beyond the rhetoric of difference and plurality. That these critiques were so exceptional has led us to question whether these teacher candidates developed this awareness in the program, or if they had learned about these issues before entering teacher education. It seems to us that if awareness of such issues were being effectively taught in the program, more classmates might have shared such

By uncovering some of the assumptions that underlie perceptions of initiatives used to engage and instruct equitable and inclusive teaching strategies, we wish to highlight that our respondents' conceptions of multicultural education recreate a situation whereby those from the dominant group consider members of minoritized groups as *objects* of study. Embedded in this perspective is what Smith (1999) refers to as a "positional superiority" (p. 60), that is, the process whereby the dominant group comes to *see*, to *name*, and to *know* the minority. We argue, therefore, that how multicultural education is understood by teacher candidates promotes educational practices that sustain and reproduce inequity. By keeping the focus on the Other, multicultural education effectively becomes antithetical to shifts in power.

The focus of this article thus far is primarily to examine the perspectives and understandings of respondents who articulated both dissatisfaction with the program's multicultural education curriculum and conceptions of it that sustain the systemic barriers that hinder any progress in this area. A small number of respondents, however, were noteworthy exceptions. At the beginning of this article we provide a theoretical framework explaining our usage of the term *multicultural education* as not in opposition to, but as existing and overlapping with critical approaches to equity. In analyzing our data, we found that although most respondents collapsed and conflated the two terms, for a few there were important distinctions between multicultural and antiracism education. This provides further evidence of the ambiguous ways these terms are understood. In these cases, the understandings went beyond the *difference* paradigm, and their responses sought to interrogate simplistic responses to the gaps in multicultural education. Indeed several used the questionnaire itself as an opportunity to challenge the Faculty to be more critical in its approach to teaching multicultural issues.

Multicultural education is a term that is far from the reality and diversity that exists within a classroom. Educators must be taught how to move beyond multicultural education and begin to explore the meaning of antiracist education. (87-W f-23 PJ)

"Multiculturalism" as conceptualized in this program, is presented, in my opinion, as a "token minority" system. We fail to address the underlying issues of acceptance, celebration of perspectives, variety of ideals, and focus, instead, on shifting subcultural paradigms and over-generalized details. (157—W m-26 IS)

I am answering this question based on my belief that antiracist education is better than multiculturalism.... Multicultural education will not meet the needs of student teachers in Ontario Schools. Antiracist education is a more appropriate approach. (123—W f-28 IS)

As the above quotes indicate, some of the respondents had clear and determined views about the limitations of multicultural approaches. We were encouraged by these responses that indicated awareness of the need to go beyond the rhetoric of difference and plurality. That these critiques were so exceptional has led us to question whether these teacher candidates developed this awareness in the program, or if they had learned about these issues before entering teacher education. It seems to us that if awareness of such issues were being effectively taught in the program, more classmates might have shared such

curriculum. Lund (1998), for example, recommends a more broadly integrated model of reform for substantive changes in the outcomes for teacher candidates. He argues that to go beyond the typical add-on approaches, significant structural change is needed. He suggests that this can be accomplished in part through hiring or admissions practices and incorporation of social justice issues into the entire program, not just specialized courses on the periphery.

As our findings clearly demonstrate, these structural and programmatic limitations constitute only part of the problem. Our study also offers insights into the conceptual underpinnings on understandings of multicultural education, showing how efforts to prepare teachers to be equitable practitioners often fail because in existing structures, dominant discourses are transmitted and reproduced *through* notions of multicultural education. The challenge, therefore, is to consider how multicultural education might be reconfigured not only at a structural level, but also at a conceptual level. In response to the conceptual barriers, we believe that Canadian teacher candidates need to be provided with theoretical tools and that will enable them to transcend the common predisposition of essentializing notions of difference, positing the Other as object of study and dehistoricizing racial inequities.

How can such change be accomplished? To shift ways of thinking and to enable a new paradigm, many suggest providing teacher candidates opportunities to think critically about *whiteness* as a racialized subjectivity and challenging them to consider the historical consequences of racism (Dei, 1996; Montecinos, 1995; Roman, 1997). Furthermore, as some anticolonial scholars have argued (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2000; Smith, 1999), if we are to keep teaching about the Other, it needs to be done through studies of agency and resistance of minoritized groups. Finally, rather than offering them information about the alleged characteristics of different groups that perpetuate stereotypes, a more useful approach would enable them to think critically about how categories of difference are created in the first place.

It is through such approaches that teacher candidates can then begin to explore the processes of knowledge production that sustain the power of certain groups over others. To be effective, therefore, instruction in multicultural education must not only be increased and integrated throughout the entire program, but must rise to the more difficult challenge of disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions about what multicultural education is, what it is for, and how it is practiced. It is only when teacher candidates become aware of such issues of power that we can expect our education system to become equitable.

#### Notes

1. This study then extended to teacher education programs in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. These cities were chosen because they have the largest populations of students from diverse backgrounds. Further along in this project, policies, programs, as well as strategies, pedagogical practices, and perceptions of teacher educators in relation to multicultural education were also examined to show how multicultural education programs are structured and implemented in the various teacher education programs.
2. In other parts of the world these terms are understood differently. In the United States, for example, *multiculturalism* or *critical multiculturalism* is often used to refer to what is considered *antiracism* in a Canadian context.

3. The terms *Caucasian* and *Native Indian* were originally used in the questionnaire, but have since been changed to *White* and *Aboriginal* to correspond better with the language currently used by the Canadian government for demographic purposes.
4. As indicated by the respondents' demographic information, the racial groups represented in this study include Chinese, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Korean, Latin American, West African, Caribbean, and Afro-Canadian. Furthermore, two people indicated that they were both White and Aboriginal, and one person identified as half Japanese.
5. Of the 216 respondents, 98 belong to the Primary/Junior division (PJ), 16 to the Junior/Intermediate (JI) division, and 101 to the Intermediate/Senior (IS) division.
6. This participant checked off both the white and the visible minority categories.
7. The question mark is used in cases where respondents chose not to answer a personal question on the questionnaire.

#### Acknowledgments

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Education, the University of Ottawa, Canadian Heritage, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for their financial support and thank the teacher candidates who participated in the study.

#### References

- Bannerji, H. (2000). *The dark side of the nation: Essays on multiculturalism, nationalism and gender*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Brush, P. (2001). Problematizing the race consciousness of women of colour. *Signs*, 27(1), 171-198.
- Carr, P.R., & Klassen, T.R. (1997). Different perceptions of race in education: Racial minority and white teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22(1), 67-81.
- Carrington, B., & Bonnett, (1997). A. The other Canadian "mosaic": "Race" equity education in Ontario and British Columbia. *Comparative Education*, 33(3), 411-431.
- Cheng, M., & Soudack. (1994). *Anti-racist education: A literature review*. Report No. 206. Toronto, ON: Board of Education, Research Services.
- Darder, A. (1995). Buscando America: The contribution of critical Latino educators to the academic development and empowerment of Latino students in the U.S. In C. Sleeter & L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 319-347). New York: SUNY Press.
- Dei, G.S. (1996). *Anti-racism education theory and practice*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Dei, G.J.S., & Asgharzadeh, A. (2000). The power of social theory: Towards an anti-colonial discursive framework. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 35(3), 297-323.
- Dei, G.S., & Calliste, A. (2000). Mapping the terrain. In G. S. Dei & A. Calliste (Eds.), *Power, knowledge and anti-racism education: A critical reader* (pp. 11-22). Halifax, NS: Fernwood.
- Fine, M. (1997). Witnessing whiteness. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell, & L.M. Wong (Eds.), *Off white: Readings on race, power, and society* (pp. 158-166). New York & London: Routledge.
- Finney, S., & Orr, J. (1995). "I've learned a lot, but ...": Cross-cultural understanding and teacher education in a racist society. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 46(5), 327-258.
- Hall, S. (1992). New ethnicities. In J. Donald & A. Rattansi (Eds.), *"Race," culture and difference* (pp. 252-259). London: Sage Publications in association with the Open University.
- Haymes, S. (1995). White culture and the politics of racial difference: Implications for multiculturalism. In C.E. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 105-128). New York: SUNY Press.
- Henry, F., Tator, C., Mattis, W., & Rees, T. (2000). *The colour of democracy and racism in Canadian society* (2nd ed.) Toronto, ON: Harcourt Brace.
- Hesch, R (1999). Culturally relevant teacher education: A Canadian inner-city case. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(4), 369-382.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage, ending racism*. New York: Henry Holt.
- James, C.E. (1996). Race, culture, and identity. In C.E. James (Ed.), *Perspectives on racism and the human services sector—A case for change* (pp. 15-35). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Javed, N.S. (1995). State-imposed multiculturalism: Social change or illusion? In J.A. Pizanas & J.S. Frideres (Eds.), *Freedom within the margins—The politics of exclusion* (pp. 233-241). Calgary, AB: Detselig.
- Kehoe, J. (1994). Multicultural education versus anti-racist education: The debate and the research in Canada. *Social Education*, 58, 354-358.

- Kincheloe, J., & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In Y. Lincoln & N. Denzin (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 138-157). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kirby, S., & McKenna, K. (1989). *Experience, research, social change: Methods from the margins*. Toronto, ON: Garamond Press.
- Lee, E. (1994). Taking multicultural, anti-racist education seriously: An interview with Enid Lee. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner, & B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and justice* (pp. 19-23). Milwaukee, WI: Rethinking Schools.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lund, D. (1998). Seeking ethnocultural equity through teacher education: Reforming university preservice programs. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 44, 268-283.
- McAllister, G., & Irvine, J., & Jordan. (2000). Cross cultural competency and multicultural teacher education. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 3-24.
- Montecinos, C. (1995). Culture as ongoing dialogue: Implications for multicultural teacher education. In C.E. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 291-308). New York: SUNY Press.
- Mujawamariya, D., Cuffaro, M., & Tardif, M. (2001). Where do we stand on multicultural education and how are we committed to it: Faculty members respond. In M. Pagé, F. Ouellet, & L. Cortesao (Eds.), *Éducation ... la citoyenneté, Actes de l'Association Mondiale des Sciences de l'Éducation* (pp. 289-304).
- Phillips, E.N. (1995). Multicultural education beyond the classroom. In C.E. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 105-128). New York: SUNY Press.
- Rattansi, A. (1992). Changing the subject? Racism, culture and education. In A. Rattansi & J. Donald (Eds.), *"Race," culture and difference* (pp. 11-48). London: Sage in association with the Open University.
- Roman, L. (1997). Denying (white) privilege: Redemption discourses and the uses of fantasy. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell, & L.M. Wong (Eds.), *Off white: Readings on race, power, and society* (pp. 270-282). New York & London: Routledge.
- Satzewich, V. (1998). Race, racism and racialization: Contested concepts. In V. Satzewich (Ed.), *Racism and social inequality in Canada—Concepts, controversies and strategies of resistance* (pp. 25-45). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational.
- Schick, C. (2002). Keeping the ivory tower white: Discourses of racial domination. In S. Razack (Ed.), *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a white settler society* (pp. 99-119). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.
- Sleeter, C.E. (1993). How white teachers construct race. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 157-171). New York & London: Routledge.
- Sleeter, C.E. (1995). Reflections on my use of multicultural and critical pedagogy when students are white. In C.E. Sleeter & P.L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 415-437). New York: SUNY Press.
- Sleeter, C.E., & McLaren, P.L. (1995). Introduction: Exploring connections to build a critical multiculturalism. In C.E. Sleeter & P.L. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and the politics of difference* (pp. 5-33). New York: SUNY Press.
- Smith, T.L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London: Zed Books.
- Solomon, R.P. (1997). Race, role modelling, and representation in teacher education and teaching. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 22, 395-410.
- Synott, A., & Howes, D. (1996). Canada's visible minorities: Identity and representation. In V. Amit-Talai & C. Knowles (Eds.), *Re-situating identities—The politics of race, ethnicity, and culture* (pp. 137-160). Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press.
- Tatum, B.D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism: An application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 1-24.
- Thiessen, D., Bascia, N., & Goodson, I. (Eds.). (1996). *Making a difference about difference: The lives and careers of racial minority immigrant teachers*. Toronto, ON; Garamond Press.
- University of Ottawa. (1999). *Teacher education program (Anglophone sector) Notes to applicants*. Ottawa: Author.
- University of Ottawa. (2000). *Faculty of Education, Teacher education calendar*. Ottawa: Author.
- Yon, D. (2000). *Elusive culture: Schooling, race, and identity in global times*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Young, J., & Buchanan, N. (1996). Antiracist/multicultural teacher education: A focus on student teachers. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 42, 60-64.