Meanings of Culture in Multicultural Education: A Response to Anthropological Critiques

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This paper explores the meanings of culture in multicultural education, as used within discourse in the United States. The paper examines anthropological criticism of cultural usage in multicultural education, responds based on multicultural education literature, and considers implications of this exchange for multicultural education.

Anthropological literature related to multicultural education over the last 20 years, is reviewed. Multicultural education literature for the same time frame is considered.

Several questions, raised within anthropological literature, frame the analysis and the response. Is culture treated simplistically within multicultural education discourse? Is multiculturalism the normal human experience? Is culture ultimately located in the individual? Is support for cultural pluralism antithetical to multiculturalism? Is culture a response to social, political, and material conditions?

Implications for multicultural education focus on ways anthropologists and multicultural educators can join forces to explore these questions in ways pertinent to them both.

Cet article explore les sens attribués à la culture en éducation multiculturelle, tels qu'utilisés au sein des discours aux Etats-Unis. L'article examine la critique anthropologique de l'usage culturel en éducation multiculturelle, les réponses basées sur la littérature dans le champ de l'éducation multiculturelle et considère les implications de cet échange pour l'éducation multiculturelle.

La littérature anthropologique dans le champ de l'éducation multiculturelle des vingt dernières années est passée en revue. La littérature relative à l'éducation multiculturelle est abordée.

De nombreuses questions issues de la littérature anthropologique, constituent le cadre de l'analyse et des résultats. La culture est-elle abordée de manière simpliste dans le discours de l'éducation multiculturelle? Le multiculturalisme constitue t-il une expérience humaine normale? La culture est-elle ultimement située dans l'individu? Le soutien pour un pluralisme culturel et le

multiculturalisme sont-ils antinomiques? La culture est-elle le résultat des conditions sociales, politiques et matérielles?

Les implications pour l'éducation multiculturelle se focalisent sur les possibilités pour les anthropologues et les éducateurs multiculturels de joindre leurs forces pour explorer ces questions d'une manière pertinente pour chacun d'eux.

As a scholar in the field of multicultural education, I often find myself intellectually bristling at anthropological critiques of the field. Anthropologists tend to look askance at multicultural education; they wonder what qualifies educators to pursue cultural studies (Turner, 1993). A common critique is that multicultural educators' perspectives on culture are uninformed, misdirected, naive, simplistic, and downright wrong (e.g., Hoffman, 1996; Perry, 1992; Wax, 1993; Wolcott, 1981). These criticisms frustrate me for several reasons. Critics often denigrate multicultural education as theory based on analysis of multicultural education as school practice. Additionally, critics generally misunderstand multicultural education as a movement for educational equality, and they gloss over complexities within the field.

Regardless of these concerns, anthropological critiques raise compelling questions that are pertinent to multicultural education. They include the following: Is multiculturalism the normal human experience (Bateson,1994; Gibson, 1984; Goodenough, 1976; Wolcott, 1981)? Is culture ultimately located in the individual (e.g., Hourihan & Chapin, 1976; Lawrence & Singleton, 1976)? Is support for cultural pluralism antithetical to multiculturalism (e.g., Carlson, 1976; Gibson, 1984; Turner, 1993)? Is culture a response to social, political, and material conditions (e.g., Erickson, 1990; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Turner, 1993)? These questions beg response from scholars within the field of multicultural education.

The purpose of this paper is to explore meanings of culture within multicultural education. This exploration is oriented to discourse within the United States. In the paper, I tackle three tasks: a) examine anthropological criticisms about cultural connotations in multicultural education, b) suggest responses to critiques based on scholarship within multicultural education, and c) consider implications for multicultural education.

Research Methods

To elicit anthropological criticisms about cultural meanings within multicultural education, I read 20 articles or books written over approximately the last 20 years (i.e., 1976-1997). This corresponded, at least roughly, to the development of multicultural education and allowed me to see changes in critiques over time. I searched anthropological literature for sources that specifically attended to multicultural education. As one aspect of this search, I read abstracts for articles within *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* and *Cultural Anthropology* from 1976-1997. As another part of the search, I examined articles catalogued in ERIC under varied descriptors including: culture and anthropology and multicultural education. Also, I used the traditional means of following citations within articles. It is likely that this method overlooked some literature correlating anthropological and multicultural concerns. For this reason, this exploration is representative rather than exhaustive.

To suggest responses of multicultural educators to critiques, I referenced a large body of theoretical literature in multicultural education. I examined scholarship from 1973 to1998 that focused on the nature of multicultural education. I paid careful attention to complexity within the field in order to capture myriad understandings of culture. To this end, I utilized topologies developed by Sleeter and Grant (1994) and Nieto (1996) to delineate five distinctive approaches to multicultural education and to examine meanings of culture particular to each.

Anthropological Critiques

Many critics lump multicultural education discourse together and despair of the simplistic, essentialistic, reified perspectives of culture disseminated by multicultural educators (e.g., Hoffman, 1996; Perry, 1992; Wolcott, 1981). For these critics, culture is viewed erroneously as general categories of life ways, shared recipes for behavior, and singular perceptions of group-based identity. Arguably, the depiction of culture as categories of life ways (e.g., food, language, clothing) prompts fragmented perceptions of culture and utilizes Western frameworks to articulate culture. The perception of culture as recipes for behavior stereotypes group conduct and assumes group cohesion. The definition of identity as attuned to a particular group overlooks cultural complexity, and the view of identity as self-centered relies on Western standards.

Critics also question expectations that cultural competence can be gained through brief (often vicarious) encounters with "others" (Perry, 1992).

Some critics (e.g., Erickson, 1990; Resaldo, 1989; Turner, 1993; Wax, 1993) blame static, singular perceptions of culture on traditional anthropological views. Traditionally, culture was defined as an organic system of ideas and standards, handed-down through child-rearing, within natural collectives (primarily ethnic). Cultural systems were perceived as human constructions – intricate, unique, and innately worthy. These systems were honored as artifacts, rather than examined as particular responses to human conditions.

Some critics acknowledge that culture is approached differently within varied forms of multicultural education. In an article first written in 1976 and reissued in 1984, Gibson delineates five approaches to multicultural education. The first four are programmatic efforts that use cultural concepts to justify school reform. The fifth approach is anthropological and considers cultural education as a life-long learning process, not limited to schools.

According to Gibson, the first approach, education of the culturally different, seeks to equalize school opportunities for ethnic minorities by reducing conflicts between mainstream and minority values, customs, and languages. The second approach, education about cultural differences, intends to assist all children in learning about cultural diversity. The third approach, education for cultural pluralism, aims to preserve cultural pluralism within the United States. The fourth approach, bicultural education, seeks to enable learners to function well in two cultures. Gibson questions the underlying assumptions for these stances. She wonders if cultural differences explain differential school success, if increased understanding reduces racism, if pluralism is antithetical to multiculturalism, and if biculturalism overemphasizes ethnicity.

Gibson proposes a fifth approach, multicultural education as normal human experience, whereby a person develops competencies in multiple systems of belief, perceptions, and actions. For Gibson, through daily interactions, schools transmit culture and can support the development of multiple, cultural competencies. Arguably, this approach overcomes weaknesses of the others: education is not restricted to schooling, culture is not reduced to ethnicity, and separatism is not fostered.

Anthropological critics tend to agree with Gibson's fifth approach (Bateson, 1994; Goodenough, 1976; Lawrence & Singleton, 1976; Wolcott, 1981). Supposedly, culture is learned by individuals, through

close encounters with social sets. Culture becomes the understandings shared, at least to some extent, by a group of people. Shared norms are interpreted idiosyncratically; ultimately, culture is located in the individual. Yet, individual views are mediated by standards of one's immediate social groups (Lawrence & Singleton, 1976). As part of normal human experience, individuals deal with different social sets. To the extent that they master beliefs and expectations for diverse social groups, or micro-cultures, they gain cross-cultural competence, and become multicultural (Bateson, 1994; Goodenough, 1976). Schools effect this learning process, however, most cultural education occurs outside schools, often through family socialization. Recognition that dominant groups control access to knowledge and inhibit free exchange of ideas and skills is limited (e.g., Goodenough, 1976; Lewis, 1976).

Some critics take a more socially-situated, critical position (e.g., Erickson, 1990; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992; McDermott & Varenne, 1995; Resaldo, 1989; Turner, 1993). These critics argue that: meaning-making is mitigated by power relations, identities are complicated by indefinite boundaries among groups, and traditions of dominant groups are challenged from all sides. Culture is a contested, noisy process of negotiation among multiple voices. To the extent that multicultural education repudiates the singularity of truth, affirms cultural diversity, and confronts issues of marginalization, it corresponds to this perspective. For these critics, such multiculturalism is critical multiculturalism, and it is a form of multicultural education that warrants more anthropological attention (Turner, 1993).

Additionally, some critics find multicultural educators terminologically confused (Wolcott, 1981; Wax, 1993). These critics hold that multicultural educators use cultural diversity and cultural pluralism interchangeably. From an anthropological perspective, cultural pluralism denotes structural arrangements in which groups maintain separate, but equal, parallel institutions (Gibson, 1984). Gibson suggests that, to multicultural educators, cultural pluralism is more likely a synonym for cultural diversity than a notion of structural parity. Additionally, critics question connections between cultural assimilation and upward mobility in multicultural education discourse (Lawrence & Singleton, 1976). Individuals can assimilate, yet be denied mobility due to racism, sexism, and so on. In addition, critics propose that multicultural educators approach assimilation too linearly – one assimilates or is marginalized.

They argue this overlooks the give-and-take process of acculturation (Gibson, 1984).

Some anthropologists dismiss multicultural education as conceptually naive and anthropologically uninformed – in my family's terms this is a "don't bother." Others seek to understand the complexity of multicultural education, support some approaches, and oppose others. This scholarship presents several issues for multicultural educators to consider. To what extent is culture viewed as static or ethnically bound? Are there differences between cultural diversity and cultural pluralism? Are the goals of multicultural education to impart cultural knowledge, support upward mobility, or seek social justice?

The Complexity of Multicultural Education

Anthropological critiques have merit, especially when multicultural education is viewed monolithically. However, multicultural education, like anthropology, is a complex, multi-faceted field. Within it, there are diverse views about the nature and aims of multicultural education. Orientations range from less to more critical of the status quo. Commonly, there is a divide between theorists, who tend toward critical, complex views of cultural diversity, and school practitioners, who tend toward artifactual, celebratory views (Gay, 1992). However, this divide is not neat. Teacher educators may promote what Hoffman (1996) calls "hallway multiculturalism;" codified "poster-ready" understandings of diversity and pluralism (e.g., "all cultures are one," or "diversity for unity"). If anthropological critics overlook the latitude within multicultural education discourse, then their criticisms are crippled. This ideological variety is sketched below and referenced in response to anthropological critiques. Topologies (Nieto, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1994) which delineate various approaches to multicultural education are utilized for this purpose.

For some educators, multicultural education is primarily compensatory. From this standpoint, educational efforts should assist ethnic minority, linguistically different, and mildly disabled students to "catch up" to the mainstream. Some adherents of this view, often termed *teaching the exceptional and culturally different* (Sleeter & Grant, 1994) or *acceptance* level multiculturalism (Nieto, 1996), perceive the locus of school problems to be student's cultural deficiencies, others see problems as rooted in cultural differences. Regardless, eventual assimilation to mainstream, majority norms is expected.

A stance which predominates in schools, *tolerance* (Nieto, 1996) or *human relations* (Sleeter & Grant, 1994), focuses on cross-cultural acceptance. Universal human dignity is stressed. Cultural difference is accepted as inevitable in a pluralistic society. Minimal celebration of cultural heritage is promoted, as in cursory attention to Black History Month. The terms cultural diversity and cultural pluralism may be used interchangeably by adherents. Usually, both terms refer to cultural difference and have little to do with issues of power. Racism is something that will diminish if youth just "stop the hate."

Single group studies (Sleeter & Grant, 1994) usually stem from (and represent) social/political resistance to cultural domination. These studies focus on women, ethnic minority groups, disability groups, or gays and lesbians. They aim to legitimate and promote equality for the group studied. Cultural heritage and identity are primary emphases, as are processes of empowerment, social critique, and social action. As part of multicultural education, these foci are attuned to educational equality, equity, and excellence. Although embraced as particularized struggles within multicultural education, single group studies can have a separatist flavor.

The terms *multicultural education* (Sleeter & Grant, 1994) or *additive multiculturalism* (Nieto, 1996) refer to efforts to transform schooling to benefit all students, especially ethnic minorities, girls, youth with disabilities, and gays and lesbians who, often, are marginalized in schools. Multicultural education includes modifications in curriculum, teaching, and staffing to affirm cultural diversity and combat prejudice and discrimination. Cultural diversity is perceived as complex inter-group intermingling. One's diversity is positioned; impacted and compounded by social class and by status of one's ascribed groups. However, the emphasis that multicultural educators give to different cultural and social dimensions, such as ethnicity, social class, or gender (or their interaction) varies considerably (Banks, 1995).

Education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist (Sleeter & Grant, 1994) or *affirmative multiculturalism* (Nieto, 1996) adds a critical, activist emphasis to the previous perspective. A goal is to challenge injustice through collective, social action. Curriculum centers around social issues which involve discrimination and oppression. Pedagogy centers around democratic decision-making, social critique, and social action skills. Significantly, some multicultural educators see the difference between the last two stances as one of emphasis only (Boyle-

Baise, 1999). Arguably, multicultural education is critical by nature; it demands school reform and meliorates educational injustice.

Response to Anthropological Critiques

Hoffman (1996) calls upon multicultural educators to become more critically self-aware of assumptions underlying concepts, such as culture, identity, and difference, fundamental to our discourse. In this section, I reflect upon the points raised within anthropological critiques and consider them from the various stances "inside" multicultural education.

Culture as Recipe

Multicultural educators are criticized for perceiving culture as a recipe for behavior (e.g., Hoffman, 1996), however, this metaphor was borrowed from anthropologists (Spradley & McCurdy, 1975). According to Spradley and McCurdy, cultural knowledge is "like a recipe for producing behavior and artifacts" (p. 5). The "recipe" is what people know and believe that guides their behavior in ways acceptable to particular groups. This definition shifts cultural interpretations from observed behavior and material artifacts to cognitive perceptions, meanings, and understandings. Arguably, culture is not static, rather cognitive understandings alter to fit changing social situations.

As a recipe for behavior, culture is a "thing of the mind." One's ideas, beliefs, and views can be approached as phenomenon or process, the former seems more inert and complete than the latter. Multicultural educators may grasp the "recipe"as more static and phenomenological, than its process-oriented, anthropological intent. Additionally, the delicacy with which anthropologists approach the "shared-ness" of recipes may be missed by multicultural educators. What was intended to mean idiosyncratic perceptions of collected understandings may be interpreted as unquestionably shared.

Within multicultural education, recipes usually refer to dispositions of ethnic minority groups (e.g., Hilliard, 1992). Originally, multicultural education developed as assistance for ethnic minority groups, who, disproportionately, experienced school failure. Cultural recipes, as indicators of ethnic group norms for behavior and learning, were considered significant to school success. To this end, outlines of ethnic inclinations, fairly distinguishable across groups, were helpful.

Anthropological criticism of overly bounded views of ethnicity within multicultural education (e.g., Hoffman, 1996) pertain to, and may be apt for, lists of ethnic dispositions. Yet, this objection misses the overall aim of such lists; they are meant to initiate and undergird pedagogical assistance (e.g., Bennett, 1979; Gay, 1997). Additionally, caveats to overly general views of ethnic attributes are not foreign to multicultural education (e.g., Bennett, 1995). Precariously stereotypic approaches to recipes as common standards characterize weak multicultural education or perhaps human relations. The intention of these efforts is to recognize and "celebrate" cultural diversity, rather than to grasp complex cultural influences on self perception and learning.

Cultural Diversity or Cultural Pluralism

Multicultural education champions respect, dignity, humaneness, and freedom within education. Race and ethnicity, as cultural markers for discrimination and marginalization, are central to multicultural education (e.g., Banks, 1973; Dickeman, 1973; Gay, 1983; Suzuki, 1977; 1979). Additionally, gender, disability, and sexuality often compound marginalization. These latter factors are significant for, but not predominant in, multicultural education discourse (Banks, 1995).

The treatment of multiple forms of difference causes internal debate within the field (e.g., Banks, 1995; Gay, 1983; Gollnick & Chinn, 1994). Arguably, important distinctions between race, ethnicity, and gender can be lost in inclusive views of multicultural education (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1996). Links between disability and diversity can foster a deficit orientation to diversity (Pugach & Seidl, 1996). Additionally, an inclusive stance can embrace groups with disparate agendas.

Actually, the affirmation of cultural diversity opens wide the doors of multicultural education. The inclusion of a broad array of diversities under the multicultural umbrella is becoming common (e.g., Huber, Kline, Bakken & Clark, 1997; Sears, 1995; Utley, 1995). Presently, multicultural educators grapple with ways to embrace cultural multiplicity. Anthropological criticism of the field as culturally reductionist or simplistic misses this struggle. Some scholars prefer to set parameters for the field around the study of culture, race, ethnicity, and education (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Gay, 1983), but movement is not in this direction (Gay et al., 1998).

Commonly, cultural diversity and cultural pluralism are intertwined in multicultural education discourse. In a project of recognition and

redress, the affirmation of cultural diversity and promotion of cultural pluralism are twin aspects of empowerment. Anthropologist's concern that cultural pluralism fosters parallelism is appropriate, yet multicultural educators, especially of more critical persuasions, desire a leveling of power across groups (Banks, 1988). Rather than divisive, cultural pluralism is perceived as hopefully democratic. It is intended that multiple, powerful groups will approach democracy in ways truly of, by, and for all people (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Additionally, a modified view of pluralism is common to multicultural discourse. According to Newman (cited in Sleeter & Grant, 1994), modified pluralism requires social assimilation, but allows retention of unique cultural expressions. For multicultural educators, this means allegiance to democratic values, amid appreciation for diverse life ways (Bennett, 1995; Gay, 1988). Cultural pluralism, thus, has both structural and cultural connotations. Some anthropological critics (e.g., Lawrence & Singleton, 1976; Gibson, 1984; Wax, 1993) propose that multicultural education dresses structural issues in cultural clothing. For many multiculturalists, cultural and structural concerns are cut from the same cloth.

Culture as Ethnicity

Within multicultural education discourse, there are at least three orientations to race and ethnicity and to their impact on identity and opportunity. In the first view, ethnicity is one of several micro-cultural groupings that compete for claims on individual identity (e.g., Banks, 1997; Gollnick & Chinn, 1994). Individuals are members of multiple micro-cultural groups (i.e., ethnicity, religion, language, age, or social class), and they have some control over the strength of their identification with varied sets. Membership in oppressed micro-cultural groups affects social opportunities and impacts identity. This perspective is sometimes criticized, within the field, for the depiction of gender and language as separate from ethnicity and for the description of age, ability, and social class groupings as cultural collectives (Boyle-Baise, 1999).

From a second perspective, ethnicity is perceived as a pivotal determinant of life views (e.g., Longstreet, 1978; Bennett, 1979; 1995). Ethnicity, learned when young from trusted family and friends, teaches an individual the essence of what it means to be a person. It is learning to be a girl, daughter, friend, communicator, and spiritual being. Ethnic knowledge differs in expanse, youth may have available to them

ethnocentric or multicultural experiences. Early ethnic learning makes a strong impression, it is ingrained as a fundamental aspect of one's worldview.

From this point of view, to the extent that children learn to comprehend gender, disability, or sexuality from family and close friends, understandings are highly ethnic. As a result, perspectives related to gender, for example, vary by ethnic group. Understandings of gender or disability might be similar across ethnic groups in cases where children are segregated together, like in a youth home, and taught the same dispositions when young. However, for the most part, one's views on gender, race, religion, language, and disability are ethnically influenced.

A third perspective looks at ethnicity critically, as part of a negotiated cultural process (e.g., Montecinos, 1995; Trueba et al., 1997). Ethnicity is contextualized, politicized, and problematized. According to this view, the demise of laws against interracial marriage, and the resultant increase in biracial marriage, diminished boundaries of color. Ethnic understandings are fragmented. Presently, meaning is self-constructed and transient, dependent upon personal circumstances and political needs. Youth cast aside old definitions of ethnicity and declare themselves multi-mixes. Adults reach across ethnic groups to form politically powerful coalitions (McLeod, 1995). The ways in which race, racism, and ethnicity interpenetrate and reinforce one another are considered chief sources of social understanding (e.g., Bartolome & Macedo, 1997; Sleeter, 1996). Relations between culture and power are underscored in this view.

Although ethnicity is considered a powerful cultural determinant, especially in the second view, there seems little intent to reduce culture to ethnicity, as feared by anthropologists. Actually, such a result is an object of concern. Over a decade ago, Suzuki (1984) warned that emphasis on ethnicity, for its own sake, deflects attention from the social situatedness of ethnic histories, perspectives, and conditions and mitigates the equity-oriented aims of the field.

Unfortunately, reductionist and decontextualized views of ethnicity are common to compensatory and human relations approaches and may be part of weak forms of multicultural education. McCarthy's charge (1988) that multicultural education has been deracialized in schools and colleges of teacher education has merit. Teachers and teacher educators, often white and middle class, tend to decipher race and ethnicity through their own cultural experiences (Sleeter, 1993). Commonly for them, race

is not debilitating and ethnicity is not pertinent. Ethnicity can be misinterpreted as an exotic cultural dimension of people of color.

Multiculturalism as the Normal Human Experience

All individuals interact within and across different social sets. In this manner, multiculturalism is the normal human experience. However, interaction may be restricted by discrimination that yields impermeable, or nearly impermeable, cultural boundaries. In the United States society, one's race, social class, gender, disability, or sexuality can serve to limit access to human activities. For example, a friend of mine grew up in a black community and region. Until graduate school, she mingled minimally with white society. Yet, she functioned competently within her milieu as an athlete, scholar, singer, friend, and more. Nonetheless, from a multicultural perspective, her human experience was constricted by racial segregation.

This anthropological stance suggests that boundaries can be bridged simply through the accumulation of cross-group skills and competencies. Arguably, culture ultimately is located in the individual (e.g., Lawrence & Singleton, 1976). It is the manifestation of individual choice, negotiation, and improvisation (e.g., Bateson, 1994). In order to foster multiculturalism, educators should prepare "culturally pluralistic individuals" (Hourihan & Chapin, 1976, p. 24), equipped with skills and dispositions to "culture-switch," as do bilingual code-switchers. From this point of view, my friend can compete for access to white society, given the skills and desire to do so.

Reasonably, culture is located lastly in the individual. Each person creates a personal world from the options open to him or her. Yet, for multicultural education, group membership counts. First, in an unequal society, cultural negotiations are mitigated by group affiliation. Although boundaries are becoming blurred, racism, classism, sexism, and the like, still flourish. My friend can be denied access to a cultural milieu for which she is quite competent. Certainly, cross-cultural skills assist her advancement, yet preparation as a culturally pluralistic individual is insufficient to challenge inequity. Second, individuals are raised as members of cultural groups. Individuals understand life through lenses of parents and significant others, who mediate culture through their standpoints in particular groups. Youngsters tend to be highly attuned to their immediate circles. For multicultural education, a project focused on youth, group affiliation likely is significant. To consider culture as located

in an individual may be to think as an adult – a person in a different life cycle of cultural construction – and to grant more independence than reality warrants.

Multiculturalism as normal human experience is promising and problematic for multicultural education. It is a consummate aim, yet one constrained by discrimination and oppression. Some cultural borders still hold firmly. Goodenough (1976) recognized that powerful groups manipulate borders and control access to valued resources. To reduce differential access is to challenge power. A common response to this problemic among anthropologists is to de-emphasize the school's power to address structural issues and to emphasize the school's role in teaching cross-cultural knowledge and skills (e.g., Bateson, 1994; Gibson, 1984; Hourihan & Chapin, 1976; Lawrence & Singleton, 1976; Philips, 1976).

Multicultural education or additive multiculturalism can be considered (and criticized) as assistance to individuals. These approaches reform educational milieus to better serve marginalized individuals – through the provision of first-class knowledge and skills. Ostensibly, informed and skilled individuals, even from subordinate groups, can gain access to privilege. Social reconstructionist or affirmative multiculturalism confronts borders head-on; for example, the interrogation of racism is key. Individuals form collectives, critique social inequality, and act to change it (Nieto, 1996). These activities aim to challenge borders that limit individual experience.

Generally, multiculturalism as normal human experience downplays borders that constrict the full gamut of human interaction. As cultural borders fade, through social change (as indicated by anthropologists) or educational change (as indicated by multicultural educators) or some combination (as probable), multiculturalism is more likely to become normal human experience. For now, it remains ideal.

Culture as a Response to Material, Social, and Political Conditions

Multicultural education is, fundamentally, a challenge to cultural hegemony. It makes sense only in the context of power relations. Support for cultural pluralism has cultural, social, political, and material dimensions. Teaching about holidays and heroes in ways dislocated from struggles for cultural legitimation, economic opportunity, and social justice is a mere shadow of the original intentions for multicultural education.

Multicultural education and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist relate to critical, anthropological views of culture as heteroglossic, situated, and contested. This anthropological perspective recognizes cultural multiplicity and social conflict. It acknowledges the struggles for equality that underlie multicultural education. Yet, it is important that emphasis on context not gloss over aspects of group membership. Rather, cultural dispositions and aspirations can be seen more clearly in relation to social, political, and material locations. Erickson (1990) argues this point. He notes:

> [there is] more to issues of social class and power in society than traditional anthropology has taken into account. Yet, there is more to ethnicity, language, gender, religious identity ... than many of the macro sociologists of education ... have given credit for. (p. 36)

Implications for Multicultural Education

Simply, yet urgently, anthropologists and multicultural educators need to talk. Conversation should go beyond critique – of one field for being uninformed about culture, of the other for being ill-attuned to issues of equality. Perhaps some ground rules for conversation are in order. Anthropologists should realize that multicultural educators are engaged in a project of educational reform that stems from cultural (and social) denigration. Except for more tolerance-oriented forms, multicultural educators do not settle for cultural celebration. Actually, they see little to celebrate. Rather, they seek to understand one's cultural development, to grasp how it impacts education, and to utilize this information to create equitable school and social environments. To this end, multicultural educators benefit from and participate in the development of theories about ethnicity and education, cultural relevance and curriculum, multiculturalism and identity, and the like. Reasonably, anthropological partnership is desirable for these endeavors.

Easily, anthropologists can feel "left out" of the multicultural project. Yet, involvement means grappling with a complicated, messy, political process of educational change. It means realizing that multicultural education is as much about equality as it is about culture. Do anthropologists care to participate in such a project? Are anthropologists willing to use their expertise to assist the struggle toward improved educational environments for all youth?

The following questions might serve to stimulate interchange between the two groups.

- How can cultural concepts inform a project of educational equality?
- How can understandings of ethnicity assist pedagogical research?
- What does it mean to prepare youth to be culture-switchers?
- How can schools foster multiculturalism as normal human experience?
- How can anthropological critique assist in understanding cultural, social inequality?

Over and above this exchange, multicultural educators can ponder anthropological assertions. Below, I contemplate several concerns raised earlier.

Turner (1993) asks: What is anthropology that multiculturalists should be mindful of it? Conversely, what is multicultural education that anthropologists should be mindful of it? Gibson (1984) encouraged a view of multiculturalism as normal human experience. Yet, this has been posited as more ideal than real, as truncated by discriminatory boundaries. Turner suggested that anthropologists contribute to "critical multiculturalism," to him, a movement to challenge cultural hegemony, offer an egalitarian vision of representation, and transform education to value ethnic and other minority groups. By whatever name, these impulses are at the center of scholarly, multicultural education discourse. This is the multicultural education that anthropologists should be mindful of.

How can criticisms of the culture concept inform multicultural education? Is culture overly perceived as a finished phenomenon rather than as an ongoing process? Is culture comprehended as something of the mind, and between the minds of individuals in particular groups? Does the notion of cultural "recipe" foster singular, set standards? Perhaps culture as "construction" or "negotiation" is a better way to approach the acquisition of symbols and meanings. Are cultural collectives unduly depicted as fully shared? Can more fragile, even fractured, understandings of "shared-ness" be advanced? Some time ago, Wolcott (1981) proposed that inductive examination of particular situations help portray cultural complexity. Autobiographical readings and exercises, which probe self perceptions and describe cultural contexts, are discussed with growing frequency within multicultural education literature (e.g., Gillette & Boyle-Baise, 1996; Gomez & Tabachnick, 1992; Ladson-

Billings, 1995). These methods can help shatter simple views of shared culture among well-defined groups.

Is support for cultural pluralism antithetical to multiculturalism? Is multicultural education a divisive process? If the goal of multicultural education was to foster separate, yet equal, ethnic cultures, it would contradict multiculturalism. However, its intent is to create something new: shared power among groups, and support for cultural and political democracy. Minority groups can be empowered, yet not use the power to stand alone. Majority groups can share their power without feeling diminished. Perhaps multicultural educators need to specify differences between their usage of cultural pluralism and traditional definitions. For multicultural education, cultural pluralism references visions of a more egalitarian society.

What is the role of ethnicity in meaning-making? How does ethnicity impact identity? Do ethnic processes encompass learning about gender, race, and the like? Is ethnicity one of several, independent, yet interrelated aspects of identity? Is ethnic identification abating in power? How does ethnic learning effect school achievement? Multicultural educators are in search of ethnic understandings, particularly, how ethnic dispositions and situations influence learning (e.g., Delpit, 1995). Yet, attempts to theorize about ethnicity are few (e.g., Longstreet, 1978). Anthropological expertise could contribute to this exploration. For now, multicultural educators can clearly distinguish the views of ethnicity that underlie their quests and continue them.

Is culture ultimately located in the individual? What does "ultimately" mean? Lawrence and Singleton (1976) claim that people learn as individuals, but what they learn are symbols and standards for their immediate groups. There is room for individual variance, yet group affiliation counts. Group affiliation can count a lot in situations of segregation and/or denigration; we-they distinctions are strengthened and relations with other groups are weakened. Multicultural educators might take care to present cultural construction as individual perceptions of group codes, and group codes as composites of individual perceptions. Thus, "standards" can become more tentative and partial, yet their potential impact can remain strong. "Ultimately," the culture that individuals make reflects the codes and status of their immediate groups.

Is multiculturalism simply normal human experience? Goodenough (1976) argued, all human beings "live in what for them is a multi-cultural world" (p. 5). Yet, the breadth of one's world is of concern to

multicultural education. To the extent that racism, sexism, or the like, artificially confine the boundaries of one's world, "normality" is unacceptable. The answer to this question depends on meanings for "multiculturalism" and "normal" experience. Multicultural education stands for an expanded understanding of both terms. Does preparation as culturally pluralistic individuals open doors to a more comprehensive multicultural world? Hopefully, to some extent, yes. Never-the-less, the confrontation of boundaries should not be left to individuals alone. Multicultural education aims to assist border crossing and to interrogate closed borders.

Is culture a response to social, political, material conditions? Is culture socially situated in ways that abet racism, sexism, classism, and so on? Linkages between culture and power are at the core of multicultural education, at least its more critical versions. It has been called an "education for freedom" (Parekh, 1986). Freedom means liberation from the cultural devaluation of minority groups. Situatedness is significant to the multicultural education struggle. Actually, multicultural educators wait for anthropologists to "catch-up" to this foundational understanding of the field.

In this paper, I have attempted to illustrate diverse orientations to culture between and among anthropologists and multicultural educators. It is minimalistic and misleading to dismiss multicultural efforts to affirm cultural diversity and to support cultural pluralism as uninformed, misdirected, naive, simplistic, or downright wrong. Rather it is incumbent upon critics to learn more about multicultural education discourse as anthropologists tend to do – through in-depth study from the inside. Would anthropological critics accept an invitation to the multicultural education project? They might find they are welcomed. They might find partners and decide to stay.

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