

Multiculturalism, Diversity, and the Impact Parents and Schools Have on Societal Race Relations

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Abstract

In this review the race construct debate and the role of the school structure are used to show how adult attitudes and behavior influence and affect the attitudes and behaviors of children/students. The conceptualizations of schools and parents as units of change are explored.

Multiculturalism, diversity, parents, and schools can offer a new challenge to societal race relations. Integration did offer an important healing ritual, but it omitted the significance of race and the role of the school structure to empower and enhance a multicultural school environment for the good of all students. My motivational goal for writing this review derives from the unsuccessful attempts of desegregation in promoting positive societal race relations.

Successful attempts at integration may come when parents and schools demand together the advancement of a well-rounded, culturally diverse school curriculum, and an integrated society that appreciates, respects, and values its members.

Introduction

In this paper I review the race construct debate and the role of the school structure in modifying the educational environment so that it is more reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity of all students. In general, parent and school role models attitudes and behaviors toward racial and ethnic groups are discussed. Throughout the essay questions are posed to address how adult attitudes and behaviors influence and affect the attitudes and behaviors of children/students.

Some anti-racist theorists view race as a social construction. According to these theorists society can if it deems necessary, use race categories to influence attitudes about race-relations. This issue can be problematic for parents and schools (Wilkinson, 1996). However, problematic questions about race conscious categories can help solve societal disharmony. Let's examine this problematic question: Did race keep parents and schools from having real conversations about true integration? The "long shadow of Little Rock" is an excellent illustration of how the lack of racial discourse can affect societal harmony.

One must admire those African American parents who had the historical courage to choose equality, the road that leads to positive race relations. The 1960s struggle to integrate public schools was not an easy task. Parents had to make things happen. This essay looks at the impact and techniques for modifying attitudes. I argue in this brief review that schools and adult role models have the tools to fully integrate society, they can make things happen. They have transformation power. Adults, especially adult family members, are significant agents of race, class, and gender socialization, as scholar and writer bell hooks argues:

Family is a significant site of socialization and politicization precisely because it is there that most of us learn our ideas about race, gender, and class. If we ignore family and act as though we can look to other structures for education for critical consciousness, we ignore the significance of early identity and value formation (1994: 72).

The current key socialization questions before educators and parents should be: (a) are you taking into account that all races and ethnicities matter; (b) are you teaching your children/students about diversity; (c) are you willing to become culturally competent; and (d) are you making sense of the diverse world and are you seeing the world as a whole? However, this notion is not the color blindness D'Souza (1995) is talking about. His color blindness does not compare with the real-world view of racial and ethnic diversity. It is no wonder that the Social Science Knowl-

edge on Race, Racism, and Race Relations, an American Sociological Association project, is now in full force.¹

The polls which show that America is split along racial lines when questioned about the propriety of the jury verdict in the O.J.Simpson trial also illustrates the need for a discourse in race relations. The racial divide, painful as it may seem, serves a purpose and moves us toward solidarity and positive action to do what bell hooks (1995) suggest to end racism.

Problems of racism, classism, sexism, prejudice, and discrimination do violate the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. These "isms" support beliefs and behaviors that lead to neglect, exploitation, and subordination among racial and ethnic groups, thus leading to negative race relations among the groups (hooks, 1992; West, 1988; 1993). The consequence of negative race relations is the systemic exclusion of so many people from full participation in a democratic society such as the United States (West, 1988; 1993). This exclusion diminishes the society and deprives individuals of using their full skills, talents, wisdom, and creativity.

In the years following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* (Topeka, Kansas) Supreme Court decision, a number of researchers studied the social dynamics of desegregated schools and the conditions that either fostered or undermined positive intergroup relationships, (e.g., Patchen 1982; St. John, 1975; Schofield, 1981; Singleton and Asher, 1977; and Slavin, 1980).

In the 1970s the recognition that desegregation did not necessarily lead to successful integration contributed to the shift towards multicultural education and, similarly, gave rise to increased research on the complexities of racial and ethnic awareness and attitudes (e.g., Aboud and Skerry, 1984; Sigelman and Singleton, 1986). Many desegregated schools historically accepted the assimilation model, rejecting the multicultural idea of the racial and ethnic minority student, and forcing racial and ethnic minority students to accept Eurocentric values, beliefs, norms, and behavior. This assimilation model helped to perpetuate an inferior self-image among some minority students.

Racial Attitudes of Children

Despite numerous studies, our knowledge about children's reactions to racial and ethnic differences is still fragmented and incomplete (Holmes, 1995). Her work looks at how young children perceive race. The works of Berndt (1981) and Bigelow and LaGaipa (1980) examined age as a factor in racial beliefs. Their research showed evidence that, as children approach adolescence, they tend to form more exclusive friendships based on certain perceived similarities—such as in skin color, beliefs, and val-

ues—to which they attach great importance. Hallinan and Teixeira (1987:566) state that “students often establish norms about the undesirability of forming friendships with dissimilar classmates, and peer pressure can be difficult to resist. Thus, similar ascribed and achieved characteristics are assigned even more weight in the selection of friends.”

These authors suggest that adolescent responses to racial and ethnic friendships involve a complicated set of behavioral and attitudinal dimensions. For example, children may develop cross-racial friendships by having contact with individual peers, yet they learn negative attitudes about that group as a whole from adults. In this case the behavioral and attitudinal processes may appear to be in conflict. Rosenfield and Stephan (1981) state that affective responses reflect socialization influences from parents, siblings, and the media. They stated, however, that behavioral preferences are determined by situational constraints, such as the amount of contact allowed with other groups. Issues of lack of equity and lack of tolerance can also be major constraints reducing chances for positive societal race relations.

According to Rotheram and Phinney (1987), the salience of race in children’s perceptions of others and the kind (and amount) of information that they learn about racial differences varies according to children’s social milieu, their majority or minority status, and the extent and types of contacts they have with other racial groups. Furthermore, these authors believe that an awareness of differences may account for the varying degrees of acceptance and or rejection by the dominant group.

Some of these authors who wrote during the late 1970s and early 1980s failed to see the absence of specific knowledge and skills (multiculturalism) in homes and in schools. This absence of knowledge may have caused some children to assume that certain racial and ethnic children are dissimilar and inferior. Therefore, they look for knowledge, skills, and interaction with children who tend to be similar. Also, some school curricula are still inefficiently Eurocentric and, thus, continue to foster a sense of inferiority.

Katz (1976) states that during their elementary years children begin to elaborate their concepts of race as they begin to associate social information with the physical attributes that they see. As this shift occurs, they rely less on color cues; and they begin to grasp the social meaning of racial terms (Alejandro-Wright, 1985). These authors concluded that children, at this time, or with appropriate instruction also develop a more accurate understanding of the nature of racial differences.

As children approach the middle childhood years, they have a growing awareness of racial characteristics. For example, skin color is a characteristic that can shape a child’s experiences with other racial and ethnic groups, thus allowing skin color to become a social marker if per-

ceived negatively. This type of social marking can lead to poor racial and ethnic relations among children.

Children's friendship choices in multiracial classrooms have been analyzed for patterns of racially related preferences. Singleton and Asher (1977) in their analysis concluded that gender is the strongest predictor of choices, and there is little evidence of same race preferences during early elementary grades. They found that boys and girls choose their friends mostly on the basis of gender rather than race.

There is, however, a trend toward increasing racial cleavage during the later elementary and high school years, with attitudes becoming crystallized in the late elementary years (Asher, Singleton, and Taylor, 1982; Schofield, 1981; Goodman, 1952; Katz, 1976). This trend is somewhat offset by children's increasing cognitive capacity that enables them to become curious about other groups (Aboud, 1977) and to understand other people's perspectives (Davidson, 1976). Aboud (1988) believes that after age nine racial attitudes will probably remain constant if the child does not experience any situations considered life changing.

There is evidence that with sustained cross-group contact, children develop more positive behaviors toward individuals in another group more readily than they change their attitudes towards the group as a whole (Schofield, 1982). Schofield's work describes how children's cross-group contacts create positive feelings about human differences. Yet, children's beliefs about racial and ethnic stereotypes can still cause some children to hold negative feelings about a group as a whole.

One of the most promising areas of research thus far has been the work in creating racially integrated cooperative learning teams. These teams are designed to replace tracking with cooperative learning and peer tutoring. There is evidence that these interventions do result in a significant increase in interracial friendships (Rosenfield and Stephan, 1981; Slavin, 1980). Some educators argue well organized cooperative groups can teach students to work and respect each other, which can help prepare for their future careers (Winter, 1994).

Brewer (1979) and Cohen (1982) argue, however, that the integration of cooperative learning teams is debatable. They argue that the role of ethnocentrism in intergroup conflict can be very pronounced, thus promoting in-group biases. Furthermore, Cohen (1982) believes cooperative learning teams are more harmful than good. She argues that negative relations lie within the complexity of the social structure of the school, such as issues of social class and the racial composition of the school. Cohen (1982) believes that human relations must function to enforce and teach social behavior throughout the schools. She recommends that minorities should make up a larger percentage of the student body and that powerful adult minority role models are needed to help generate a

positive effect on the interracial behavior of students. This may not be feasible.

Relationship of Parents and Attitudinal Change

Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's perspectives and expectations (Phinney and Rosenthal, 1992; Derman-Sparks, 1989; 1997). Evidence of their roles in influencing the attitudes and behaviors of their children toward racial and ethnic groups is important. Phinney and Rosenthal (1992, p. 153) say: Asian-American, African-American, and Mexican-American adolescents who scored high on a measure of ethnic identity (including ethnic practices, attitudes, and commitment) had parents who were significantly more likely than parents of low scorers to state that they had personally tried to prepare their son or daughter for living in a culturally diverse society. In addition to modeling or discussing ethnic issues specifically, parents may influence adolescents in indirect ways.

It is, therefore, reasonable to see family influences on racial and ethnic attitudes as pervasive and powerful. Moreover, one cannot ignore convincing evidence that (a) children start developing attitudes about race and ethnicity at a very young age, as early as three or four years of age (Katz, 1976); (b) skin color is the characteristic that can shape a child's interaction with others more than any other with the possible exception of gender (Rotheram and Phinney, 1987); and (c) prejudice based on race and ethnicity remains a major social problem (Gibbs, 1990).

Katz (1993) suggests that at an age as early as six months, infants notice skin color differences. Katz's study demonstrates that children mirror the attitudes of adults in their families. For children to understand and accept differences among the various racial and ethnic groups, parents will need to be willing to help educate their children to be against all forms of prejudice, racism, and biases.

Parents and families who interact favorably with other racial and ethnic groups will instill in their children a positive feeling about such groups. Phinney and Nakayama's (1991) research shows how parental sensitivity to cultural diversity has affected adolescent ethnic identity. They demonstrated that parental sensitivity to cultural diversity has positive outcomes for adolescent ethnic identity.

What is clear about their study is that children bring to adolescence a view of their racial and ethnic heritage that has been mainly enhanced by family influences. There is a need for research to focus now on how adolescents can develop respect and understanding for racial and ethnic differences and at the same time maintain their own strong racial and

ethnic heritage. Multiculturalism research is a critical thought and practical approach to learning about diversity and identity.

Relationship of Education and Attitudinal Change

Rosenberg's (1960) study of attitudinal change suggests that attitude-development requires a consistency between the affective and cognitive components implicit in the attitude. The cognitive component relates to how well young children can learn and/or identify racial prejudice. The affective component relates to how children social environment, such as their home life, may positively or negatively shape his/her understanding of racial prejudice. A child can thus form positive or negative attitudes about racial prejudice depending on the existence of a consistency between these two influential components.

A good example is the Clark and Clark (1947) study of pre-school-age African American children. These children chose white dolls. The authors assumed the selection of white dolls was the black students' preference for wanting to be white. I suspect, however, that these children may have been exposed only to white dolls while growing up due to an absence of African American dolls. As bell hooks (1996, pp. 22-23) has said in *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood*: "Deep within myself I had begun to worry that all this loving care we gave to the pink and white flesh-colored dolls meant that somewhere left high on the shelves were boxes of unwanted, unloved, brown dolls, covered with dust—waiting".

My conclusion is that the researchers may have seen a different set of responses. Note: The market and the availability of African American dolls have only now become a major market issue in American society. My point is well illustrated by Hopson and Hopson's (1990) replication of the Clark's doll experiment. In their study they arranged an intervention that encouraged black children to appreciate their blackness. In this study African American children chose black dolls based upon positive aspects of what they had been taught about their blackness. According to Rosenberg (1960) if either the cognitive or affective components shifted, the resulting inconsistency would produce a drive to change in order to achieve a new balance. Hopson and Hopson's (1990) study validates this very point.

It has generally been assumed that education alone will change a person's attitudes toward other races. This dimension of enlightenment alone has not been proven to reduce prejudice; for while knowledge can definitely provide a necessary contribution to attitudinal change, it is not sufficient. Moreland (1963) illustrates this point when he states that facts alone do not influence learning, but that facts are a contributory factor along with a person's personal experience and bias. For young children

the schools provide both knowledge and social experience (Banks, 1997).

Stember (1961) who wrote during an important time frame—the pre-civil rights movement — conducted a study based upon the assumption that education could liberate and free people from narrow-mindedness. His empirical study found no clear relationship between a person's degree of prejudice and the amount of that person's education. He concluded that education had a limited impact as an agent for attitudinal change. Furthermore, his study found the relationship between education and racial prejudice to be complicated, involving numerous intervening social and political variables. Former mayor W. Wilson Goode of Philadelphia said: "It's very hard to have candid discussions about race," especially in mixed groups, "It's hard to face one's inner feelings about the whole issue, to explain them and think them and analyze."²

Astin (1993), on the other hand, argues that undergraduates showed increased changes in their beliefs and attitudes regarding race during their college years. Bagley (1970, p. 72) explains that as a result of education, persons are trained in objective and dispassionate thoughts which are hostile to prejudice. Perhaps a different explanation is that while education may not actually cause a reduction in racial intolerance, it does make individuals more careful or sophisticated about revealing whether or they are not prejudiced. Whatever competing view a person holds, it is clear that the continuing trend is to have a better educated population that will contribute to the reductionism of any form of prejudice (Case, et al., 1989; Schaefer, 1976; Schwartz, 1967; and Glock, et al., 1966) (Banks, 1997; Derman-Sparks and Phillips, 1997).

There are some studies that indicate that racial attitudes are determined by the person's total experiences. Horwitz's (1936) study is one such study. It set a precedent for more empirical investigations of the development of racial attitudes. In this study white urban and rural children who attended all white schools in Georgia and Tennessee were compared to children who attended all white schools in New York City. Horwitz found white urban and rural children's attitudes toward blacks to be the same regardless of their individual experiences from outside influences such as parents, teachers, and peers.

Allport (1935) surveyed the formation of attitudes and identified four conditions of attitude development. The first condition included the individual's experiences with the "attitude object" (the person or thing to which an attitude is directed). According to Allport information combines with other experiences in order to produce an attitude.

The second condition identified by Allport was the development of a permanent attitude through experience. Initially an attitude is gross and diffuse; however, through experience it becomes more defined and differentiated.

The third condition described by Allport involved the formation of a permanent attitude through a single traumatic experience. For example, in the case of traumatic conditioning the emotional response is so violent that a single connection is formulated between the object and the stimulus.

Finally, according to Allport attitude formation does share an emphasis on the effects of environmental experiences. Unfortunately, Allport did not consider the influence of education on attitude changes. Did he not know that preexisting personalities could change?

Taba (1962) suggests that education can save children from the destructive effects of racial prejudice. Negative racial and ethnic attitudes reflect the types of relationships that children experience. Taba stated that by modifying the educational curriculum such negative racial and ethnic attitudes can be prevented and those already existing attitudes can be changed. According to Lucero (1997) if children are encouraged to discuss their concerns and if they can develop vocabulary to express their feelings the value of diversity can help children reduce prejudice and racism within their world.

Each year we are seeing public schools becoming more diverse, but are we seeing major educational curriculum changes being made? In Nebraska, where I did my graduate training, the answer is a resounding no. For instance, during the last several years the multicultural advisory committee, formed on behalf of the Lincoln Public Schools, has been unsuccessful in implementing a multicultural curriculum. With changing U.S. demographics, projected by the increasing number of racial and ethnic minority children and youth, multicultural and multilingual student bodies will continue to increase at a very fast rate. Ponterotto and Casas (1991) suggest that by the year 2010 one out of every three school-age children will be from a minority racial and/or ethnic group. This increased diversity is not without its difficulties. It is not the norm! Especially true is how difficult diversity can be in the schools. Yes, this is a major normative goal.

Schools will need to be restructured so that all students will acquire attitudes and skills to function in a multicultural world. How, for instance, are teachers and administrators to communicate with, much less educate, children from these various racial and ethnic backgrounds who do not speak English? How, for example, can white, middle class teachers and administrators be sensitive to children from lower socioeconomic and culturally diverse backgrounds, considering that teachers are significant actors in the formation of students' attitudes?

The future of progressive education rests almost exclusively with "committed to diversity" teachers and administrators involved in the educational system. The system must aim and hire role models for diversity,

and rid those who do not assume a critical, responsible role in making sure that all students regardless of race, class, gender, ability, or physical challenge be given the opportunity to develop accurate and positive images of all people. Administrators will need to help teachers challenge students' negative attitudes and behaviors that are not suitable in an increasingly diverse, multicultural environment.

A multicultural education with multicultural perspectives and a strong multicultural consciousness can help teachers and administrators provide the best education possible for all students. At the risk of overstating, if teachers and administrators do not talk about race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc. — in essence multiculturalism — children will continue to be an easy prey to negative stereotypes about racial and ethnic minorities. And, as Pine and Hilliard (1990) suggest, children are exposed to such stereotypes by parents almost from birth. These are the same stereotypes, biases, and prejudices that children bring into the classroom. Clark's (1955) study found that children come to school with preexisting negative attitudes and behaviors about racial and ethnic minority children who are different from them. Unfortunately, teachers, and administrators must now deal with these preexisting attitudes and encourage all students to accept diversity. The complex relationship between education and attitudes has important implications for research. The formation of attitudes seems to be a combination of environmental factors of which education and learning are important components.

Reducing Racial Prejudice

One of the primary issues of desegregation is whether simple person-to-person contact or structured curricula interventions designed to supplement the personal contact is more effective in reducing racial prejudice. Educational researchers since the early 1950s desegregation era have been split on this issue. Mann (1959) and Koslin, et al. (1968) believed that contact alone will reduce racial prejudice; however, (Greenberg, Pierson, and Sherman, 1952; Campbell, 1958; and Lombardi, 1963) argued structured intervention programs are needed in order to reduce racial prejudice.

The research of Maos (1983) generated an eight-session generic understanding of human differences program for fourth grade students. The program was created to confront widely recognized prejudices, prejudices often not addressed by existing programs and general intolerance of differences as a factor underlying many prejudices. The main purposes of the research were to determine whether prejudices towards different groups of people are interrelated and to rate the attitudinal effects of the generic program when compared to a specifically ethnic

program. Results showed that negative attitudes towards many groups still existed and tended to correlate with each other. The data showed few significant attitude changes in the experimental groups.

Hauser (1978) designed a study to see how effective audio-visual media as an instructional technique would be in altering ethnic attitudes among young children. The sample was 153 children ranging in ages from five to nine. The children were randomly assigned to one of three groups: a control group who watched no films, a group who watched two films, and a group who watched only one film. The findings showed that the use of audio-visual media as an instructional technique was effective in reducing prejudiced responses among the subjects. There was no significant difference in the responses of the group that viewed one film and the group that viewed two films, indicating that the addition of the second film did not significantly alter the ethnic attitudes produced by the first film. As described by Hauser (1978), the results of this study demonstrated that audio-visual media are a valuable resource in influencing certain positive attitudes which schools were expected to reinforce.

Westphal (1977) explored the relationship between inter-ethnic instructional curricula and racial prejudice of first grade children. He utilized the Ethnic Preference Scale to measure the students' level of racial prejudice. The experimental group showed more positive attitudes towards the ethnic category than did the control group. The result supported Westphal's hypothesis that a cognitively-oriented curriculum has a positive effect upon changing students' attitudes.

A unique study by Glick and Meinke (1972) was conducted to assess an intervention curriculum-unit on racial attitudes. The Paired Hands Test was used to determine the racial attitudes of a group of white sixth graders. The intervention unit was composed of eight increasingly interactive steps using panel discussions, class discussions, filmstrips and movies, open-ended stories, trips to an all-black school, and a three-school skating party. The results of the post-test showed a significant difference between the control group and the experimental group, indicating that racial attitudes can be reduced when an intervention curriculum unit is utilized.

Madden's (1971) work suggests that children's attitudes toward African Americans could be changed in a positive direction through the use of specific instructional programs. The methods investigated and the approaches used were the literature approach, the audio-visual presentation approach, and a combination approach. The population sample in the study consisted of white sixth grade students in a small, rural Midwestern state. The sample completed both pre- and post-test forms of the California Test of Personality. They also completed an attitude scale

adopted from a scale developed by Harrison Gough. Madden's findings showed that there was a direct correlation between an increase in knowledge about African Americans and a positive attitude change toward African Americans.

A study by Gezi and Johnson (1970) reached the conclusion that racial prejudice in the elementary schools can be reduced when teachers consciously include changing racial attitudes as a major behavioral objective of a teaching unit. These two researchers supplemented first hand experience with experiences of pictures, records, slides, movies, letters, books, tapes, and maps. Two elementary classrooms in two suburban California schools were used as the sample. A positive attitudinal gain was shown on both the Henkley's Attitude Toward Negro Scale and the Bogardus Racial Distance Scale.

Webster's (1961) study concluded that contact, alone, between members of different races does not reduce prejudice. He demonstrated in his study that contact, alone, between African American and white seventh grade students in the San Francisco Bay area did not reduce racial prejudice. Instead it produced a negative effect on white students without any significant change in the attitudes of African American students. Further, he concluded that without structured intervention programs racial prejudice is reduced only incidentally.

Conclusion

Multicultural Research since the late sixties and early seventies has shown that pupils' attitudes and friendships within a multiracial and ethnic context involve complicated sets of behavioral and attitudinal dimensions. Parents' and teachers' influence can cause children to develop positive and/or negative attitudes about a group as a whole. According to some research behavioral dimensions—such as the amount of contact allowed with other groups—can create constraints, thus increasing negative race relations. Some research indicates that racially integrated, cooperative learning teams promote positive racial and ethnic contacts. Yet, other researchers contradict this, suggesting that under specific conditions these cooperative teams can serve to reinforce ethnocentric ideas and beliefs.

The noteworthy information presented in this essay makes clear that the complex relation between education and attitudes have important implications for further research. The information presented also makes clear that structural interventions can be effective in reducing racial and ethnic prejudice. Madden's (1971) findings show a direct correlation between an increase in knowledge about African Americans and a posi-

tive attitude change toward African Americans. This correlation between an increase in knowledge and a respect and appreciation for others is multiculturalism.

This paper has provided some positive reports on how previous research thus far describes multicultural practices within the school context, but as separate information. For example, showing minority related films, reading books about minorities, taking field trips to enhance learning about minorities, and measuring on scales how well white students like minority students do not report the need to embrace and build on the human richness of diversity. The examples of research provided in this paper do not take into consideration the need to establish or the importance of establishing permanent core courses as a way to look at the knowledge and skills of all cultures. This approach enhances a curriculum that does not omit, discredit, or diminish any culture. I am referring specifically to structural multiculturalism. According to Camino (1995), structural multiculturalism represents a challenge for curriculum reform. This type of curriculum can expose children to nonwestern thought and experiences and teach about diversity. This diversity creates understanding about others.

Bernstein (1994) believes the opposite. He believes to achieve multiculturalism is an aimless battle that has become a dictatorship of virtue. Unfortunately, Bernstein (1994) fails to see that multiculturalism is the direct opposite of a dictatorship of virtue; that indeed multiculturalism is synonymous with the true meaning of democracy and is properly characterized as a democracy of virtue.

Bernstein's (1994) mischaracterization notwithstanding, this new structural multicultural direction can help to prepare children for responsible citizenship in the 21st century (Banks, 1997). This new multicultural information can help adolescents understand the problems of race and ethnicity from the view of others. In essence, a multicultural curriculum can help children acquire knowledge and skills needed to gain full understanding of different racial and ethnic groups. There is research that does not address this developmental need of all children. Research is also needed to address the changing racial and ethnic attitudes in areas where populations are almost all minorities. Fortunately, this paper can help educate children, parents, and educators to accept opportunities and challenges that enhances understanding of others while simultaneously promoting positive societal race relations.

As I stated earlier, in the 1970s, the recognition that desegregation did not necessarily lead to successful integration contributed to the shift towards multicultural education and, similarly, gave rise to increased research on the complexities of racial and ethnic awareness and attitudes (e.g., Aboud and Skerry, 1984; Sigelman and Singleton, 1986). Unfortu-

nately, many educators do not want structural multicultural education and have made no efforts to incorporate multiculturalism into their curriculum, nor do they understand what multicultural education means. Others believe multicultural education is a one-month-out-of-the-year tribute to Black History. In fact, multicultural education promotes multiculturalism and diversity. According to Jefferson (1986) multiculturalism is the mastered knowledge and skills needed to feel comfortable and to communicate effectively with people of all cultures and in all cross-cultural situations.

Are parents and educators serious in their commitment to be transformed? Will the role of the school structure change to meet the needs of all children? Multiculturalism and multicultural education are the instruments to promote full democratic integration within schools and communities. Structural changes within the school environment are a must. Parents and educators must see multiculturalism as an ideal that leads to hope. They need to see that multiculturalism is a passion for knowledge and skills needed to communicate effectively and feel good about communicating with all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, etc.. Educators and parents need to believe that multiculturalism can enhance the true meaning of diversity. More important, educators and parents must make right decisions. They must talk about race and difference. They can help children/students reach their fullest potential, and they can prepare children/students for a rapidly changing world — a world that can accept, recognize, and appreciate positive societal race relations.

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Notes

¹ See the September/October 1997 issue of *Footnotes*. "The White House Office of Science Technology Policy (OSTP) has asked the ASA to take a leadership role in helping to educate the nation about the facts surrounding the issue of race. This effort is part of President Clinton's Initiative on Race, "One America", and his effort to undertake a national examination of racial reconciliation."

² See Susan Page (1998). USA Today: <http://www.USAToday.com/news/washdc/ncs10.htm>