The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education

Edited by James A. Banks
This volume is the first authoritative reference work to provide a truly comprehensive international description and analysis of multicultural education around the world. It is organized around key concepts and uses case studies from various nations in different parts of the world to exemplify and illustrate the concepts. Case studies are from many nations, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Spain, Norway, Bulgaria, Russia, South Africa, Japan, China, India, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico. Two chapters focus on regions—Latin America and the French-speaking nations in Africa. The Companion is divided into ten sections, covering theory and research pertaining to curriculum reform, immigration and citizenship, language, religion, and the education of ethnic and cultural minority groups among other topics.

With 40 newly commissioned pieces written by a prestigious group of internationally renowned scholars, The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education provides the definitive statement on the state of multicultural education and on its possibilities for the future.

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The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education
Edited by James A. Banks
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James A. Banks
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A number of factors contributed to the rise and development of multicultural education around the world. The gap between ideals and realities in the Western democratic nations and the marginalized status of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities stimulated the rise of ethnic revitalization movements in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements began in the United States when African Americans began a quest for political, economic, and cultural rights that was unprecedented in their history. The Black civil rights movement influenced other structurally excluded racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups in the United States as well as in other nations. Marginalized groups in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere also began movements that demanded that their histories, cultures, and languages be reflected in mainstream institutions and in the public and civic culture.

Schools, colleges, and universities were important targets of ethnic revitalization movements because they reflected and reinforced mainstream society and culture in their ethos, curriculum, and the languages and cultures they valued and sanctioned. The myriad responses to ethnic revitalization movements that schools implemented evolved into a series of phases that culminated in the development of multicultural education. The earliest phase of multicultural education consisted of the infusion of bits and pieces of ethnic and cultural content into the curriculum without changing it in significant ways. Over four decades and through several phases of development, multicultural education evolved into a transformative idea whose implementation requires substantial changes in all of the major variables of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious groups experience educational equality.

Multicultural education is a concept, an educational reform movement, and a process (Banks, 2007). It incorporates the idea that all students — regardless of their ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic characteristics — should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. Another important idea in multicultural education is that some students, because of their group characteristics, have a better chance to learn in schools as they are currently structured than do students who belong to other groups.
The goals and development of the *Companion*

A companion is a single-volume reference work that gives an overview of the theory, research, and practice in a discipline or field. This *Companion* is designed to provide researchers, students, and educational practitioners with a one-volume reference that describes the research, concepts, theories, and practices in multicultural education within an international context. This volume also illustrates how multicultural education is a contested concept both within and across nations and how it reflects—in complex and nuanced ways—the national, social, and political context in which it is embedded. Another goal of this *Companion* is to advance theory, research, and practice in multicultural education by providing a source that researchers and educational practitioners can use to enrich their work with insights and findings from scholars and practitioners in other nations.

The first phase in the development of the *Companion* was the establishment of the International Editorial Advisory Board that consists of scholars in various parts of the world. After the Board was established, I constructed a working outline of the *Companion* that the Board reviewed critically. The Board was especially concerned that the *Companion* be inclusive and represent nations and cultures throughout the world. The revised outline, which incorporated the Board’s comments, was substantially different from the original outline. It contained more chapters as well as chapters from a wider range of nations across the continents.

One of the most difficult problems with which the Board and I had to wrestle was how to represent a world that consists of 193 generally recognized nation-states (Martin & Zurcher, 2008) within a single-volume reference work that would have adequate depth and a logical organization that was helpful to readers. By reviewing the literature in the field and responding to the feedback from the Board, I decided to organize the *Companion* around key concepts and to use case studies from various nations to exemplify and illustrate the concepts. Consequently, the *Companion* consists of 10 parts organized around key concepts and case studies from nations in different parts of the world.

The organization of the *Companion*

Part 1 consists of four chapters that discuss cross-cultural issues, concepts, and theories in multicultural education. The first chapter describes the historical and contextual development of multicultural education and the dimensions and paradigms in the field. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 discuss critical multiculturalism, world population movements, and globalization, immigration, and schooling, respectively.

Multicultural education shares characteristics across nations but also reflects the national, cultural, and political context in which it is embedded. Part 2 consists of seven chapters that describe multicultural education within national contexts. The earliest phases of multicultural education developed in the US but first received official government sanction in policies of multiculturalism in 1971 in Canada and in 1978 in Australia. Some of the earliest phases of multicultural education in Europe were implemented in England in the 1970s to respond to the migrants who had started settling in the UK in significant numbers after World War II to fulfill labor needs. Multicultural education developed later in Asian nations such as Japan and India and has taken a unique path in South Africa because of that country’s history of apartheid and reconciliation.

Race has been a powerful factor in all multiethnic and multicultural nation-states and societies since the development of Western imperialism, the construction of race to justify
hegemony and slavery, and the spread of Western ideas about race throughout the world. Racial stratification and its consequences were by-products of colonization, the conquering of Indigenous peoples, and the construction of justifications for the taking of their lands and the destruction of their languages and cultures. The chapters in Part 3 examine institutional and structural racism from several perspectives. Chapter 12 analyzes structural and institutional racism and the ways in which it influences the schooling experiences of students. Chapters 13 through 16 describe research on the nature and origins of children’s racial attitudes and how they can be modified with educational interventions.

To implement effective multicultural education, schools must help all students – including ethnic and language minority students as well as majority group students – to acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for productive employment in a highly technological and global society, participate effectively in the political system, and take action to increase equity in society. Schools should also work to close the wide achievement gap that exists between middle-class mainstream students and low-achieving minority students. Research and theory grounded in the cultural difference paradigm indicate that if teachers incorporate the cultures and languages of diverse groups into instruction the academic achievement of these students will increase. The two chapters in Part 4 discuss research on ways in which culturally responsive teaching and improved home–school relationships can help students from diverse groups increase their academic achievement.

When nations in Western Europe established colonies in the Americas, Canada, Australia, the Caribbean, Africa, and other parts of the world, the cultures, religions, and languages of the Indigenous peoples were systematically destroyed by factors such as disease, war, and schooling. In the US, Canada, and Australia, Indigenous students were taken from their homes and sent to boarding schools where they were “civilized” by being stripped of their cultures, languages, and religions. The destruction of Indigenous cultures, languages, and religions left a poignant and challenging legacy in the US, Canada, Australia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. The three chapters in Part 5 are case studies that describe the legacy of colonization of Indigenous peoples and its effects on education in three nations: (1) the Maori in New Zealand, (2) the Indigenous people in Peru, and (3) the Native Americans in the United States.

Growth in international migration, increasing recognition of structural inequality within democratic nation-states, and growing recognition and legitimacy of international human rights have problematized citizenship and citizenship education in nation-states throughout the world, and especially in Western democracies. The near zero population growth in many of the Western developed nations and in Japan and the steady growth of the population in developing nations have created a demographic divide and a demand for immigrants to meet labor needs in the developed nations (Haub, 2007). The demographic divide and labor needs in developed nations have also stimulated acid debates about immigration and citizenship. The chapters in Part 6 examine immigration, citizenship, and education in selected nations. These chapters also describe the ways in which citizenship and citizenship education have changed to respond to the needs of Indigenous and immigrant groups. However, as several of the chapters in this volume point out, citizenship education is also being used in nations such as Australia, Canada, and the UK to promote a new form of assimilation called “social cohesion,” which is a conservative response to immigration, radical Islam, and concerns about the fracturing of national identity and the maintenance of national unity.

In nations around the world, some languages have higher status than others, and students from language minority groups frequently experience alienation, low academic achievement, high dropout rates, and identity problems in schools. The chapters in Part 7 describe the status of various languages in selected nations, the extent to which students experience language
inequality in school, and programs and practices that are being implemented to help language minority students experience academic success and educational equality.

The growth of the Muslim population in nations such as the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, and France and the rise of radical Islam around the world have evoked tension and Islamophobia in many nations. A string of terrorist events in different nations related to radical Islam has crystallized fear, stereotypes, and hostility toward all Muslims. These events include the bombing of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in the US on September 11, 2001; the bombings of four commuter trains in Madrid, Spain, on March 11, 2004; the murder of the Dutch film director Theo van Gogh in Amsterdam on November 2, 2004; and the bombings in the London transportation system on July 7, 2005. In the United States as well as in the Arab world, religious fundamentalism is challenging democratic values. In nations such as the UK, France, and India religion has historically influenced education in significant ways. The chapters in Part 8 examine religious issues related to education in selected nations, the challenges and opportunities they create for schools, and how schools are responding to religious issues, tensions, challenges, and possibilities.

The experiences of groups such as Mexican Americans in the United States, Turks in Germany, African Caribbeans in the United Kingdom, Muslims in France, and Koreans in Japan are characterized by discrimination, marginalization, and the quest for inclusion and equality. Blacks and Indigenous groups in Brazil, and Indians in Mexico and Peru also experience poverty and educational inequality. China has 56 officially designated ethnic groups, most of whom experience educational challenges and do not attain the knowledge and skills needed to fully participate in mainstream Han society. The chapters in Parts 9 and 10 examine the educational problems that ethnic minority groups experience in schools and reforms that have been undertaken to respond to their educational needs.

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I hope the 48 authors and 90 external reviewers who contributed to the Companion project will take pride in their association with it and that this volume will advance theory, research, and practice in multicultural education and contribute to the attainment of social justice and equality for students around the world.

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References

Part 1

Multicultural education

Theoretical perspectives and issues
In nation-states around the world, there is increasing diversity as well as increasing recognition of diversity. Since the ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s, ethnic groups have articulated their grievances and pushed for equality and structural inclusion. The Black civil rights movement in the US – which echoed throughout the world (Painter, 2006) – stimulated the ethnic revitalization movements. The French and First Nations in Canada, the West Indians and Asians in Britain, the Indonesians and Surinamese in the Netherlands, and the Aboriginal peoples in Australia joined the string of ethnic movements, expressed their rage and anger, and demanded that the institutions within their nation-states – such as schools, colleges, and universities – become more responsive to their needs, hopes, and dreams.

When the ethnic revitalization movements began in the 1960s and 1970s, the Western nations were characterized by tremendous ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic diversity. This diversity resulted from several historical developments. The nations in Western Europe had longstanding linguistic and cultural minorities, such as the Basques in France and Spain, the Germans in Denmark, the Danes in Germany, and the Welsh, Scots, and Jews in the United Kingdom. Europe has historically been a crossroad and meeting ground – sometimes violent – of diverse cultural groups (Figueroa, 2008). Diversity in Europe was increased when thousands of migrants from colonial nations came to Europe to improve their economic and social status in the years after World War II.

Many of the nations in Asia have been diverse historically. Although the Han Chinese make up about 92% of the Chinese population, China has 56 officially designated ethnic groups (Postiglione, chap. 37, this volume). Malaysia is both ethnically and religiously diverse. Its population consists of approximately 50.4% Malay, 23.7% Chinese, 11% Bumiputera, 7.1% Indian, and 7.8% other ethnic groups (Hudson, 2007). Malaysia’s religious groups include Muslim (53%), Buddhist (17.3%), Confucian and Taoist (11.6%), Christian (8.6%), and Hindu (7%). The Chinese (76.8%) are the largest ethnic group in Singapore, followed by the Malay (13.9%), and Indians (7.9%) (Hudson). Although Japan has historically viewed itself as a homogeneous and monoethnic nation-state (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2006), immigrants have lived in Japan for more than a century (Befu, 2006). Its minorities include the Ainu, Okinawans, Burakumin, Koreans, Chinese, and Taiwanese (Lie, 2001).

The United States, Canada, and Australia were diverse when the European explorers and
settlers arrived in these distant lands. The diversity in these nations was enriched by the Indigenous peoples that the European settlers displaced, by Black people from Africa in the US, and by the large numbers of immigrants and refugees from nations around the world who settled in these three nations to realize their religious, political, and economic dreams. The US, Canada, and Australia have become more ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse within the last 40 years. Although English was the most frequently spoken home language in Australia in 2006 (78.5%), the census indicated that more than 400 languages were spoken in homes, including Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese, Italian, Greek, and Arabic (Inglis, chap. 7, this volume).

In 2008, Canada’s population was very diverse. Individuals of British Isles origin made up 28% of the population, 23% were of French origin, and 15% were other European. The other 34% of the population was made up of individuals of various ethnic groups and of mixed backgrounds (Statistics Canada, 2008). The US is experiencing its largest influx of immigrants since the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the immigrants to the US today are coming from Asia and Latin America, whereas most came from Europe in previous centuries. The U.S. census (2007) projects that ethnic minorities will increase from one-third of the nation’s population in 2006 to 50% in 2042. Ethnic minorities made up 100 million of the total U.S. population of just over 300 million in 2006. U.S. schools are more diverse today than they have been since the early 1900s when a flood of immigrants entered the US from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe. In the 30-year period between 1973 and 2004, the percentage of ethnic minority students in U.S. public schools increased from 22% to 43% (Dillon, 2006).

Ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity is found in nations around the world. It extends far beyond the nations highlighted in the brief overview above. There is myriad diversity in Latin America and African nations, as the chapters in this Companion indicate. The educational challenges experienced by Indigenous and ethnic groups in Peru, Cuba, Brazil, and Mexico – and related educational reforms – are described in Chapters 20, 38, 39, and 40 respectively. Chapters 10 and 28 describe the educational challenges and reforms related to diversity in South Africa and in the Francophone nations in Africa.

**Worldwide immigration and education**

The movement of peoples across national boundaries is as old as the nation-state itself (Castles & Davidson, 2000). However, never before in the history of world migrations have the movement of diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups within and across nation-states been as numerous and rapid or raised such complex and difficult questions about citizenship, human rights, democracy, and education (Banks, chap. 22, this volume). In 2005, there were approximately 191 million migrants living outside the nation in which they were born, which was 3% of the world’s population (Martin & Zurcher, 2008).

Many worldwide trends and developments are challenging the notion of educating students to function in one nation-state. They include the ways people are moving back and forth across national borders (Castles, chap. 3, this volume), the rights of movement permitted by the European Union, and the rights codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These trends indicate that we should be educating students to be cosmopolitan citizens in a global community (Appiah, 2006).
The assimilationist and liberal vision of society

The Western nations were characterized by myriad racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity when the ethnic revival movements emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. However, they were dominated by an assimilationist ideology. A major national goal in the US, Canada, and Australia was to create a nation-state in which one culture – the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Celtic – was dominant. The diverse groups that made up these nations were expected to forsake their original cultures and languages in order to become effective citizens of their nation-states. The older nation-states in Western Europe – such as the United Kingdom (Carby, 1982), France, Germany, and The Netherlands – were also dominated by an assimilationist ideology. Their goal was to maintain their national identities and the cultural hegemony of existing dominant groups.

The assimilationist and liberal ideology that dominated the Western nations envisioned a nation-state in which individuals from diverse groups are able to participate fully. However, the liberal-assimilationist believes that, in order for this kind of equitable, modernized society to emerge and flourish, individuals must surrender their ethnic and cultural attachments. Ethnic attachments and traditionalism, argues the liberal, are inconsistent with a modernized society and a civic culture. Traditional cultures promote historic prejudices, we–they attitudes, and cultural conflict (Porter, 1975). They also lead to the Balkanization of the nation-state. Traditionalism and cultural pluralism also stress group rights over the rights of the individual, and regard the group rather than the individual as primary (Patterson, 1977). In a modernized, equitable society, individual rights are paramount; group rights are secondary.

Liberals also argue that traditionalism promotes inequality, racial and ethnic awareness, group favoritism, and ethnic stratification. As long as attachments to cultural and ethnic groups are salient and emphasized, argues the liberal-assimilationist, they will serve as the basis for employment and educational discrimination as well as other forms of exclusion that are inconsistent with democratic ideals and values (Glazer, 1975). The solution to this problem, argues the liberal-assimilationist, is a common national culture into which all individuals are culturally and structurally assimilated and public policies that are neutral on questions of race and ethnicity.

The rise of ethnic revitalization movements

The scope and intensity of the ethnic protest movements during the 1960s and 1970s revealed that the liberal ideology that dominated Western social science and national policies had serious limitations and neither adequately explained nor predicted the course of events or the status of ethnic groups in modern democratic societies. Western social scientists studying race relations in the 1940s and 1950s viewed the assimilation of ethnic groups as both desirable and inevitable. They were heavily influenced by the writings of Park (1950), the noted sociologist at the University of Chicago who believed that the four basic processes of social interaction were contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.

It was not only national policy makers and social scientists who endorsed an assimilationist ideology during the 1940s and 1950s. Most ethnic groups themselves, as well as their leaders, accepted assimilation into their national societies as a desirable goal and worked hard to achieve it. There were important exceptions of groups that pursued separatism, such as the French in Canada, the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) quest for Basque independence in Spain, the Garvey movement in the United States, and other isolated separatist movements in Western nations that began prior to World War II. However, until the 1960s, most ethnic groups in the
Western nations worked to attain cultural assimilation and structural integration into their societies.

Ethnic groups tried to become assimilated into their national societies in large part because of powerful economic and political incentives. The strong appeal of attaining social mobility within the industrialized nation-states such as the United States, Canada, and Australia motivated many citizens of these nations to rid themselves of most aspects of their ethnic cultures and to become ashamed of their folk cultures and traditions. There has been historically—and continues to be—a cogent push toward assimilation in most nations because of the strong appeal of social and economic mobility.

The assimilationist and liberal ideology that has been dominant in Western nations such as the United States, Canada, and Australia has been successful for most White ethnic groups, who have achieved a significant degree of cultural and structural assimilation into their societies (Carr & Lund, 2007). However, the assimilationist ideology has worked much less well for non-White groups. Even when they are highly culturally assimilated, they may still experience high levels of structural exclusion. Although African Americans and the Indigenous groups in the United States (Native American and Alaska Natives) were expected to assimilate culturally, they were frequently denied the opportunity to attain a quality education, to vote, and to participate in the political process. The Canadian First Nations had a similar experience, as did the Australian Aboriginal peoples. The Western nations created expectations and goals for marginalized ethnic groups of color but often made it impossible for these groups to attain them. The structural exclusion of ethnic groups of color was a major cause of the ethnic revitalization movements that developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

Ethnic protest movements also arose in Western societies because ethnic groups that experienced discrimination and racism, such as African Americans in the United States and First Nations in Canada, internalized the egalitarian and democratic ideologies that were institutionalized within their nations and believed that it was possible for these ideals to be realized. While the conditions of these groups improved in the period after World War II, they still did not have many of the benefits enjoyed by the dominant groups in their societies. In the post-war period, their governments took steps to eliminate some of the most blatant forms of discrimination and to improve their social and economic status. However, these improved conditions created rising expectations. Rising expectations outpaced the improvement within the social, economic, and political systems. The disillusionment and shattered dreams that resulted from the historic quest for assimilation caused ethnic groups to demand structural inclusion and the right to retain important aspects of their cultures, such as their languages, religions, and other important ethnic characteristics and symbols.

The failure of Western nation-states to close the gap further between their democratic ideals and societal realities and the existence of discrimination and racism do not sufficiently explain the rise of ethnic revitalization movements in the 1960s and 1970s. The cultural and symbolic components of many of these movements indicate that they emerged in part to help individual members of ethnic groups to acquire the sense of community, moral authority, and meaning in life that highly modernized societies often leave unfulfilled. Writes Apter (1977), “[modernization] leaves what might be called a primordial space, a space people try to fill when they believe they have lost something fundamental and try to recreate it” (p. 75). As Apter points out, the liberal-assimilationist conception of the relationship between tradition and modernity is not so much wrong as it is incomplete, flawed, and oversimplified. It does not take into account the spiritual and community needs that ethnic cultures often help individuals to satisfy. The push toward assimilation in modernized societies is counterbalanced by the trenchant pull of primordialism, traditionalism, and the search for community. The quest for self-determination,
equality, and inclusion are also important factors that drive ethnic revitalization movements (Figueroa, 2008).

The pursuit of independence by nations in Asia and Africa during the decolonization movement that followed World War II was another important factor that stimulated ethnic revitalization movements and motivated marginalized minority groups to seek autonomy and respect for their cultures, languages, and identities (Figueroa, 2008). The decolonization movement was especially active between 1945 and 1960, when many nations in Asia and Africa became independent from the UK and nations in Europe.

The rise and characteristics of multicultural education

The early phases of multicultural education developed first in the United States as a response to the civil rights movement. They developed subsequently in other nations, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Canada developed a multiculturalism policy in 1971; Australia in 1978. Multicultural education is an approach to school reform designed to actualize educational equality for students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, social-class, and linguistic groups. It also promotes democracy and social justice. A major goal of multicultural education is to reform schools, colleges, and universities so that students from diverse groups will have equal opportunities to learn. In most nations around the world, schools reflect and reproduce the racial and class stratification within society (Gillborn, 2008; Gillborn & Youdell, chap. 12, this volume; Gonçalves e Silva, 2004; Luchtenberg, 2004). The inequality that exists within society is reflected in the curriculum, textbooks, teacher attitudes and expectations, student–teacher interactions, languages and dialects spoken and sanctioned in the schools, and school culture.

Ethnic groups such as Mexican Americans in the United States, African Caribbeans and South Asians in the United Kingdom, the Aboriginal peoples in Australia, Algerians in France, and Indigenous groups in Mexico were experiencing academic and language problems in the schools when the early phases of multicultural education developed. A significant academic achievement gap existed between these groups and the mainstream racial, cultural, and linguistic groups within their societies. These groups demanded that the schools, colleges, and universities be reformed to reflect their cultures, identities, hopes and dreams, and to increase their academic achievement.

The early responses of schools in most nations to the ethnic revitalization movements were hastily conceptualized and implemented (Banks, 2006). An important goal of these early responses was to silence ethnic protest and discontent. There were few structural changes made within schools during the early phases of what became the multicultural education movement. The celebration of ethnic holidays and the insertion of ethnic units and courses at the primary level and of ethnic studies courses at the secondary level epitomized the responses of many schools in various nations. In Western European nations such as the UK and France, the achievement problems of immigrant groups were perceived first as mainly a language or dialect problem (Banks & Lynch, 1986). Consequently, the establishment of language education and bilingual education programs was a common early response to ethnic revitalization movements (Schools Council, 1970). Teachers from the original homelands of immigrant students were sometimes recruited to teach them.

When the achievement gap remained after superficial changes were made in the school curriculum, educators began to realize that deep structural changes were needed to increase the academic achievement of marginalized groups and to help all students to develop democratic attitudes and values. Consequently, the scope of the multicultural education movement
broadened to include a focus on reform of all of the major variables in the school, such as teacher attitudes and expectations, testing and assessment, the language and dialects sanctioned by the schools, and school norms and values.

A significant degree of consensus exists within multicultural education about its major principles, concepts, and goals (Banks & Banks, 2004). However, specialists within the field emphasize different components and groups. A major goal of multicultural education is to restructure schools so that all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function in ethnically and racially diverse communities and nations, and in the world. Multicultural education seeks to actualize educational equality for students from diverse groups, and to facilitate their participation as critical and reflective citizens in an inclusive national civic culture.

Multicultural education tries to provide students with educational experiences that enable them to maintain commitments to their community cultures as well as acquire the knowledge, skills, and cultural capital needed to function in the national civic culture and community. Increasingly, multicultural education has a global component that seeks to help students develop cosmopolitan attitudes and become effective world citizens (Banks, 2008). Multicultural theorists view academic knowledge and skills as necessary but not sufficient for functioning in a diverse nation and world. They regard democratic racial attitudes and the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively within and across diverse groups as essential goals of schooling (Aboud, chap. 14, this volume; Ramsey, chap. 16, this volume; Stephan & Vogt, 2004).

Most multicultural theorists, researchers, and practitioners – within and across nations – accept the broad goals of multicultural education described above. However, there are variations within as well as across nations in the ways in which multicultural education is interpreted and implemented. In Western Europe, the movement is often referred to as intercultural education, a term used to recognize the desirability for people from different cultures to interact in dynamic and complex ways. Antiracist education, which emerged primarily in Britain but was influential in Canada, arose as a critique of multicultural education (Bonnett & Carrington, 1996; May, chap. 2, this volume).

In the 1970s and 1980s, antiracist educators argued that multicultural education did not promote an analysis of the institutional structures – such as racism, power, and capitalism – that keep ethnic and racial groups oppressed and victimized. Moodley wrote in 1995, “The shift from multicultural education to [antiracist] education is from a preoccupation with cultural difference to an emphasis on the way in which such differences are used to entrench inequality” (p. 812). The most significant ideas of antiracist education have been incorporated into mainstream multicultural education (Banks, 2006; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter, 2005). Consequently, the distinction between multicultural education and antiracist education is rarely heard in multicultural discourse today.

Although there is a significant degree of consensus about its goals among specialists and researchers in the field, multicultural education is a contested concept both within and across nations (James, 2005; Lund, 2006). There is debate within nations about the scope and boundaries of multicultural education, as the chapters in Part 2 of this volume indicate. In the United States as well as in other Western nations, multicultural education first focused on racial, ethnic, and language minority groups. In time and in response to protest movements by women and people with disabilities, multicultural education in the United States – at least among theorists – is slowly expanding to include issues related to gender and exceptionality. Gay rights advocates in the United States are making a compelling case that issues related to sexual orientation should be a part of multicultural education because of the discrimination that gay and lesbian youth experience in society and in the schools (Mayo, 2010). Authors of multicultural textbooks in the US are beginning to respond to their concerns (Gollnick & Chinn, 2009).
However, there is a significant gap between theory and practice in multicultural education in the United States as well as in other nations. There are few visible signs either within or across nations that schools are incorporating issues related to sexual orientation into the curriculum in meaningful ways.

The Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Banks (2004) developed the Dimensions of Multicultural Education to help educational practitioners and scholars to conceptualize and develop practices, theory, and research in the field. The five dimensions are: (a) content integration; (b) the knowledge construction process; (c) prejudice reduction; (d) an equity pedagogy; and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure (see Figure 1.1). Although each dimension is conceptually distinct, in practice they overlap and are interrelated. Each of the dimensions is defined and discussed below.

*Content integration* deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a

![Figure 1.1 The Dimensions of Multicultural Education.](https://example.com/figure1.1)

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variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject area or discipline. The infusion of ethnic and cultural content into a subject area is logical and not contrived when this dimension is implemented properly.

More opportunities exist for the integration of ethnic and cultural content in some subjects than in others. There are frequent and ample opportunities for teachers to use ethnic and cultural content to illustrate concepts, themes, and principles in the social studies, the language arts, and in music. Opportunities to integrate multicultural content into mathematics (Nasir & Cobb, 2007) and science (Harding, 1998) exist. However, they are less ample than they are in the social studies and the language arts. Content integration is frequently mistaken by school practitioners as constituting the whole of multicultural education, and is consequently viewed as irrelevant to instruction in disciplines such as mathematics and science.

The knowledge construction process describes teaching activities that help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases of researchers and textbook writers influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed. Multicultural teaching involves not only infusing ethnic content into the school curriculum, but changing the structure and organization of school knowledge. It also includes changing the ways in which teachers and students view and interact with knowledge and helping students to become knowledge producers, not merely the consumers of knowledge produced by others (Banks, 1996).

The knowledge construction process helps teachers and students to understand why the cultural identities and positionality of researchers need to be taken into account when assessing the validity of knowledge claims. Multicultural theories believe that the values, personal histories, attitudes, and beliefs of researchers cannot be separated from the knowledge they create (Code, 1991; Harding, 1998). They consequently reject positivist claims of disinterested and distancing knowledge production. They also reject the possibility of creating knowledge that is not influenced by the cultural assumptions and positionality of the knowledge producer.

In multicultural teaching and learning, paradigms, themes, and concepts that exclude or distort the life experiences, histories, and contributions of marginalized groups are challenged. Multicultural pedagogy seeks to reconceptualize and expand the institutionalized curriculum canon, to make it more representative and inclusive of a nation’s diversity, and to reshape the frames of reference, perspectives, and concepts that make up school knowledge.

The prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education seeks to help students develop democratic racial attitudes (Stephan & Vogt, 2004). It also helps students to understand how ethnic identity is influenced by the context of schooling and the attitudes and beliefs of dominant groups. The theory developed by Allport (1954/1979) has significantly influenced research and theory in intergroup relations in the US and in nations around the world (see Bekerman, chap. 15, this volume). Allport theorized that contact between different groups would improve intergroup relations if the contact between these groups has these characteristics: (a) the individuals experience equal status, (b) they share common goals, (c) intergroup cooperation exists, and (d) the contact is sanctioned by authorities such as parents, teachers, and administrators – or by law or custom (cited in Pettigrew, 2004).

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse groups. This includes using a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the learning characteristics of various cultural and ethnic groups and being demanding but highly personalized when working with students such as Native Americans and Native Alaskans (Kleinfeld, 1975). It also includes using cooperative learning techniques in mathematics and science instruction to enhance the academic achievement of ethnic minority students (Cohen & Lotan, 1995).
An equity pedagogy rejects the *cultural deprivation paradigm* that was developed in the early 1960s. This paradigm posits that the socialization experiences in the home and community of low-income students prevent them from attaining the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for academic success. Because the cultural practices of low-income students are viewed as inadequate and inferior, cultural deprivation theorists focus on changing student behavior so that it is more congruent with mainstream school culture. An equity pedagogy – which exemplifies the *cultural difference paradigm* – assumes that students from diverse cultures and groups come to school with many strengths.

Cultural difference theorists describe how cultural identity, communicative styles, and the social expectations of students from marginalized racial and ethnic groups conflict with the values, beliefs, and cultural assumptions of teachers (Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007). The middle-class, mainstream culture of the schools creates a cultural dissonance and disconnect that privileges students who have internalized the school’s cultural codes and communication styles.

Teachers practice culturally responsive teaching when an equity pedagogy is implemented (de Haan & Elbers, 2004; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). They use instructional materials and practices that incorporate important aspects of the family and community cultures of students. Culturally responsive teachers also use the “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, p. 29).

*An empowering school culture* involves restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse groups experience equality. Members of the school staff examine and change the culture and social structure of the school. Grouping and labeling practices, sports participation, gaps in achievement among groups, different rates of enrollment in gifted and special education programs among groups, and the interaction of the staff and students across ethnic and racial lines are important variables that are examined and reformed.

An empowering school culture requires the creation of qualitatively different relationships among various groups within schools. Relationships are based on mutual and reciprocal respect for cultural differences that are reflected in schoolwide goals, norms, and cultural practices. An empowering school culture facilitates multicultural education reform by providing teachers with opportunities for collective planning and instruction, and by creating democratic structures that give teachers, parents, and the school staff shared responsibility for school governance.

**Ethnic revitalization movements, the schools, and response paradigms**

Structurally marginalized ethnic groups in the various Western nations demanded changes in a range of social, economic, and political institutions so that they could participate and exercise power in them. Much of the response to ethnic protest took place in schools, colleges, and universities, in part because these institutions included a range of constituencies (including ethnic groups) and in part because they were seen as powerful symbols and bastions of the status quo that had participated in the marginalization of ethnic groups (Williamson, 2008). They were consequently viewed as potentially significant vehicles that could play a pivotal role in their liberation.

The development of ethnic revitalization movements in Western democratic nations such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia — and the responses that educational institutions have made to them since the 1960s and 1970s — reveal specific types and patterns of institutional responses. These patterns and prototypical responses are called *paradigms* in this chapter. Kuhn (1970) uses *paradigm* to describe the “entire constellation of beliefs, values,
techniques, and so on shared by members of a given [scientific] community” (p. 175). The laws, principles, explanations, and theories of a discipline are also part of its paradigm. Kuhn states that, during the history of a science, new paradigms arise to replace older ones, which constitutes a “scientific revolution.”

Educational paradigmatic responses do not necessarily occur in a linear or set order in any particular nation, although some of them tend to occur earlier in the development of ethnic revitalization movements than others. Thus the response paradigms relate in a general way to the various phases of ethnic revitalization movements. The ethnic additive and self-concept development paradigms, for example, tend to arise during the first or early phase of an ethnic revitalization movement. Single-explanation paradigms tend to emerge prior to multiple-explanation ones. While single-explanation paradigms usually emerge during the first phase of ethnic revitalization, multiple-explanation paradigms usually do not emerge or become popular until a later phase. The characteristics and cyclic quality of ethnic revitalization movements are illustrated in Figure 1.2.

A sophisticated neoconservative paradigm tends to develop during the later phase of ethnic

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**Figure 1.2** Phases in the Development of Ethnic Revitalization Movements.

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revitalization, when the groups that are trying to institutionalize reforms related to diversity begin to succeed and those that are committed to assimilation and to maintaining the status quo begin to fear that the pluralistic reformers will institutionalize a new ideal and create new goals for the nation-state. The fears and concerns about multicultural education and other reforms related to diversity articulated by neoconservative scholars in the United States such as Glazer (1975) and Schlesinger (1991) epitomize this stance.

I will describe a number of response paradigms that develop when ethnic revitalization movements emerge (see Table 1.1). These paradigms might develop within a nation at different

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Major Assumptions</th>
<th>Major Goals</th>
<th>School Programs and Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Additive</td>
<td>Ethnic content can be added to the curriculum without reconceptualizing or restructuring it.</td>
<td>To integrate the curriculum by adding special units, lessons, and ethnic holidays to it.</td>
<td>Special ethnic studies units; ethnic studies courses that focus on ethnic foods and holidays; units on ethnic heroes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Concept Development</td>
<td>Ethnic content can increase the self-concept of ethnic minority students. Many ethnic minority students have low self-concepts.</td>
<td>To increase the self-concept and academic achievement of ethnic minority students.</td>
<td>Special units in ethnic studies that emphasize the contributions that ethnic groups have made to the building of the nation; units on famous ethnic individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Deprivation</td>
<td>Many low-income and ethnic minority youth are socialized within homes and communities that prevent them from acquiring the cognitive skills and cultural characteristics needed to succeed in school.</td>
<td>To compensate for the cognitive deficits and dysfunctional cultural characteristics that low-income and ethnic minority youth bring to school.</td>
<td>Compensatory educational experiences that are behaviorist and intensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Difference</td>
<td>Ethnic groups such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians have strong, rich, and diverse cultures.</td>
<td>To change the school so that it will respect and reflect the cultures of minority youths and use teaching strategies that are consistent with their cultural characteristics.</td>
<td>Culturally responsive and culturally sensitive teaching strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Linguistic minority students often achieve poorly in school because instruction is not conducted in their home and community languages.</td>
<td>To provide initial instruction in the student’s home and community language.</td>
<td>Teaching English as a second language; bilingual-bicultural education programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Ecology</td>
<td>The low academic achievement of castelike or involuntary minorities is due primarily to their opposition to the mainstream culture in society.</td>
<td>To enable marginalized ethnic minorities to assimilate into the mainstream culture and to become structurally included.</td>
<td>Educational interventions that change the cultures of minority communities so that they are more consistent with the culture of the mainstream culture of society.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued Overleaf)
times or they may coexist at the same time. Each is likely to exist in some form in a nation that has experienced an ethnic revitalization movement. However, only one or two are likely to be dominant at any particular point in time. The leaders and advocates of particular paradigms compete in order to make their paradigms the most popular in academic, government, and school settings. Proponents of paradigms that can attract the most government and private support are likely to become the prevailing voices for multicultural education within a particular time or period.

Sometimes one dominant paradigm replaces another and something akin to what Kuhn
(1970) calls a scientific revolution takes place. However, what happens more frequently is that a new paradigm will emerge that challenges an older one but does not replace it. During the late 1960s in the United States the cultural deprivation paradigm dominated the theory, research, and practice related to educating low-income and minority groups (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966). During the 1970s this paradigm was seriously challenged by the cultural difference paradigm (Baratz & Baratz, 1970). The cultural difference paradigm did not replace the cultural deprivation paradigm; the two paradigms coexisted. However, the cultural deprivation paradigm lost much of its influence and legitimacy, especially among a new generation of ethnic minority scholars and researchers. The cultural deprivation paradigm experienced a renaissance in the 1980s when a neoconservative movement developed and became influential in the United States. When it re-emerged, low-income and minority youth were referred to as “at-risk” students (Cuban, 1989).

The ethnic additive and self-concept development paradigms

Often the first phase of a school’s response to an ethnic revitalization movement consists of the infusion of bits and pieces about ethnic groups into the curriculum, especially into courses in the humanities, the social studies, and the language arts. The teaching about ethnic heroes and the celebration of ethnic holidays are salient characteristics of the ethnic additive paradigm.

This paradigm usually emerges as the first one for a variety of reasons. It develops in part because ethnic groups demand that their heroes, holidays, and contributions be included in the curriculum during the first stage of ethnic revitalization. This paradigm also emerges because teachers usually have little knowledge about marginalized ethnic groups during the early phase of ethnic revitalization and find it much easier to add isolated bits of information about ethnic groups to the curriculum and to celebrate ethnic holidays than to integrate ethnic content meaningfully into the curriculum. Thus Black History Week, American Indian Day, and Asian and African Caribbean feasts and festivals become a part of the curriculum.

Another major goal expressed by educators during the first phase of ethnic revitalization is to raise the self-concepts of minority youths and to increase their group pride. This goal develops because leaders of ethnic movements try to shape new and positive ethnic identities and because educators assume that ethnic groups who have experienced discrimination and structural exclusion have negative self-concepts and negative attitudes toward their own racial and ethnic groups. Social science research in the US prior to the 1960s reinforced this belief (Clark & Clark, 1950); some leaders of ethnic movements also expressed it during the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1970s, many educators assumed that students needed healthy self-concepts in order to do well in school. They also assumed that curriculum content that includes ethnic heroes and the celebration of ethnic holidays would enhance the self-concepts and academic achievements of ethnic groups. In 1981, Stone – a lecturer at Surrey University in England – described the serious limitations of the self-concept paradigm. The influence of the additive and self-concept paradigms wanes as ethnic revitalization reaches its later phases.

The cultural deprivation paradigm

Cultural deprivation theories, programs, and research often develop during the first phase of an ethnic revitalization movement. Cultural deprivation theorists assume that low-income youths do not achieve well in school because of family disorganization, poverty, the lack of effective
concept acquisition, and other intellectual and cultural deficits that these students experience during their first years of life. Cultural deprivation theorists assume that a major goal of school programs for culturally deprived youth is to provide them with cultural and other experiences that will compensate for their cognitive and intellectual deficits. Cultural deprivation theorists believe that low-income students can learn the basic skills taught by the schools, but that these skills must often be taught using intensive, behaviorally oriented instruction (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966).

Programs based on the cultural deprivation paradigm require students to make major changes in their behavior. Teachers and other educators are required to make few changes in their behavior or in educational institutions. Such programs also ignore the cultures that students bring to school and assume that low-income and minority children are “culturally deprived” or “disadvantaged.” The cultural deprivation paradigm also developed in other nations such as Canada and the UK during the 1970s. It usually evokes strong criticisms from ethnic minority scholars and researchers, such as Carby (1982) in England.

The cultural difference paradigm

Unlike the cultural deprivation theorists, cultural difference theorists reject the idea that low-income and ethnic minority youths have cultural deficits (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 2007). They believe that ethnic groups such as African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians have strong, rich, and diverse cultures. These cultures, argue the cultural difference theorists, consist of languages, values, behavioral styles, and perspectives that can enrich the lives of all people. Ethnic minority youths, contend these theorists, fail to achieve in school not because they have deprived cultures but because their cultures are different from the school culture.

Cultural difference theorists believe that the school – rather than the cultures of minority students – is primarily responsible for their low academic achievement (de Haan & Elbers, 2004). The school must change in ways that will allow it to respect and reflect the cultures of low-income and minority youths and at the same time use teaching strategies that are consistent with their cultural characteristics. These kinds of teaching strategies will help ethnic minority youths to achieve at higher levels. The schools, argue these theorists, frequently fail to help ethnic minority students to achieve because schools often ignore or try to alienate them from their cultures and languages, and rarely use teaching strategies that are consistent with their learning characteristics. Cultural difference theorists cite research that shows how the cultures of the school and of ethnic minority youths differ in values, norms, and behaviors (Gay, 2000; Lee, 2007).

Cultural difference theorists are committed to helping low-income and ethnic minority youths experience educational equity and to protecting their rights to cultural democracy. Cultural democracy guarantees them the right to maintain ties with their ethnic families and communities and the right to retain their dialects and languages (Valdés, 2001), while at the same time developing competency in the national language or languages. Ramírez and Castañeda (1974) write:

Cultural democracy, as we define it, states that an individual can be bicultural and still be loyal to American ideals. Cultural democracy is a philosophical precept which recognizes that the way a person communicates, relates to others, seeks support and recognition from his [or her] environment (incentive motivation), and thinks and learns (cognition) is a product of the value system of his [or her] home and community. Furthermore,
educational environments or policies that do not recognize the individual’s right, as guaranteed by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to remain identified with the culture and language of his [or her] cultural group are culturally undemocratic. (p. 23)

Cultural difference theorists maintain that every nation needs an overarching set of values and goals to which all members of the nation-state are committed and that there is a need for a national identity shared by all ethnic and racial groups. Members of all groups should also have the skills and attitudes needed to participate effectively in the political, economic, and social institutions of the nation-state, and should be given the opportunity to participate in these institutions. However, cultural difference theorists also recognize the need for Americans to maintain attachments to their ethnic communities. For many, especially those who are members of visible ethnic groups, their attachments to their ethnic families and communities are strong and important. It provides them with a sense of group identification, a sense of peoplehood, and psychological support. When members of these ethnic groups are provided the opportunities and skills to participate in the shared national culture and in their ethnic cultures and communities, they can make their maximum contributions to the civic culture because both their personal and their civic needs are being satisfied and are given the richest opportunities to develop.

The language paradigm

Often during the early phase of ethnic revitalization or when a large number of immigrants settle in a nation and enroll in the schools, educators view the achievement problems of these groups as resulting primarily from their language or dialect differences. When West Indians and Asians first enrolled in schools in England in significant numbers in the 1960s, many English educators believed that if they could solve the language problems of these youths they would experience academic success in English schools. The early responses by English educators to the problems of immigrant students were almost exclusively related to language (Schools Council, 1970). Special programs were set up to train teachers and to develop materials for teaching English as a second language to immigrant students. French educators also viewed the problems of the North African and Asian students in their schools in the late 1970s as primarily language related (Banks, 1978).

In the United States the low academic achievement of Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans was often assumed to be rooted in language during the 1970s. Some proponents of bilingual education in the United States argued that, if the language problem of these students were solved, they would experience academic success in the schools. As bilingual programs were established in the United States, educators began to realize that many other factors, such as social class, learning characteristics, teacher attitudes and expectations, and motivation, were also important variables that influenced the academic achievement of Latino students.

The main focus of multicultural education in Japan today is language (Hirasawa, chap. 11, this volume). Multicultural education in Japan is driven by local groups, citizens, teachers, and activists who are keenly aware of the language and cultural problems with which newcomer immigrants are dealing (Murphy-Shigematsu, 2008). However, educational reforms to respond to the language needs of newcomer students have made only limited progress because of the strong assimilationist ideology in Japan and the propensity of the Japanese to view Japan as a monocultural and monolingual nation.

The experiences with programs based on the language paradigm in the Western nations
teach us that an exclusive language approach to the educational problems of ethnic and immigrant groups is insufficient. Languages are integral parts of cultures. Curriculum interventions designed to educate students from diverse language and cultural groups must be comprehensive in scope, and focus on variables in the educational environment other than language. An exclusive language approach will not be effective in improving the academic achievement of language minority students.

### The cultural ecology paradigm

Ogbu (2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) hypothesized that the low academic achievement of African Americans was due primarily to their opposition to White mainstream culture and the fear of acting White. He distinguished between two types of racial minorities: *immigrant* or *voluntary* and *castelike* or *involuntary*. Voluntary immigrants come to a new nation because they view it as a land of opportunity and hope. Castelike minorities are Indigenous groups that have experienced institutionalized racism and discrimination in their homeland. Voluntary immigrants – such as immigrants from China, India, and Jamaica in the United States – are more academically successful than castelike minorities such as African Americans and Mexican Americans because they embrace U.S. mainstream values and behaviors that are normative in the schools.

Castelike minorities such as African Americans and Mexican Americans resist the academic values and behaviors institutionalized in the schools because of fictive kinship, which causes them to reject mainstream institutions and values. Because they have been victimized by structural racism and discrimination in their society, castelike minorities have fictive kinship ties and a sense of peoplehood that are oppositional to the mainstream values and cultures of the nation-state. Ogbu (2003) believed that, in order for castelike minorities such as African Americans to experience academic success, significant changes had to be made within their cultures and communities.

A number of social scientists have described serious limitations in Ogbu’s cultural ecology theory and the research that supports it (Carter, 2004; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2004). Ogbu’s theory essentializes what he calls castelike minorities and does not describe the wide variations within these groups. His theory also provides a rationale for educators to “blame the victim” for their educational problems (see Banks & Park [in press] for a discussion of the critiques of Ogbu’s theory).

### The protective disidentification paradigm

Steele (2004) uses an experimental approach to demonstrate a process of protective disidentification that occurs as a response to stereotype threat. His theory focuses on students who are particularly confident as well as competent in a domain such as mathematics or language arts and, as a result, identify with that domain. Stereotype threat applies to members of any stigmatized group, such as females, about whom a negative reputation or stereotype exists (e.g. that females are not as good as males in math). When individuals sense the possibility of conforming to the group stereotype or being judged in terms of the stereotype, it becomes threatening to their sense of self. In an attempt to protect their sense of self, individuals may respond to stereotype threat by disidentifying with the domain and consequently no longer allowing themselves to be vulnerable to the potential threat. Steele describes the detrimental effects that
stereotype threat can have on students who are among “the academic vanguard of their group” (2004, p. 686).

Steele’s (2004) protective disidentification paradigm suggests that well-intentioned remedial programs for minority students are likely to fail because they confirm the racial stereotypes that cause students to be at risk of failure. He recommends reducing stereotype threat for students who are identified with academic subjects by creating an environment that has high expectations for them and does not question their academic ability.

The structural paradigm

The structural paradigm tends to develop during the early or later stage of ethnic revitalization. Theorists with a variety of perspectives and points of view exemplify it, including neo-Marxists (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), critical theorists (McCarthy, 1988), antiracist theorists (Bonnett & Carrington, 1996), and critical race theorists (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These theories provide a structural and institutional analysis of the achievement problems of low-income and minority students. While the other paradigms assume that the school can successfully intervene to help ethnic minority youths to attain social, political, and economic equality, the structural paradigm assumes that the school is a part of the problem and plays a significant role in keeping ethnic groups marginalized. Thus, it is very difficult for the school to empower marginalized groups, because one of its central purposes is to educate students so that they will accept their assigned status in society. A primary role of the school is to reproduce the social-class stratification within society (Katz, 1975).

The structural paradigm stresses the limited role that schools can play to eliminate racism and discrimination and to promote equality for low-income and minority students. Jencks, a noted structural theorist in the United States, conducted – with his colleagues at Harvard University – an influential study that described the limited effects of schools in increasing social-class mobility (Jencks, Smith, Ackland, et al., 1972). He argued that the most effective way to bring about equality for low-income groups was to equalize incomes directly rather than to rely on the schools to bring about equality in the adult life of students. Jencks argued that the schooling route is much too indirect and will most likely result in failure. Bowles and Gintis (1976) wrote a neo-Marxist critique of schools in the United States that documented the way in which schools reinforce the social-class stratification within society and make students politically passive and content with their social-class status.

During the 1970s and 1980s some critical theorists in both England and the United States described what they viewed as the serious limitations of multicultural education. Some of them argued that multicultural education was a palliative to keep marginalized groups such as African Americans and African Caribbeans from rebelling against a system that promotes structural inequality and institutionalized racism (Carby, 1980; McCarthy, 1988). They also argued that schools do not provide interventions that will eliminate the structural and economic barriers that keep ethnic and racial groups oppressed and victimized. They maintained that, because multicultural education avoided serious discussion of class, institutionalized racism, power, and capitalism, it might divert attention from significant economic and structural problems and issues. These theorists stated that educators needed to focus on the institutions and structures of society rather than on the characteristics of minority students and cultural differences.

Most mainstream multicultural educators in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have incorporated elements of the structural paradigm into their analyses (Banks,
2006; James, 2005; Lund, 2006; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sleeter, 2005). Consequently, the criticisms of multicultural education by critical theorists are muted in these nations. However, the anti-racist theory is still viable and persistent, especially outside the US. Although they are limited in the extent to which they can change the structural factors in society, schools can implement reforms that can improve the academic achievement of students from diverse groups (Figueroa, 2008), as research in both the US (Broookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979) and the UK has demonstrated (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, & Ouston, 1979).

The need for a multi-factor paradigm

Multicultural education is replete with single-factor paradigms that attempt to explain why low-income and minority students achieve poorly in school. Proponents of these paradigms often become ardent in their views and insist that one major variable explains the problems of minority students and that their educational problems can be solved if major policies, related to a specific explanation or paradigm, are implemented. Reforms related to culturally sensitive or responsive pedagogy are based on the cultural difference paradigm; cultural deprivation proponents view cultural enrichment as the most important variable influencing academic achievement; some structural theorists view the school as having little possibility of significantly influencing the life chances of low-income and minority students.

Experiences in the major nations around the world since the late 1960s and 1970s reveal that the academic achievement problems of students from diverse ethnic and social-class groups are too complex to be solved with reforms based on single-factor paradigms and explanations (Banks & Banks, 2004; de Haan & Elbers, 2004). Education is broader than schooling, and many of the challenges that students from diverse groups experience in the schools reflect the problems in the wider society. The critiques of schools by structural theorists are useful because they help educators to appreciate the limitations of formal schooling (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). However, structural explanations are limited because they do not provide educational practitioners with the guidelines needed to conceptualize and implement effective educational interventions.

When designing educational reform strategies, educators need to be keenly sensitive to the limitations of formal schooling that the structural theorists describe. However, they should be tenacious in their faith that the school can play a limited but significant role in bringing about equal educational opportunities for low-income and minority students (Noguera, 2003), and helping all students to develop cross-cultural understandings and competencies (Aboud, chap. 14, this volume). In order to effectively design school programs that will help low-income and ethnic minority youths to increase their academic achievement and to help all students to develop ethnic literacy and cross-cultural competency, educators need to conceptualize the school as a system in which all of its major variables and components are interrelated in complex ways (Figueroa, 1991).

A holistic paradigm, which conceptualizes the school as an interrelated whole, is needed to guide educational reform and intervention (see Figure 1.3). Viewing the school as a social system can help educators to derive an idea of school reform that can help all students to increase their academic achievement and to develop democratic attitudes and values. Both research and theory indicate that educators can successfully intervene to help students to increase their academic achievement (Lee, 2007) and to develop democratic attitudes and values (Banks & Banks, 2004; Stephan & Vogt, 2004).

Conceptualizing the school as a social system means that educators should formulate and
initiate a change strategy that reforms the total school environment in order to implement multicultural education successfully. Reforming any one variable, such as curriculum materials and the formal curriculum, is necessary but not sufficient. Multicultural and sensitive teaching materials are ineffective in the hands of teachers who have negative attitudes and low expectations for various ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups. Such teachers are likely to use multicultural materials rarely or to use them in a detrimental way when they do. Thus, helping teachers and other members of the school staff to develop democratic attitudes and values is essential when implementing multicultural programs and experiences.

When formulating plans for multicultural education, educators should conceptualize the school as a microculture that has norms, values, roles, stratifications, and goals like other cultural systems. The school has a dominant culture and a variety of subcultures. Most schools around the world are multicultural because many kinds of diversity exist within and across groups. Teachers in schools around the world also come from many different ethnic groups and cultures. Many teachers were socialized in cultures other than the dominant one, although these may be forgotten and repressed. The school is a microculture where the cultures of students and teachers meet. The school should be a cultural environment where acculturation takes place: both teachers and students should incorporate some of the views, perceptions, and ethos of each other as they interact (see Figure 1.4). This process will enrich both teachers and students, and the academic achievement of students from diverse cultures will be enhanced because their cosmos and ethos will be reflected and legitimized in the school.

Historically, schools in most societies have had assimilation rather than acculturation as their major goal. The students were expected to acquire the dominant culture of the school and society, but the school neither legitimized nor assimilated parts of the students’ cultures.
Assimilation and acculturation are different in important ways. Assimilation involves the complete elimination of cultural differences and differentiating group identification. When acculturation occurs, a culture is modified through contact with one or more other cultures but maintains its essence (Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969).

Both acculturation and accommodation should take place in schools in multicultural democratic societies. When accommodation occurs, groups with diverse cultures maintain their separate identities but live in peaceful interaction. It is essential that schools in democratic societies acculturate students rather than foster tight ethnic boundaries, because all students, including ethnic minority students, must develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to become successful citizens of their cultural communities, their nation-states, and the global community.

If they are to function successfully in their nation-states, ethnic minority students must develop competency in the national language or languages and acquire the skills needed to participate in the national civic culture. They must also develop a commitment to the overarching democratic ideals of their nation-state, such as equality and justice. Acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to participate in their nation-state and in the global community means that all students, including majority group students, will often find it necessary to assimilate cultural components that are not a part of their home and community cultures. However, ethnic minority students can assimilate essential aspects of the mainstream culture without surrendering the most important aspects of their first culture or becoming alienated from it. The school should help students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively in their community culture, in the mainstream national culture, and within and between other ethnic cultures (see Figure 1.5). The school should not require students to become alienated from their families and communities in order to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in the national civic culture.

While students will find it essential to assimilate values, knowledge, and skills from the
mainstream culture, educators can gain valuable insights into their students’ cultures by viewing the world from their perspectives, spending time in their students’ homes and communities, and consequently gaining an understanding of the “funds of knowledge” in the worlds of their students (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Viewing the world from the perspectives of their students and becoming aware of the complex knowledge, norms, and ethos in their communities and cultures will help educators to create a school culture that validates and legitimizes the cultures of their students as well as enriches their personal lives.

Notes

1 *First Nations* is a term used to describe the original peoples of Canada.

2 *Fictive kinship* is used by Ogbu (2003) to describe the strong sense of identity and affiliation that marginalized ethnic groups such as African Americans and Mexican Americans have with the members of their racial or ethnic groups that developed from a shared history of victimization and exclusion.

References


Critical multiculturalism and education

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In the 1990s, multiculturalism as public policy seemed to be in the ascendant. Some 30–40 years after the genesis of the multiculturalist movement, even its critics were acknowledging – albeit with an overtly wearied resignation – its increasingly significant influence on public policy, particularly within education. Nathan Glazer (1998), a long time skeptic of multiculturalism, did just that when he conceded, in the ironic title of his book, “we are all multiculturalists now.” Multiculturalism, at least in his view, had finally “won” (p. 4) because the issue of greater public representation for minority groups was increasingly commonplace in discussions of democracy and representation in the civic realm (see, for example, Goldberg, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). It seemed that the notion of a pluralized public sphere – where cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity could be actively and positively accommodated – was becoming an increasingly accepted part of social and political life in modern nation-states.

How times have changed. In this first decade of a new century, and particularly post-9/11, we have seen a rapid and significant retrenchment of multiculturalism in a wide range of nation-states. In the US, decades of affirmative action and related civil rights advances for African Americans have been dismantled, most notably in relation to access to higher education (Kellough, 2006). The provision of bilingual education, particularly for Latino and Latina Americans, has also been severely circumscribed, and in some U.S. states actually proscribed, by legislation promoting a monolingual English language philosophy as a prerequisite for U.S. citizenship (May, 2008b). Meanwhile, across Europe, itself subject to the Madrid bombings of 2004 and the London bombings of 2005, multiculturalism as public policy is in apparent full retreat, as European states increasingly assert that minority groups “integrate” or accept dominant social, cultural, linguistic, and (especially) religious mores as the price of ongoing citizenship (Modood, 2007).

These arguments are not new – the “threat” of multiculturalism to social and political cohesion has long been a key trope of the Right (see, for example, Glazer & Moynihan, 1975; Schlesinger, 1992). However, they have clearly gained purchase in the increasingly securitized post-9/11 environment as both an explanation for, and a visceral rejection of, the apparent willful failure of minorities to accept dominant societal mores and values. As the recent polemics against multiculturalism by Barry (2000) and Huntington (2005) illustrate starkly, ongoing ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious differences are simply no longer to be tolerated if
nation-states are to continue to make their way safely in the world, or so the story goes. And the role of education is often at the center of such attacks.

In this current “post-multicultural” environment, the observations made by Torres (1998) about the challenges still facing multiculturalism, at the time of its apparent ascendancy in the late 1990s, are thus highly prescient. As he argued then:

The multitude of tasks confronting multiculturalism is overwhelming. They include the attempt to develop a sensible, theoretically refined, and defensible new metatheoretical and theoretical territory that would create the foundations for multiculturalism as a paradigm; the attempt to establish its epistemological and logical premise around notions of experience, narrative, voice, agency and identity; the attempt to pursue empirical research linking culture/power/knowledge with equality/inequality/discrimination; and the need to defend multiculturalism from the conservative Right that has demonized it as an unpatriotic movement. (p. 446)

Taken in reverse order, the challenges Torres (1998) highlights can be usefully paraphrased as:

- the ongoing critique of multiculturalism from the Right;
- the tendency of multiculturalism to concentrate on culture at the expense of structural concerns such as racism and socioeconomic inequality;
- the challenges that postmodernist understandings of identity present for multiculturalism;
- the urgent need to develop a multiculturalist paradigm that effectively addresses – and, where necessary, redresses – all of the above.

The challenge to multiculturalism from the Right, while a central contributing characteristic of its current international retrenchment, is not my immediate concern here. The wider sociopolitical circumstances that exist at present will inevitably require a significant social and political realignment if multiculturalism – and the related rights of minorities with their social, cultural, linguistic, and religious practices – is to re-emerge as acceptable public policy. It is not that this debate is not central or pivotal (it clearly is); it is just that it is beyond the scope of this chapter, with its particular focus on education (although for further discussion on these wider issues see Kymlicka, 2007; May 1999a, 2008a, 2008b; Modood, 2007).

However, for the purposes of this chapter, I do wish to review here the second and third challenges to multiculturalism identified by Torres (1998) – what might be termed the “culturalist” and “postmodernist” critiques, respectively – since these bear directly on the subsequent development of critical multiculturalism within education, my principal concern in what follows. In so doing, I will highlight key aspects of critical multiculturalism, and the implications attendant upon it. I will also argue that critical multiculturalism is an educational paradigm that, in Torres’s words, is sufficiently “sensible, theoretically refined, and defensible” (p. 446) as to take us forward from here – particularly in light of, and indeed despite, the current sociopolitical circumstances that appear so antithetical to an ongoing commitment to public multiculturalism.

**The problem of culture**

For much of its history, multiculturalism has been plagued by an idealistic, naive preoccupation with culture at the expense of broader material and structural concerns. If only cultural
differences could be recognized, so the story went, the prospects of a harmonious multi-ethnic society could then (more easily) be achieved. This strain of multiculturalism is most evident in the rhetoric of early forms of multicultural education, developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s (for useful critiques here, see Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Modood & May, 2001). It is encapsulated by the British antiracist educator Hatcher’s (1987) observation that:

[While] culture is the central concept around which [this] multiculturalism is constructed, the concept is given only a taken-for-granted common sense meaning, impoverished both theoretically and in terms of concrete lived experience. It is a concept of culture innocent of class. (p. 188)

Hatcher’s (1987) acerbic assessment formed part of a sustained assault by “antiracist” theorists in Britain in the 1980s and, subsequently, critical race theorists in the US in the 1990s, on what they perceived to be the endemic utopianism and naivety associated with the multicultural education movement of that era. This movement has since come to be described as “liberal multiculturalism” in the US and “benevolent multiculturalism” elsewhere (see May, 1994; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). Antiracist critics of benevolent or liberal multiculturalism, notably the British antiracist educator Troyna (1993), have argued that such an approach constituted an irredeemably “deracialized” discourse, an approach which reified culture and cultural difference, and which failed to address adequately, if at all, material issues of racism and disadvantage, and related forms of discrimination and inequality. British commentators initiated this broad antiracist position – a result, in turn, of the British antiracist education movement’s origins in a neo-Marxist critique of multiculturalism. However, it has since also been articulated forcefully in Canada (see, for example, Dei, 1996) and the US, the last most notably in the application of critical race theory to education (see, for example, Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993).

Despite the perspicacity of these criticisms, what antiracist and critical race theorists have consistently underestimated (or, simply, ignored) is the remarkably similar criticisms from more critical educators within the multiculturalist paradigm itself.1 Thus, Kalantzis and Cope (1999), key proponents of multicultural education, can observe:

Whilst mouthing good intentions about pluralism . . . this sort of multiculturalism can end up doing nothing either to change the mainstream or to improve the access of those historically denied its power and privileges. It need not change the identity of the dominant culture in such a way that there can be genuine negotiation with “minorities” about matters social or symbolic or economic. It need not change education in such a way that issues of diversity are on the agenda for all students. It need not change education so that diversity might become a positive resource for access rather than a cultural deficit to be remedied by affirmation of difference alone. (p. 255)

Multiculturalists have responded to this critique from both within and without by acknowledging more directly the role of unequal power relations and the inequalities and differential effects that ensue from them. As Berlak and Moyenda (2001) argue: “central to critical multiculturalism is naming and actively challenging racism and other forms of injustice, not simply recognizing and celebrating differences and reducing prejudice” (p. 92; see also Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; May, 1999a; McLaren, 1995, 1997; McLaren & Torres, 1999; Sleeter & Delgado Bernal, 2004). This more critical response – a central feature of “critical
multiculturalism,” as it has come to be known – acknowledges that the logic of much previous multiculturalist rhetoric failed
to see the power-grounded relationships among identity construction, cultural representations and struggles over resources . . . [Rather, it engaged] in its celebration of difference when the most important issues to those who fall outside the White, male and middle class norm often involve powerlessness, violence and poverty.

(Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997, p. 17)

In contrast, a more critical conception of multiculturalism
takes as its starting point a notion of culture as a terrain of conflict and struggle over representation – conflict for which resolution may not be immediate and struggle that may not cease until there is a change in the social conditions that provoke it. Rather than present culture as the site where different members . . . coexist peacefully, it has to develop strategies to explore and understand this conflict and to encourage creative resolutions and contingent alliances that move [away] from interpreting cultures to intervening in political processes.

(Mohan, 1995, p. 385)

However, in developing this broadly critical response, multiculturalists have also more recently come to face another, perhaps more intractable problem – a problem brought on to some extent by this very process of accommodation with antiracist theory. For example, the privileging of racism over other forms of discrimination in early conceptions of British antiracism resulted in an increasing preoccupation with “color racism” and the Black – White dichotomy (Modood & May, 2001). This, in turn, led to a grand theory approach which, in attributing racism as the primary modality in intercultural relations, came to be seen subsequently as both reductive and essentialist (see Modood, 1998a, 1998b). Such an approach subsumed other factors such as class, religion, sexuality, and gender, and failed to address adequately postmodernist accounts of identity as multiple, contingent, and subject to rapid change. These emphases in British antiracist theory also considerably understated both the multiplicity of racism and their complex interconnections with other forms of inequality (for critiques along these lines, see Modood, 1998a, 1998b; Rattansi, 1999; although for a notable exception see Gillborn, 1995). As McLaren and Torres (1999) observe:

[The] conflation of racialized relations into solely a Black – White paradigm has prevented scholars from engaging more fully the specificities of particular groups and from exploring more deeply comparative ethnic histories of racism and how these are linked to changing class relations in late capitalism. (pp. 45–46)

The preoccupation with color racism is also a feature of the parallel Canadian antiracist education movement, as well as critical race theory (CRT) as it has been developed in the US, and applied to education, over the last decade. Darder and Torres (2002), for example, in addressing CRT directly, are highly critical of the “overwhelming tendency” to focus on reified “notions of race” (p. 260). They argue instead for “a critical language and conceptual apparatus” that, while still foregrounding racism and racial inequality, simultaneously encompasses “multiple social expressions of racism” (Darder & Torres, p. 260). This would allow CRT advocates, as well as antiracist theorists, to better address the increasing articulation
of new “cultural racisms,” where race as a signifier is transmuted into the seemingly more acceptable discourse of “cultural differences” (Modood, 2007; Rattansi, 1999). In this process, essentialist racialized discourses are “disguised” by describing group differences principally in cultural and/or historical terms – ethnic terms, in effect – without specifically mentioning “race” or overtly racial criteria (Barker, 1981; Small, 1994). New racisms, in this sense, can be described as a form of ethnicism which, as Brah (1992) describes it,

defines the experience of racialized groups primarily in “culturalist” terms: that is, it posits “ethnic difference” as the primary modality around which social life is constituted and experienced. . . . This means that a group identified as culturally different is assumed to be internally homogeneous . . . ethnicist discourses seek to impose stereotypic notions of common cultural need upon heterogeneous groups with diverse social aspirations and interests. (p. 129)

Such ethnicist discourses are increasingly articulated in the public domain in relation to minority groups. They are particularly evident in the public and academic discourses that explain and/or defend the abandonment of multiculturalism as public policy in these post-9/11 times.

Avoiding essentialism

But opponents of multiculturalism are not the only ones who homogenize groups and attribute to them fixed cultural characteristics. Ironically, the problems of cultural essentialism and the reification of group-based identities highlighted by Brah (1992) – and mobilized so effectively by new racist proponents – also continue to haunt much multicultural theory and practice. This is particularly evident within benevolent or liberal multicultural education, for example, where the regular invocation of “cultural difference” often presents culture as sui generis, as unique and unchanging, fixed, and final, and determined by ethnic origin (Hoffman, 1996; McCarthy, 1998). In the process, ethnicity is elided with culture and both come to be treated as “bounded cultural objects,” to borrow a phrase from Handler (1988, p. 15), which are seen to attach unproblematically to particular individuals and/or groups. This naive, static, and undifferentiated conception of cultural identity and the allied notion of the incommensurability of cultures end up being not that dissimilar from the new racisms of the Right. Both appear to abandon universalist notions of individual choice, rights, and responsibility in order to revalorize closed cultures, roots, and traditions (Werbner, 1997b).

It is perhaps not surprising then that criticism of multiculturalism with respect to this issue comes predominantly from what one might term the “postmodernist/left” (see Phillips, 1997). The challenge posed by postmodernist/left critics is this: how can multiculturalism, based as it is on a notion of group-based identities and related rights, avoid lapsing into reification and essentialism? In effect, how can it codify without solidifying ethnic group identities, thus accounting for postmodernist understandings of voice, agency, and the malleable and multiple aspects of identity formation? Not easily is the short answer.

The principal problem for multiculturalism here is that any notion of group-based rights stands in direct contrast to much postmodernist theorizing on identities which – with its related concepts of hybridity, syncretism, creolization, and new ethnicities – highlights the “undecidability” and fluidity of much identity formation. Indeed, it is now almost de rigueur in this postmodernist age to dismiss any articulation of group-based identity as essentialist2 – a
totalizing discourse that excludes and silences as much as it includes and empowers (see, for example, Bhabha, 1994; Gilroy, 2000; Hall, 1992). Viewed in this way, multiculturalism’s advocacy of group-based identities appears irredeemably passé.

Left/postmodernist critics are particularly exercised by, and skeptical of, any claims to the validity of distinct (ethnic) group identities, especially if such identities link cultural difference and identity ineluctably to a historical past of (supposed) cultural authenticity. Such critics argue that this form of “left-essentialist multiculturalism” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McLaren, 1995), of which Afrocentrism is often seen as an exemplar (see Howe, 1998), may well be motivated by key concerns to acknowledge positively cultural difference, to address historical and current patterns of disadvantage, racism, and marginalization, and, from that, to effect the greater pluralization of the public sphere. However, it does so at the cost of overstating the importance of ethnicity and culture, and understating the fluid and dialogic nature of inter- and intragroup relations. In effect, communitarian conceptions of multiculturalism such as these are charged with operating a model of group membership that is at odds with the complexities of identity in the modern world. As Said argues, “no one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting points” (1994, p. 407).

This broad critique of “left-essentialist multiculturalism” is illustrated by two allied, although theoretically quite distinct, conceptions: cultural hybridity and the cosmopolitan alternative. Both celebrate the notion of cultural mixture and, concomitantly, disavow the validity of so-called “rooted” identities like ethnicity.

**Cultural hybridity: The postmodernist critique**

The articulation of cultural hybridity – and related concepts such as mestizaje and creolization – is a prominent feature of the work of British theorists Hall, Bhabha, and Gilroy, among others. Hall’s (1992) discussion of “new ethnicities,” Bhabha’s (1994) celebration of creolization and subaltern voices from the margin, and Gilroy’s (2000) discussions of a Black Atlantic – a hybridized, diasporic Black counter-culture – all foreground the “transgressive potential” of cultural hybridity. Hybridity is viewed as being able to subvert categorical oppositions and essentialist ideological movements – particularly ethnicity and nationalism – and to provide, in so doing, a basis for cultural reflexivity and change.

Within the discourses of hybridity, and of postmodernism more broadly, the new social agents are plural – multiple agents forged and engaged in a variety of struggles and social movements. Conversely, hybridity theory is entirely opposed to universalism, traditionalism, and any idea of ethnic or cultural rootedness. In line with postmodernism’s rejection of totalizing metanarratives, exponents of hybridity emphasize the contingent, the complex, and the contested aspects of identity formation. Multiple, shifting, and, at times, nonsynchronous identities are the norm for individuals. This position highlights the social and historical constructedness of culture and its associated fluidity and malleability. It also posits contingent, local narratives – what Lyotard (1984) has described as petits récits – in opposition to the totalizing narratives of ethnicity and nationalism. The rejection of totality and foundationalism in hybridity theory, and its replacement by a plethora of local identities, thus lends itself at one level to a politics of difference that is commensurable with multiculturalism. Hybridity theorists, like multiculturalists, are fundamentally opposed to a static, closed sense of national identity where majoritarian (usually White) ethnicities come to be elided or equated with national ones, a position articulated most trenchantly by conservative opponents of multiculturalism.
(Huntington, 2005; Schlesinger, 1992). Instead, and again like multiculturalists, they argue for a differentiated politics of representation in the public sphere.

However, where hybridity theorists differ from multiculturalists is in sharing with conservative commentators a view of ethnicity and nationalism as misconceived “rooted” identities. Similarly, these identities are almost always ascribed with the negative characteristics of essentialism, closure, and conflict. Postmodernists, like multiculturalists, may thus argue for the pluralization of the public sphere via a differentiated local politics, but they do so via a rejection, not a defense, of singular ethnic and cultural identities. Rather, as Bhabha (1994) argues, it is the “inter” and “in-between,” the liminal “third space” of translation, which carries the burden of the meaning(s) of culture in this postmodern, postcolonial world. Others have described this process as one of “border crossing” (see Anzaldúa, 1987; Giroux, 1992).

Hybridity theory, as part of the wider postmodern critique, appears to offer us, among other things, a more contingent, situational account of identity and culture – a process which involves “decentering” the subject (Rattansi, 1999) and contesting essentialism wherever it is found. But there are also limits to hybridity. First, in arguing for the inter and in-between, hybridity is still predicated on the notion of (previous) cultures as complex wholes (Friedman, 1997). In juxtaposing the merits of the heterogeneous hybrid against the homogeneous ethnicist or nationalist, hybridity assumes that the liminal “third space” is replacing the bounded, closed ones that preceded it. Border crossing, in effect, assumes that (closed) borders were there to begin with. However, as Friedman points out, this simply perpetuates an essentialist conception of culture rather than subverting it since, as Lévi-Strauss (1994) has argued, all cultures are heterogeneous, arising out of cultural mixture. The juxtaposition of purity and hybridity, or authenticity and mixture, so central to hybridity theory, is thus fundamentally misconceived. In the end, hybridity is meaningless as a description of “culture” because it museumizes culture as “a thing” (Werbner, 1997b; see also Modood, 1998a).

Second, an advocacy of hybridity carries with it the imputation that all group-based identities are essentialist. This is most clearly demonstrated in the frequent conflation of ethnicity and nationalism with racism, which, as so-called rooted identities, are all treated with equal disparagement (see Gilroy, 1987). This is simply wrong. There are many examples of ethnic and national categorization which do involve the imputation of essentialized notions of racial and/or cultural difference, leading in turn to social and/or political closure, hierarchization, exclusion, and/or violence. The cultural racism of the New Right is an obvious example here. But, while ethnic and national categories may be essentialized in the same way as “race” categories have been historically, they need not always be. Nor are ethnic relations necessarily hierarchical, exploitative, and conflictual in the same way that “race relations” invariably are (Jenkins, 2008). Indeed, it has often been the case that the global impact of racism has overridden previously non-hierarchized ethnic categories (Fenton, 1999). In similar vein, Werbner (1997a) has argued that the politics of ethnicity, which objectifies communities situationally and pragmatically with regard to questions of redistributive justice in the public sphere, can be clearly distinguished from the violent essentializing of racism.

The failure to make these crucial distinctions points to a third weakness of hybridity theory: the considerable disparity between the intellectual celebration of hybridity and the reality of the postmodern world. This world is increasingly one of fractured – and fracturing – identities. But these identities are generally not hybrid: just the opposite, in fact. Nation-states, as conservatives will be the first to tell you, are facing a plethora of ethnic, regional, and other social and cultural minority demands, many of which are couched in singular, collectivist terms.