

INTRODUCTION: *Multicultural Education and Empowerment*

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Recently a principal of an urban elementary school expressed skepticism toward my interest in multicultural education, arguing that, with all the problems and difficulties low-income students and students of color face, shouldn't I instead be promoting the effective schools movement or programs for at-risk students? Isn't multicultural education a leftover from the 1960s that might be nice to add to a strong education program, but relatively unimportant given other reforms needed in schools for "disadvantaged" children? In the course of attempting to explain "why multicultural education," I concluded that she and I held very different visions of what it is, and probably also of society now and in the future.

A discussion with another colleague surfaced a different set of issues. Somewhat disdainful of my interest in multicultural education, he told me that it merely tries to co-opt Black people into the system rather than directly challenging White racism. Multicultural education, he argued, tries to make everyone like one another rather than to address issues of social inequality. Rather than being a strategy for empowerment and social change, he said, it is really an accommodationist strategy for defusing anger brought about by oppression. He pointed to "touchy-feely" lessons and lessons about group differences in food preferences as examples; he was unconvinced when I pointed out, first, that these were poor examples of multicultural education and, again, when I argued that empowerment for social change is an inextric-

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cable component of multicultural education.

Yet, on reflection, I am aware that many people approach multicultural education without thinking about social inequality or empowerment at all. I have seen lessons containing a rich assortment of content drawn from different ethnic groups and both sexes that taught nothing about racism, sexism, or classism, and that made students passive recipients of someone else's version of the world. Such lessons have always struck me as inadequate because they so clearly ignore the issue of empowerment.

For me, as well as for many other advocates and theorists of multicultural education, *empowerment* and *multicultural education* are interwoven, and together suggest powerful and far-reaching school reform. But both terms mean different things to different people. Many people discuss empowerment without ever addressing social change, what a better society would look like, or society's racial, gender, and social-class groups. Many other people discuss multiculturalism, human relations, or "at-risk" populations as if oppression and collective power were irrelevant considerations or lenses for analysis. This book links power and empowerment with race, social class, and gender issues in education, and it amplifies attention to multicultural education's social change mission.

Empowerment has always been an important concern to oppressed groups, but it is especially crucial to focus on it now. The Civil Rights movement generated recognition on the part of the wider society that discrimination and oppression exist. During the 1980s, however, complacency and backlash replaced recognition. White America assumed that racial discrimination had been eliminated and felt threatened by so-called preferences given to Americans of color. Whites pointed to Asians as the "model minority," "proof" that racism no longer hinders a group's efforts to advance (Takaki, 1989). The presence of White women and a few Blacks in middle-management positions suggested that the doors of opportunity were now open to all. President Reagan addressed discrimination by simply removing sexist wording from laws, and the Supreme Court began dismantling civil rights rulings on the grounds that these are state issues. The "silent majority," with federal sanction, no longer sees the existence of a problem or the need to act. Within this context, action must be developed from within the ranks of oppressed Americans. Schooling, which usually serves to reinforce and legitimate the status quo, can also enlighten and emancipate, working with rather than against indigenous efforts for liberation. Chapters in this book illustrate how schooling can block efforts to advancement,

as well as how it can create conditions for empowerment for liberation.

In this chapter, I will discuss what empowerment means in relation to social oppression, then how different conceptions of multicultural education address power and empowerment. I will then outline some issues and concerns that should be developed within the field of multicultural education; some of these issues are addressed by chapters in this book, some are not.

Empowerment

Empowerment has been defined in different ways. Ashcroft (1987) defines it as "bringing into a state of belief in one's ability/capability to act with effect" (p. 145). Her definition stresses the individual's power to achieve his or her own goals. McLaren (1989) stresses the social purpose of empowerment, defining it as "the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live" (p. 186). His definition highlights the need to transform "the way we live" so that the social world better serves the interests of all its members.

Empowering relationships differ markedly from the benevolent helping relationships that characterize much of education and social service work. Brickman and his colleagues (1982) have described four models of helping relationships, differentiating on the basis of who is believed responsible for causing a problem and who should take responsibility for its solution. The "moral model" blames the victim by viewing persons as responsible for both their own problems and their solutions; the rest of society is absolved of responsibility, and the "have-nots" are supposed to pull themselves up by their bootstraps out of problems presumed to be of their own making. The "medical model" and the "enlightenment model" are both benevolent helping relationships in which "experts" with power and knowledge help those who presumably lack these resources. These two models differ in that the first views society or the environment as having caused people's problems, and the second views persons as having created their own problems through ignorance. The fourth model directs us toward empowerment, viewing persons as victims of problems created by society but as potentially active solvers of their own problems.

The first three models are familiar features on the education landscape. Examples of the "moral model" include exhorting students with

low grades or in lower groups to try harder, blaming low-income parents for lack of interest in their children's school success, and painting a picture of American society as an equal opportunity enterprise in which anyone who wishes can get ahead through hard work. Educators who subscribe to this model support treating all students "alike" and giving little or no special help to members of oppressed groups or making special considerations for discrimination they may have experienced. The "medical model" includes programs that place students in the hands of experts to diagnose special needs and recommend prescriptions for meeting those needs. Special education fits this model well; however, the model also includes any program that may not subscribe to biological causality but that still requires highly trained experts to understand a problem and decide what to do about it. Examples of the "enlightenment model" include discipline programs that instruct students on how they ought to behave, compensatory education programs that teach students skills their homes "failed" to teach them, and English as a second language or transitional bilingual education programs. The assumption is that students from "disadvantaged" groups need special instruction to "catch them up" with everyone else, and once they have the information or skills they had lacked, they will learn and behave "appropriately," and thus succeed.

These benevolent helping models, although they may be implemented with good intentions and produce some positive results, tend to reinforce the status quo and disable members of oppressed groups. Writing about family services, Dunst and Trivette (1987) argue that benevolent helping relationships produce learned helplessness, suggest that the "help seeker is inferior, incompetent, or inadequate" (p. 446), foster indebtedness, often produce poor solutions to family needs, and as a result disable people from working constructively on their own behalf. Hughes (1987), writing about services for rural communities and families, argues that benevolent helping relationships are often simply ineffective because they tend to ignore the strengths and competencies people have, as well as people's analysis of their own needs and problems, to promote homogeneity by standardizing solutions, and to weaken the small, intimate social institutions that impact most directly on people. These authors advocate empowerment strategies that capitalize on people's ability to understand their own needs and that build on the energy, networks, and strengths people have. Kramer (1989), for example, describes health care programs Indian tribal governments have established which build on the resources and networks within Indian communities.

Cummins (1986) has made similar arguments for empowering students of color through education. He distinguishes between empowering and disabling orientations in four areas: (1) whether students' culture and language are incorporated into or excluded from the education program; (2) whether community participation is collaborative or exclusionary; (3) whether pedagogy is oriented toward reciprocal interaction or transmission; and (4) whether assessment is oriented toward advocacy or legitimation of failure. Empowering education programs work with students and their home communities to build on what they bring; disabling programs ignore and attempt to eradicate knowledge and strengths students bring, and replace them with those of the dominant society.

Too often education for members of oppressed groups takes the form of benevolent helping, which in the process disables. A very dedicated teacher in a low-income school described her students to me like this: "They need lots of help with everything. They're Basic Level [lower track] kids, so they're not at grade level, so they need help with just about anything you could help them with." Although her genuine concern for the students' achievement is important, her description does not hint that students might bring with them to the classroom prior learning from outside school, motives, goals, insights, strategies for learning, or personal identities that give direction to their growth.

Chapters 1 through 4 in this book illustrate how schools disable many young people, especially members of oppressed groups, and how young people perceive their own power to control their lives. In Chapter 1, Bennett describes the formation of stratification in a first grade class in a low-income Appalachian community. She shows how the use of four reading groups placed a ceiling on the pace and type of instruction children received, and provided a context within which students constructed identities that matched their position in a hierarchical order. In Chapter 2, Sleeter and Grant examine how junior high students in a desegregated working-class school learn to view public institutions as being controlled by others, through their school experience. Even while students develop power over their personal and social worlds, they learn to comply passively with the demands of a public institution. In Chapter 3, Fordham examines how the organizational structure of a high school depressed the achievement of Black students by trying to separate high achievers from their peers. She develops the concept of "fictive kinship" among Black Americans, arguing that competitive individualism in schools forces Black students to choose between an identity as Black people versus an identity as high achiev-

ers. In Chapter 4, Weis examines female identity formation and White male dominance in a postindustrial community. Referring to a case study of a high school, she argues that female students' partial insights into patriarchy are blocked and fragmented as they experience a strong White male voice and patriarchal relationships among teachers.

Chapters 5 through 12 develop strategies for empowerment. It is important to explain what empowerment means in the context of education, as it is used in this book. Education for empowerment demands taking seriously the strengths, experiences, strategies, and goals members of oppressed groups have. It also demands helping them to analyze and understand the social structure that oppresses them and to act in ways that will enable them to reach their own goals successfully. In part, this means helping them succeed as individuals in the mainstream of schools and other social institutions. Academic achievement is a necessary part of empowerment for members of oppressed groups. The importance of achievement within existing realities cannot be overemphasized. As Simon (1987) points out, "If we do not give youth a sense of how to 'make it' within existing realities, all too often we doom them to social marginality: yet another high-minded way of perpetuating the structural inequalities in society" (p. 375).

Education for empowerment also means teaching students how to advocate effectively for themselves as individuals as well as collectively. Chan, Brophy, and Fisher (1981), for example, have developed a teaching model "to help people assert control over their own lives" (p. 195). It involves helping people learn to use the law and administrative procedures of due process to assert their interests when they feel they are being treated unfairly. Rather than feeling frustrated and powerless, or depending on someone else to advocate for them, individuals learn specific procedures for analyzing problems, investigating alternative courses of action, and carrying out actions that translate legal standards into fair treatment. This model is limited in that it does not change institutions, but at least it helps oppressed individuals mobilize power on their own behalf.

Education for empowerment also means developing the insights and skills to work collectively for social justice. McLaren (1988b) points out that educators who use the term *empowerment* to refer only to "acquiring the cognitive and social skills necessary to adapt to a rapidly-changing capitalist society" (p. 3) generally view society as fair and just, and believe that people can go forward successfully if their own capabilities are strengthened. Educators who view society as unfair and unjust use the term *empowerment* to mean "enabling students to do more than

simply adapt to the social order but rather to be able to transform the social order in the interests of social justice" (p. 3).

Wilkerson (1983) emphasizes skill for social transformation. Writing about the agendas and historic social activism of women of color, she asks: "Are personal advancement and social mobility the only ends that we seek? Do we seek more money? Greater influence? To what end?" (p. 61). She goes on to answer these questions:

Lift as We Climb was the answer given a century ago as newly freed blacks struggled to loose the bonds of slavery and ignorance. The commitment of the historically black colleges to admit students whom other institutions might reject and to open the world of learning to these students was embodied in that phrase. It is still pertinent to women of color in the 1980s, for it acknowledges their need and desire for personal advancement while connecting them with a collective effort to improve the quality of life for many. (p. 61)

Members of other oppressed groups also recognize the need to achieve and climb as individuals while simultaneously working collectively to further the interests of the group. Checkoway and Norsman (1986), for example, describe a project for empowering citizens with disabilities. They point out the need to organize for collective action, noting that people with disabilities often do not see themselves as part of a potentially powerful collective: "Disabled persons often use facilities as individuals, or do not consider disabilities as an organizing vehicle, or are unaware about their rights as citizens in society. Instead they may operate in isolation, or hesitate to intrude in matters which seem beyond reach, or accept the notion of institutional control over resources even when these are intended to meet their special needs" (p. 274).

This brings us to a crucial issue: If empowerment involves collective action based on common interests, which collectives and which social issues do we have in mind? Who is articulating a particular group's agenda, who is analyzing its current status, who is deciding the boundaries defining its membership? Who is framing what empowerment means in practice? Who is deciding what constitutes legitimate discourse and rules for debate? Sometimes those who define the discourse on empowerment in the process shut out and exclude members of oppressed groups. Magda Lewis and Roger Simon (1986) recently published an intriguing (and brave) example of how Simon and male class members silenced female graduate students in a seminar on language and power relations. By deciding himself on the language, conceptual

lenses, and processes to be used, Simon enabled the male class members to take over and render the women silent, in spite of his limited attempts to involve them. They described the silencing process that occurred:

The men monopolized not only the speaking time but the theoretical and social agenda as well . . . [W]omen's experience and discursive forms are defined by men as illegitimate *within the terms of men's experience and men's discursive forms* . . . Being muted is not just a matter of being unable to claim a space and time within which to enter a conversation. Being muted also occurs when one cannot discover forms of speech within conversation to express meanings and to find validation from others. (pp. 207-211)

Members of traditionally dominant groups cannot be the main definers of what empowerment means, what its agendas are, and how it is to be implemented. If they are, they are using language of empowerment to silence and continue to oppress others. Many discussions of education for empowerment that one reads today are framed mainly by Whites and/or males, but often with reference to students of both sexes and of various racial and ethnic groups. Such discussions do not necessarily reflect the interests, concerns, experiences, and language of oppressed groups who are not White or male. This book questions who speaks for members of oppressed groups. It develops ideas that have been articulated within the field of multicultural education, not just *about* women and men of color and White women, but also *by* members of these groups.

Multicultural Education as a Strategy for Empowerment

In order to view multicultural education as an empowerment strategy, one must first take seriously the notion that education can serve as an effective vehicle for social change and emancipation. Considerable research over the past two decades portrays schools as agents of dominant groups that select and socialize the young into a highly stratified society. Yet at the same time, this socialization is somewhat contradictory and provides space for teaching the young to question. Banks (1981) notes that "the school itself is contradictory, since it often expounds democratic values while at the same time contradicting them. The school does socialize students into the existing social structure; it also

enables some students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate effectively in social action and social change" (p. 166). Advocates of multicultural education, feminist teaching, and critical pedagogy have sought to develop and amplify the school's power to validate students' experiences and identities, to promote democratic values and critical thought, and to empower young people.

Multicultural education is an imperative dimension to empowerment, and empowerment is a fundamental goal of multicultural education. This statement is not immediately obvious to many, however, because of the different perspectives regarding what multicultural education is. Suzuki (1984) points out that "many widely differing conceptualizations of multicultural education have been formulated. As a consequence, the various programs in the field often appear to have conflicting purposes and priorities. Many educators have come to view multicultural education as ill defined, lacking in substance, and just another educational fad" (p. 294). This is particularly a problem for people who know little about it, since many well-intentioned but superficial school practices parade as multicultural education, such as food fairs, costume shows, and window-dressing contributions by people of color.

How prominently empowerment for social action fits into any given educator's conception of multicultural education varies. How explicitly an educator announces this varies also. Multicultural education originated within a context of social activism and has always drawn its main energy and inspiration from struggles against oppression. It developed in the ferment of the 1960s and early 1970s, receiving its major impetus from struggles against racial oppression; it subsequently was joined to some extent by feminist groups struggling against sexual oppression. According to Gay (1983), in the mid-1960s, "the ideological and strategic focus of the [civil rights] movement shifted from passivity and perseverance in the face of adversity to aggression, self-determination, cultural consciousness, and political power" (p. 560). On college campuses this activism took the form of demands for ethnic studies courses and the elimination of stereotypic and derogatory treatment. Some of this energy was directed toward the public school curricula and to the "ethnic distortions, stereotypes, omissions, and misinformation" in textbooks (p. 561). At the same time, social science research undermined cultural deprivation theories which blamed racial minority people for their own problems by describing pathologies thought to characterize their cultures. This research suggested that "the academic failure of minority youths was due more to the conflicting expectations of school and home and to the schools' devaluation of minority group cul-

tures" (p. 561). Although the field is still in the process of conceptualizing and developing its political strategy, it has always been grounded in a vision of equality and has served as a mobilizing site for struggle within education.

Multicultural education has been a highly political change strategy; many of its writings are attempts to bring about changes in schooling on the part of individuals who would resist those changes. Since schools, as well as the colleges and job markets they serve, are controlled mainly by White males, and substantive changes must have their support, advocates have had to address them in terms that will not be rejected outright. Having had considerable experience with White and male educators, advocates have known that they can easily be antagonized or alienated by words or ideas that seem "too radical." The politics of bringing about change has necessitated frequently couching arguments for school reform in relatively benign language. To radical educators who do not understand this, sometimes the words of multicultural education advocates seem soft and accommodationist. For example, using the term *human relations*, educators in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa institutionalized state requirements for teacher certification that have led many campuses to develop courses about oppression. Several campuses have hired faculty who specialize in "human relations" to develop and teach the courses. These "human relations" educators have networked quite effectively to exchange resources and ideas for their programs. In the process, oppression based on race, social class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation has become a shared framework for their work. Paradoxically, the benign term *human relations* was quite useful in institutionalizing radical activity.

Within the field, educators define and conceptualize multicultural education differently according to its goals and practices and the social groups it deals with. Some educators address only race and ethnicity (e.g., Bennett, 1986; Gay, 1983), some address race, ethnicity, and gender (e.g., Baptiste and Baptiste, 1979), some focus on race, ethnicity, and language (e.g. Hernandez, 1989), and some address multiple forms of oppression, including race, ethnicity, language, gender, social class, and disability (e.g., Banks and Banks, 1989; Gollnick and Chinn, 1986; Grant, 1977; Sleeter and Grant, 1988). Deciding with which groups one should be concerned presents some important issues that will be addressed later in this chapter.

One also can distinguish between five approaches to multicultural education which differ quite significantly and have different conceptions of empowerment (see Sleeter and Grant, 1987, 1988). These

approaches include human relations, teaching the culturally different, single-group studies, multicultural education (or cultural democracy),¹ and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist.

The *human relations* approach aims toward sensitivity training and teaching that “we are all the same because we are different.” Human relations advocates talk of the power of love, unity, and harmony, and of the need for individuals to try to change the attitudes and behavior of other individuals who thwart loving, harmonious relationships. Inner and interpersonal well-being are much more a concern than social change. The human relations approach has less to say about empowerment as it is discussed in this book than does any other approach. Unfortunately, many people equate multicultural education with the human relations approach (e.g., McCarthy, 1988), and in so doing, miss entirely multicultural education’s challenge to oppression.

The *teaching the culturally different* approach attempts to raise the achievement of students of color mainly through designing culturally compatible education programs. It conceptualizes empowerment as the development of the skills and capabilities needed to succeed in schools and society. For example, Trueba (1988) argues that “at the heart of academic success, and regardless of the child’s ethnicity or historical background, an effective learning environment must be constructed in which the child, especially the minority child, is assisted through meaningful and culturally appropriate relationships in the internalization of the mainstream cultural values embedded in our school system” (p. 282). This approach assumes that society is sufficiently open that once mainstream values and skills have been acquired, individuals can “make it.”

The other three approaches all conceptualize empowerment as collective social action in addition to achievement. The *multicultural education* approach, or *cultural democracy*, attempts to redesign classrooms and schools to model an unoppressive, equal society which is also culturally diverse. Explicitly this approach does not strongly teach social criticism and social change, but implicitly it does so in that a multicultural classroom or school implementing this approach is clearly different from the existing society. Students are empowered as individuals by achieving and receiving validation for who they are, and are empowered for social change by having lived a pluralistic model. The *single group studies* approach includes such programs as Black studies, Chicano studies, or women’s studies, which explicitly teach students about the history of the target group’s oppression and how oppression works today, as well as the culture the group has developed within

oppressive circumstances. More than the other approaches, it promotes identification with and solidarity among members of the specific ethnic or gender target group, clearly defining boundaries between the in-group and out-groups. Finally, *education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist* forges a coalition among various oppressed groups as well as members of dominant groups, teaching directly about political and economic oppression and discrimination, and preparing young people directly in social action skills.

Advocates of these three approaches stress the need to help students acquire basic academic skills and develop an understanding of their own background as well as that of other groups in society. But equally important is helping them to develop a vision of a better society and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to bring about constructive social change. As Bennett (1986) has argued, "In view of the fact that certain ethnic groups are unable to gain, maintain, and effectively use political power, to ignore this goal is to make a sham out of the [other] goals" of multicultural education (p. 212). According to Suzuki (1984), multicultural education must

foster [students'] ability to analyze critically and make intelligent decisions about real-life problems and issues through a process of democratic dialogical inquiry. Finally, it should help them conceptualize a vision of a better society and acquire the necessary knowledge, understanding, and skills to enable them to move the society toward greater equality and freedom, the eradication of degrading poverty and dehumanizing dependency, and the development of meaningful identity for all people. (p. 305)

Similarly, Banks (1989) has described the social action approach to multicultural curriculum development:

To participate effectively in social change, students must be taught social criticism and must be helped to understand the inconsistency between our ideals and social realities, the work that must be done to close this gap, and how students can, as individuals and groups, influence the social and political systems in U.S. society. In this approach, teachers are agents of social change who promote democratic values and the empowerment of ethnic students. (p. 198)

To the extent that school programs ignore the analysis of issues of oppression and collective social action, they are ignoring a fundamental

part of these last three approaches to multicultural education.

Chapters 5 through 12 discuss strategies for empowerment through multicultural education. Collectively, they advance the last approach, education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. Individually, some of them more closely resemble other approaches. Readers are urged to seek linkages among chapters and the “gestalt” they form. I have tried to facilitate this linkage by cross-referencing chapters, since some elaborate on ideas mentioned in others.

Banks discusses the development of a curriculum for liberation in which students analyze social issues and learn to take action. He illustrates with several examples, developing an excellent picture of a junior high teacher’s social studies curriculum. Cortés examines media literacy for empowerment, arguing that media constitute a very powerful source of education. He suggests that schools can teach young people to analyze media as critical consumers and to influence as well as use media as modes of communication about diverse groups in society. Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind argue that cooperative learning supports many goals of multicultural education and that it should be used to help students develop a sense of collective power and self-efficacy. They suggest strategies for using it to accomplish this goal, emphasizing its potency when used in conjunction with a curriculum that analyzes oppression. Pang argues that empowerment is not just for older students, but that it can begin when children are young. She presents examples of young children’s perspectives and suggests strategies for developing critical awareness and action skills at their developmental level. Williams examines African American Language in schooling, suggesting strategies for its use that will develop students’ self-concept, teach Standard American English, promote bilingual communication, and help students learn to assert themselves as positive social actors in school as well as in the community. Ruiz distinguishes between language and voice, arguing that language-minority students need opportunities to use their own voices and be heard, not just to use a language other people consider “theirs.” He urges language minority communities to marshal power within the “private” sphere of home and community, and to use voice for taking control of their own lives.

Chapters 11 and 12 examine the implementation of some strategies suggested in this book and discuss how students respond. Bell describes a project involving consciousness raising around gender issues with a multiracial group of elementary school girls. Takata describes a project that involved “nontraditional” undergraduate students in constructing a community-based research project.

Chapters 13 and 14 discuss issues in teacher education for multicultural education and urban schools. Haberman points out that teachers are self-selected and that those entering teacher education are most often late adolescents. He argues that, because of their level of development, it is not reasonable to expect them to empower urban children effectively; adults generally are developmentally more able to focus on those outside their own families and to comprehend the complexities of urban schools. Martin discusses how universities should work with student teachers, and preferably those who desire multicultural teaching. Using an analogy of the theater, she argues that schools are political "stages"; universities can work with several factors related to power in the classroom to empower student teachers to implement multicultural teaching.

As we develop further our thinking about empowerment through multicultural education, we encounter some important issues that must be addressed. I will discuss three: the extent to which 'powerlessness' is a useful idea, the extent to which different forms of oppression should be treated separately, and the dilemma of inviting students to think their own thoughts when those thoughts reaffirm rather than question the social order. Multicultural education theorists do not necessarily agree with one another on their resolutions to these issues; authors of chapters in this book do not necessarily agree. Nevertheless, they are important conceptual as well as practical issues that should be discussed.

Problems with the Concept of Powerlessness

Power is often conceived as a commodity one either has or lacks. This conception is reflected in the language we use and presents a serious conceptual as well as psychological problem. Consider the book titles *Educating the Powerless* (Charnofsky, 1971) and *The Powerholders* (Kipnis, 1976). One would think these refer to two different groups. However, they do not necessarily. Rather, they refer to two very different ways of viewing power.

The concept of powerlessness implies that "the powerless" have no power and no recourse but to wait for those who have power to share some of it. Charnofsky (1971), for example, in writing about "the powerless," advised that "those in positions of power must willingly relinquish some of it if the emerging poor [the powerless] are to have a chance to try it for themselves" (p. 191). If those in positions of power do not choose to relinquish some of it, presumably the powerless can do nothing.

I am reminded of a recent conversation with a teacher who was feeling powerless to change some conditions in his school that he saw as oppressive to students of color. As I asked him what actions he could take, I discovered how his analysis of change strategies reinforced his feeling of powerlessness. The main change strategy he voiced was the individual (himself) attempting to change attitudes of other individuals, a strategy he saw doomed to failure because so many other individuals had “hard core” attitudes he could not change. He also identified the school administration as the main locus of power, but doubted his ability as one lone teacher to influence it much. Power, viewed as a commodity, was something he felt he did not have and could not get.

This teacher illustrates well how many people conceive of power and its mobilization: the individual rather than the collective is the unit for accessing and using power; powerholders are an impenetrable collective the individual can rarely access effectively, which renders the individual powerless; and one’s own strategies for attempting to make changes consist mainly of persuasion or coercion. This conception of power is reinforced in schools, which stress individual efforts and rarely teach students to analyze power structures and mobilize collective power. Those involved in empowerment must help people recognize and learn to use various power bases, as both individuals and collectives. This requires first rejecting the idea of powerlessness, which both conservative and radical educators have tended to hold, although for different reasons. Giroux (1983) puts it this way: “Too often, as I have pointed out, radical theorists have portrayed the use of power in schools in strictly negative and one-dimension terms. This not only distorts the reality of schools; it ends up being a more ‘radical’ version of management ideology which sees human beings as infinitely malleable. Power in the service of domination is NEVER as total as this image suggests” (p. 199). Ruiz, in Chapter 10, furthers this point, writing that “the radical pedagogue who treats empowerment as a gift is not yet radical. Teachers do not empower or disempower anyone, nor do schools. They merely create the conditions under which people can *empower themselves*” (p. 223, emphasis his).

Ashcroft (1987) provides a useful alternative metaphor for viewing power, from physics: “In the realm of physical science, energy is the ability/capability to do work. A distinction is made between potential energy, which is stored and latent, and kinetic energy, which is in use and active. This transformed kinetic energy science calls power” (p. 149). To the physicist, energy is never powerless: it is either latent or active. Similarly, oppressed people do not lack power, but are not mobi-

lizing their power as effectively as possible. Power is inherent in a dialectical relationship between parties; both parties act in response to one another, although the acts of oppressed people often are not viewed as potentially powerful.

Giroux (1983) argues that power manifests itself in various forms and acts of resistance to domination that oppressed people make all the time. He points out that "much of the opposition in both schools and the workplace represents forms of symbolic resistance, i.e., the struggle is thereby limited to the world of cultural symbols of dress, taste, language, and the like. In order for such opposition to move to a more effective level of action, it will have to be extended into a form of resistance linked to political action and control" (p. 200). This requires developing "social awareness" (p. 200), or recognizing one's own oppositional behavior and viewing it as a creative, although not necessarily politically effective, act taken in response to certain conditions.

With training, oppositional behavior can become politically effective. The field of political science provides some guidance in political mobilization; multicultural educators should draw more on this guidance. Wrong (1979), for example, describes the characteristics of effective political groups. They have solidarity "based on an awareness by the members of their collective identity as a group and their common commitment to a goal, interest or set of values" (p. 148). Members are aware of their collective conflict with another group, and the group has developed a "social organization specifically designed to promulgate and promote" the group's interests (p. 149).

Developing group consciousness and solidarity can be difficult. One must first define who the group is and with whom it conflicts over what. For example, Weis, in Chapter 4, shows how the beginnings of female group consciousness and awareness of conflict of interest are thwarted by male dominance among faculty; Bell, in Chapter 11, describes a school-based project specifically designed to build female group consciousness and their awareness of conflicts of interest between the sexes. Another difficulty in developing group consciousness and solidarity is the ideology of individualism which pervades schooling. Fordham, in Chapter 3, illustrates clearly how school processes oriented around competitive individualism undermine the collective advancement of Black students.

Oppressed people can maximize their power by assessing and learning to use a variety of power bases. Kipnis (1976) discusses this in some detail, drawing on the five power bases described by French and Raven (1959): reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert

power, and referent power. He argues that those who feel powerless tend to use coercive power only, and often violently; this is not necessarily the most effective power base. Power can be mobilized by expanding an individual's or group's power bases and by learning to judge more effectively when to use which base. Youkin (1989) illustrates, describing how people with disabilities are learning to use both litigation and public protest, making each form of power work with and strengthen the other. Williams, in Chapter 9, examines language as a power base, arguing that facility in multiple dialects and languages increases power by providing access to multiple language communities. Over the long run, according to Kipnis, those who use power effectively begin to view themselves as strong and effective, and are viewed by others in the same way, which furthers their ability to use power effectively.

Which Forms of Oppression?

The term *multicultural education* is usually associated with race and ethnicity, although, as mentioned above, many educators address additional forms of diversity. Terms themselves reflect differing conceptions of how to deal with different forms of oppression. For example, some authors distinguish between multicultural education and multiethnic education (Banks, 1981); some specify multicultural-nonsexist education (Colangelo, Foxley, and Dustin, 1979). Is White ethnicity part of multicultural education? What about women's studies? Bilingual education?

Arguments have been made for addressing each form of oppression separately, on the one hand, or oppression broadly conceived, on the other. At issue is the extent to which attending to multiple forms of oppression maximizes power or fragments it. As noted above, successfully organized groups have clearly defined membership, a sense of solidarity, and a clearly articulated agenda of concerns.

Gay (1983) argues that multicultural education's assault on racism will be weakened considerably if it is also attempting to deal simultaneously with additional forms of discrimination. She emphasizes the importance of Black Americans siding with each other against White racism; introducing other forms of oppression such as sexism can only fragment Blacks, as well as other groups of color, and weaken opposition to racism. Issues are often different for different groups and are sometimes contradictory. Hicks (1981) terms this problem "nonsynchrony." For example, while White women have been struggling to enter the workplace, Black women have been struggling for the economic security to leave the workplace and spend more time at home.

While many groups of color have struggled for access to mainstream social institutions, American Indians have struggled to retain control over Indian institutions.

On the other hand, all people are members simultaneously of at least one racial group, ethnic group, language community, gender group, social-class group, and other groups based on age, religion, and so forth. To address only one form of diversity forces many people artificially to separate out other loyalties and interests. Butler (1989) describes the particular difficulty in which she feels this places many women of color, for whom the "struggle against sexism and racism [and classism] is waged simultaneously" (p. 151). She suggests that women of color are natural "agents of transformation" (p. 151) because of their simultaneous membership in multiple oppressed groups.

Therefore, many people advocate building coalitions to address multiple forms of oppression simultaneously, focusing on oppression broadly rather than the oppression of one group (Grant and Sleeter, 1986; Schniedewind and Davidson, 1983). The issue then becomes determining which instances of oppression are most worth challenging collectively, how to build coalitions that will work together for common ends, and how to develop group consciousness on the part of members *without* asking groups constituting the coalition to give up their own identities or agendas. Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind, in Chapter 7, discuss cooperative learning as a strategy for coalition building. They point out that cooperative learning helps students who are members of diverse groups to work together and appreciate each other. But they also emphasize that students who have learned to work together should then examine various issues involving oppression and learn to act on them collectively. Students' individual membership in various social groups become important resources for collective thinking and acting. Coalitions that bring together oppressed people can create powerful groups. For example, discriminatory housing practices can affect people of color, single parents with children, and people with disabilities. The exact form housing discrimination takes may vary across these groups. However, a coalition that addresses housing discrimination as it is experienced by multiple groups is not only larger and more powerful, but is also able to view the problem of housing discrimination more comprehensively. Scotch (1988) describes how the disability rights movement joined a coalition in Washington with other "liberal-left advocacy groups" in common struggle against conservative policies of the Reagan administration. The long-term stability of such coalitions is problematic, however, being constantly threatened by very real differences among

groups. A related issue concerns the role of members of dominant groups. If one is mobilizing a challenge to sexism, for example, what role should men who support feminist concerns occupy? Women who are active in the women's movement vary on this issue, with some rejecting participation of men and others encouraging it. The same issue occurs with relationship to race, language, ethnicity, class, and disability. If one examines the models of helping relationships presented earlier (Brickman, et al., 1982), one can see that members of dominant groups who wish to "help" members of oppressed groups usually adopt either the "medical model" or the "enlightenment model." In both, the helper assumes he or she has the knowledge to determine the goals, agendas, strategies, and so forth, for others. In empowering relationships, members of dominant groups need to work with oppressed people, taking direction from them and contributing expertise only insofar as it is asked for and judged appropriate.

Empowerment as a Process or as Having Correct Information?

Radical educators face the dilemma of wanting students to develop the power to construct their own understanding of themselves and the world, on the one hand, and wanting them to know certain information and view the world in a certain way, on the other. Giroux (1988) illustrates with

the middle-class teacher who is rightly horrified at the sexism exhibited by male students in her classroom. The teacher responds by presenting students with a variety of feminist articles, films, and other curriculum materials. Rather than responding with gratitude for being politically enlightened, the students respond with scorn and resistance. The teacher is baffled as the students' sexism appears to become even further entrenched. (pp. 70-71)

Should empowerment mean teaching these students to recognize and reject sexism, thereby accepting the teacher's definition of the world, or should it mean developing their power to examine the world and act upon it for themselves, which might not involve questioning sexism and could even strengthen it? Sometimes this is a dilemma, because although multicultural and radical educators advocate valuing and legitimating student experience and student perceptions, those perceptions always embody self-interest and personal experience. The

teacher's definition of the world also reflects the teacher's self-interests and political affinities; nobody's definition is universal or neutral.

Simon and Dippo (1987) put this dilemma very well: "how to acknowledge student experience as a legitimate aspect of schooling while being able to challenge both its content and its form during the educational process" (p. 106). Describing a work education program, they show some common patterns in students' perceptions of experience. First, students commonly explain unfairness in terms of individual personalities: "'Harv was a cheap-o.' 'The boss is a jerk'" (p. 111). Second, students draw on what they have experienced to confirm the world rather than to question it. Third, their own life histories and assumptions help shape their interpretations of the world in ways they do not recognize.

As educators we want students to analyze events in terms of patterns and structures rather than just individual personalities, to question why things are as they are and how they might be different, and to hear and value the voices of those whose life histories have been very different from theirs. Probably most radical educators have experienced a process of learning to view the world differently from the mainstream and have invested considerable time and effort in questioning the social world as well as conventional explanations of it. We want exuberantly to convey to our students the "truth," being aware that students often accept and take for granted much of what they see and hear every day. So our teaching often takes the form of providing students with a different vision of the world, namely, ours.

Users of critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy, on the other hand, attempt to help students develop the power to analyze and create meaning by working *with* rather than *on* students in the construction of knowledge. Maher (1987) explores similarities and differences between critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. In critical pedagogy, "oppressed groups name, describe, and then analyze salient features of their world as they experience it. As students come to recognize certain features of their reality as not 'natural' but as socially and historically constructed, they can act on these to change them" (p. 93). Feminist pedagogy emphasizes the private sphere and the personal; it holds that "all knowledge must be contextualized, and rooted in a particular framework and world view . . . [Knowledge] always has, and indeed should have, an emotional component, a feeling component, that comes from the knower's sense of purpose, sense of connection to the material, and particular context" (p. 96). Critical pedagogy emphasizes the collective analysis of oppression and feminist pedagogy focuses more on personal