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Multiculturalism, Race, and Education

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This article considers arguments offered in the debate over multicultural education (MCE), noting that the concept has encountered support from enthusiasts of cultural diversity and opposition from those who believe it creates unhealthy divisions between groups. It reports on a telephone survey conducted in the Washington, D.C., area to examine the extent of support or opposition to MCE among Blacks and Whites (N=348). Blacks' and Whites' attitudes toward interracial contact, MCE curricular issues, racial/ethnic stereotypes, quotas, and discrimination were compared. Strong support was found for the concept of MCE, but issues of implementation were more controversial; interracial differences were generally larger than intraracial differences. A model incorporating variables to be considered in measuring attitudes toward MCE is proposed.

INTRODUCTION

The foundation and stability of democracy in the United States are based upon the credo of *e pluribus unum*: "out of many, one." Unfortunately, many uphold a parochial vision of this democracy as one in which the will of the majority overrides the rights of minorities. Recent attempts to undermine the pluralist mandate of a nation conquered by immigrants is only the latest irony in what has become a battlecry against the expressions of multiculturalism in U.S. public education. Conservative forces have sought to discredit scholars of multicultural education (MCE) as nothing short of professional hacks by denouncing the basic tenets of this concept as anti-educational and attacking pedagogy that goes beyond the primacy of a Eurocentric curriculum as "therapies whose function is to raise minority self-esteem" (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 17). Wong (1990) notes that conservative educational theorists believe an educational emphasis on multiculturalism creates a classroom climate quite different from that of the real world. Thus, in the conservatives' view, celebrating diversity betrays the true purpose of education.

Other scholars argue that a good deal of what presently passes under the banner of multiculturalism is intellectually dishonest; that it has a political agenda, not an academic one. This is the case made by Mattai (1992), who asserts that, in most cases,

... attempts to introduce multiculturalism into the curriculum appear to be political responses, and efforts to infuse the American educational curriculum with multiculturalism largely partisan activities engaging only those few who are committed to effecting significant educational and societal changes. Thus, after almost two decades of curricular engineering, a great deal of suspicion regarding the multicultural education movement exists among African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, many of whom presently raise serious questions about what the movement has done and/or failed to do for them. (p. 66)

In light of the dilemmas raised by these conflicting points of view, the present article has three objectives. The first is to review the major arguments for and against multiculturalism as an instrument for understanding questions associated with race as a perennial source of conflict in American education. This will be achieved by a thorough review and discussion of the literature on MCE. Our second objective is to analyze MCE's impact on

societal expectations and its implications as a formal policy framework in the nation's public schools. Such an analysis also provides an opportunity to examine racial stereotypes and other issues that often divide Blacks and Whites such as quotas and affirmative action. This objective is achieved via our analysis of the results of a telephone survey, conducted in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area in 1992, which measured public attitudes toward MCE. Third, we will present a model of how these attitudes are influenced by sex, age, education, and other factors that are often presumed to affect racial attitude structures.

THE MULTICULTURALISM DEBATE

For many, MCE is simply an attempt to foster an appreciation for cultural diversity, with the overall goal of developing within students a sense of esteem for different cultures. Holders of this perspective argue that knowledge of differences in world views, as shaped by culture, can enhance one's ability to interact with individuals and groups of diverse cultural backgrounds. Heard (1990), for example, argues that the instructional objectives of MCE curriculum must focus on specific features of multicultural understanding such as: (a) the histories of racial, ethnic, and national groups as well as their contemporary behaviors and beliefs; (b) pluralistic awareness and intercultural competency; and (c) prejudice reduction. Additionally, Clark (1993) looks upon the entire issue of cultural hegemony from the perspective of "power relationship[s]" and maintains that

... failure to recognize that knowledge is inseparable from power leads one to mistakenly believe that it is possible to offer neutral or objective knowledge. . . . Thus, the knowledge perpetuated by the schools tends to reinforce the culture of the dominant groups while degrading the other cultures. (pp. 62-63)

On the other hand, critics such as Ravitch (1990) and Schlesinger (1992) posit angry responses to what they believe are the excesses of multiculturalism and MCE in the United States. Schlesinger, for one, accuses radical multiculturalists of dividing our population and distorting American history. He celebrates the so-called "melting-pot" thesis, arguing that the U.S. is "a brilliant solution for the inherent fragility of a multiethnic society" because it has been able to forge a single nation from people of remarkably diverse racial, ethnic, and religious origins (p. 13). However, while Schlesinger acknowledges that the melting-pot theory is more accessible with respect to immigrants from certain racial and religious backgrounds (e.g., White Christians, particularly Protestants), he argues that "even non-white Americans, miserably treated as they were, contributed to the formation of the national identity . . . reconfigur[ing] the British legacy [making] the United States . . . a very different country today from Britain" (p. 14). Pressed too far, he claims, it poses the danger of fragmenting, resegregating, and tribalizing American life.

Is the purpose of history to make minority groups feel good about themselves? Or is it rather to teach an accurate understanding of the world and to protect the unifying ideals of tolerance, democracy, and human rights? . . . Will the center hold? or will the melting pot give way to the Tower of Babel? (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 18)

Bennett (1992) and other defenders of the educational status quo such as Bloom (1987) assert that the present mainstream curriculum needs only slight improvement to more efficiently assimilate ethnically and racially diverse minority populations. They claim that the curriculum of Horace Mann did this for the cohorts of European immigrants during the early years of the Republic and that it can continue to do the same for all learners, differences in background notwithstanding. They fear that MCE, if allowed to spread, would lead to the ethnic and racial balkanization of learning in the U.S., the erosion of a common commitment to the meaning of America, and the further fragmentation of an already enclave-riddled society.

Most disturbing for scholars like Ravitch (1990) is the spread of a pernicious strain of multiculturalism they call "particularism," whose intellectual roots can be found in the

“ideology of ethnic separatism and in the black nationalist movement” (p. 342). According to Ravitch:

In the particularist analysis, the nation has five cultures: African American, Asian American, European American, Latino/Hispanic, and Native American. . . . The Afrocentric curriculum puts Africa at the center of the student’s universe. . . . The conflict between pluralism and particularism turns on the issue of universalism. (p. 342)

Asante (1988) and others of the “Nile Valley School” of Black scholars view Africentrism as a culturally correct and pedagogically sound educational imperative for African American students. Kershaw (1989), for example, advocates the utility of a “Black Studies” method to relieve the historical oppression experienced by most African Americans. This method has as one of its central features “a program of education which develops tools that help identify contradictions between conditions and understandings” (p. 50). They hold that a proper Africentric education will accomplish for these learners what existing Eurocentric curricula has not, namely: (a) increase African Americans’ self-esteem, (b) promote among them a desire to learn, and (c) help them to establish a viable set of positive life values and achievement attitudes. In opposition, Bennett (1992) and others have issued warnings about the dangers of Africentrism, which they view as an anti-White orientation designed to make Europe and the U.S. the rogue elephants of world history. Moreover, because they assert that North American culture is primarily an offshoot of Western European values and mores, an educational focus on African culture for any students in the U.S. is, in their view, unwarranted.

Writing as the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Albert Shanker (1991) dismisses the relevancy of multiculturalism in a pluralistic society by dubbing it an arbitrary process in which it is disingenuous to

. . . teach our children about other . . . people’s customs and values. . . . But this does not mean teaching students that they need not hold other people’s practices—and our own—up to moral scrutiny. If we do this, we confuse objectivity with neutrality. (p. 21)

Critics of multiculturalism further argue that the Eurocentric curricular concentration on English, mathematics, history, and science has given way to a false curriculum of multicultural, Africentric, and/or bilingual education that lacks substance, coherence, or consistent structure. As a consequence, these conservatives claim, U.S. schoolchildren of the future will generally lack the skills necessary for success in the workplace of the 21st century.

Notwithstanding, the idea of assimilation into the mainstream is giving ground to the celebration of differences. The melting-pot theory is increasingly under attack as a new orthodoxy describing the United States, past and present, as a nation of diverse interest groups has emerged. Banks (1993) offers the following challenge to critics’ preoccupation with the so-called divisive nature of multiculturalism:

This misconception is based partly on questionable assumptions about the nature of U.S. society and partly on a mistaken understanding of multicultural education. The claim that multicultural education will divide the nation assumes that the nation is already united. While we are one nation politically, sociologically our nation is deeply divided along lines of race, gender and class. (p. 26)

Banks also offers an historical challenge to the myth of the melting pot when he describes an early account of late 19th- and early 20th-century U.S. immigration policies as ones that endorsed scientific racism “to justify the prevailing negative beliefs about southern and eastern European immigrants to the United States as well as discrimination against African Americans” (p. 276). As he notes:

Nativism, a movement whose major aim was to exclude southern, eastern, and central European immigrants from the United States, was legitimized by scientific racism. This movement triumphed when the Immigrant Act of 1924, which placed tight restrictions on the flow of immigrants from these regions, was enacted by Congress. (p. 276)

Supporters of MCE point out that one of the greatest fears of the conservative, melting-pot faction is that the current demographic trends in schools and society will place the United States in danger of losing its competitive edge vis-à-vis other countries, primarily because of the poor quality of its public school products—namely, increasing numbers of non-White, minority students (Ogbu, 1990). Ogbu argues that students who are members of groups that were brought to the U.S. involuntarily as slaves (African Americans) and those who are members of conquered groups (American Indians and Hispanic Americans) have done less well in reaching the nation's educational and societal goals and expectations than have those Whites who immigrated to the U.S. of their own free will and were thus voluntary participants in the assimilationist educational process of "mainstreaming" students. Nieto (1992) and Gibson and Ogbu (1991) concur, arguing that assimilationist educational policies do not always work in the best interests of students from some minority groups. Moreover, they contend that some minorities, or substantial numbers of minority-group members, either do not want to or cannot assimilate into the American mainstream, no matter what they do; therefore, these groups and individuals reject assimilationist education whenever and in whatever form it is offered to them.

Adams (1991) contends that the struggle over multicultural, Africentric, and bilingual education is really about what kind of personal and group identities U.S. schools should foster and what kind of image of the nation the curriculum should present. Consequently, he contends that proponents of MCE should seek to use a variety of techniques, content, and direction in curriculum implementation to produce eager students of broad sensitivities, outlooks, and backgrounds with the technical and behavioral competencies they will need to thrive in a multicultural world.

Sleeter and Grant (1988) have repeatedly affirmed and emphasized the inclusive, rather than exclusive, responsibilities of MCE to shape American students into productive assets to both their racial/ethnic communities and the larger society once they have formed strong attachments to their racial/ethnic identities. They maintain that the process of good citizenship is best accomplished by using the following five approaches:

- (1) teaching the exceptional and the culturally different—that is, focusing on changing the culturally different by offering them compensatory education;
- (2) Human Relations Studies—promoting positive feelings among students, enhancing students' self-concepts, reducing stereotypes, and promoting tolerance and acceptance of others;
- (3) Single-Group Studies—focusing on one racial, ethnic, or cultural group to promote social-structural equality and advocate the immediate recognition of the identified as a distinct group;
- (4) Multicultural Education—promoting social-structural equality, cultural pluralism, and equal opportunity in schools along with power equity among groups; and
- (5) Social Reconstructionist Education—preparing citizens to work actively toward social-structural equality.

RACE AND RACISM IN EDUCATION

Implicit in the debate over MCE are the issues of race and racism. Drawing upon the work of Kluegel and Smith (1986), Hurwitz and Peffley (1992) note that public policies and programs designed to provide equal opportunity in public education like affirmative action, busing, Africentrism, and multicultural and bilingual education are increasingly opposed by large majorities of Whites. As they point out:

... "the dominant ideology" in the U.S. endorsing inequality as both equitable and fair is based on the twin beliefs that: (1) opportunity for economic advancement is widespread in America today and (2) individuals are personally responsible for their positions in society. Thus, while whites support the

principle of equality (i.e., equal opportunity), they often do not support policies designed to achieve equality of outcomes when they seem to offend a sense of fairness. (p. 396)

Kinder and Sears (1981) have put forth the theory of "symbolic racism" to explain this seeming contradiction between principle and implementation. They contend that opposition to policies seen as primarily benefiting African Americans, while couched in the rhetoric of discussions about standards or self-reliance, in actuality stems from deep-seated racial prejudices.

Countervailing values about racial stereotypes tend to influence racial policy attitudes whenever they challenge cherished values (i.e., the curriculum of Horace Mann versus the curricula of MCE or Africentrism). For example, conservative individualists might view the poor as undisciplined, disorderly, and lazy; these negative stereotypes provide the rationale for the former's opposition to policies they perceive as benefitting the latter (Lyenger, 1989). Therefore, the primary task awaiting proponents of MCE in the United States is one of fashioning a coherent and comprehensive public policy framework that considers both the negative and positive attributes of MCE in its narrowest and broadest applications. This will mitigate arguments shaped around emotion rather than reason. It will also set the stage for the more logical "next-step" approach whereby the masses of Americans can be made to understand fully why MCE is so important at this particular juncture of our nation's social and political life and how it can be manifested in its most advantageous and least divisive form.

Many of the values, assertions, and issues surrounding the MCE debate are intrinsic to the tensions inherent in Black-White relationships in the U.S.. Although MCE is the primary focus of the present article, assessment of the differences in Blacks' and Whites' attitudes toward interracial contact, curricular issues, racial and ethnic stereotypes, quotas in student admissions and faculty positions, and discrimination provide a good yardstick for measuring how well multiculturalism "fits" into the development and evolution of American public education.

In the first part of the following analysis, we examine overall attitudes toward MCE and Black-White differences in these attitudes, beginning with a report of a telephone survey conducted for the purpose of comparing these attitudes. Part two involves the use of regression analyses to develop a model of respondents' attitudes toward MCE.

METHOD

Sample

Data for this study were derived from a telephone survey of 348 respondents over the age of 18 years old living in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. We decided to overrepresent respondents living in the District of Columbia so that we would have a sufficient number of Black urban respondents for detailed intraracial statistical analysis. Our goal was to have 30% of the survey respondents come from within the District. The actual number was 27.6%. At the time of this study, however, of the entire metropolitan area, residents of Washington, D.C. constituted 19.8% of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991).

We apportioned the Maryland and Virginia sample relative to their respective Black-White populations. Over half (56.8%) of the non-District population over the age of 18 lived in Maryland's Prince George's and Montgomery counties. Correspondingly, 60.9% of our non-District sample came from these two counties. Our Virginia sample was drawn from Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax counties (in the northern Virginia suburbs abutting the District). Whereas 34.7% of the population over the age of 18 living in the

metropolitan area (including the District, the two Maryland counties, and the three Virginia counties) were Black (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1991), 42.8% of our sample was Black.

Procedures

The survey was conducted between March 2 and March 14, 1992. Undergraduate students enrolled in methodology courses in the Department of Political Science at Howard University were trained and used as interviewers. The Waksberg–Mitofsky system was used to generate telephone numbers (Waksberg, 1978). Following procedures documented by O'Rourke and Blair (1983), interviewers asked to speak to the person within each household who most recently celebrated his or her birthday. The refusal rate was 50.9%.¹

Data Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine if the survey items could be grouped into broad categories (see Table I). From this analysis, four factors emerged. The first factor was addressed by items whose statements advocate support for MCE (i.e., "Textbooks should be rewritten and students should be required to take courses where they learn to appreciate other cultures"). Items relevant to the second factor assert purportedly negative aspects of MCE (i.e., "Not enough time will be spent on the three Rs, and friction will be encouraged between groups"). Items addressing the third factor reflect respondent attitudes toward racial quotas in education. Factor four items indicate the extent to which respondents blamed Blacks themselves or society as the reason for the inequitable economic, social, political, and other conditions confronting Black Americans. Sigelman and Welch (1991) maintain that explanations for this inequality can be grouped into two categories: dispositional (blaming Blacks) and situational (blaming society).

To improve the interpretability of the results, index scales were created from each of the four factors. Respondent scores for each set of survey items constituting a factor were added together, and the absolute value of the largest negative score was added to each data point. Thus, the lowest score would be 0. The result of the largest score divided by 100 was then multiplied by each data point; therefore, each index ranged from 0 to 100. For example, a score of 100 on the General Support for MCE Index reflects a person who took the most extreme pro-MCE position in response to all three factor items. A score of 0 reflects one who took the least pro-MCE position on these items.

Modelling the Data

In an attempt to further understand the dynamics of the respondents' attitudes toward MCE, regression equations were developed for each of our four additive indices. The following independent variables were included in these equations based on the corresponding rationales:

- (1) *Race*—Given the greater liberalism of Blacks noted by Smith and Seltzer (1992), we expected the Black respondents in the present study to have greater sympathy for MCE and affirmative action as well as less tolerance for negative stereotypes of

¹A refusal is defined here as any telephone number to an eligible household for which an interview was not completed. Almost three-quarters (74.0%) of the numbers dialed were outright refusals. Only 2.8% of respondents failed to finish the interview once the interview began. The remainder (23.2%), were to households whose respondents requested a call back at another time or indicated that the correct respondent was not at home. The high refusal rate is due in part to the use of students as interviewers and the fact that the survey was conducted in an urban area, where refusal rates are typically higher. Nevertheless, this was the highest refusal rate the researchers have noted in 12 years of polling in the District of Columbia.

TABLE I
Factor Analysis Correlations and Overall Frequencies

	FACTOR CORRELATION	AGREE RATE
<i>FACTOR 1: PRO-MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION</i>		
We should have more required courses that teach children to appreciate other cultures.	.44	97.1%
There is too much stress on Whites in history courses.	.54	57.9%
We should rewrite our textbooks so that Blacks and other minorities are featured more, even if this raises taxes.	.63	77.3%
<i>FACTOR 2: PROBLEMS WITH MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION</i>		
Teachers spend too much time looking at different cultures; they should spend more time on reading, writing, and arithmetic.	.74	53.2%
If we try to teach about all cultures, not enough attention will be paid to learning about America.	.71	26.9%
When you have courses that encourage pride in different ethnic groups, you encourage friction between these groups.	.56	17.6%
We should encourage Black students to think of themselves primarily as Americans, instead of as Black Americans.	.61	63.7%
<i>FACTOR 3: ATTITUDES TOWARD QUOTAS</i>		
The use of racial quotas should be forbidden in student admissions decisions to colleges and universities.	-.76	53.6%
Unless quotas are used, Blacks and other minorities won't get a fair shake in admissions.	.77	53.7%
Giving special preferences to Blacks and other minorities when hiring teachers will result in the hiring of unqualified individuals.	-.45	23.7%
Schools should hire more minority teachers, even if this calls for the use of quotas.	.79	50.2%
<i>FACTOR 4: ATTITUDES TOWARD BLACKS</i>		
Narrative: Now I would like to move to another type of question. On the average, Blacks have worse jobs, income, and housing than White people. I'm going to list some possible reasons why these differences exist. For each possible reason, tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly?		
Mainly due to discrimination.	.61	68.4%
Mainly because most Blacks have less inborn ability to learn.	-.44	7.6%
Mainly because most Blacks don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty.	.72	69.3%
Mainly because most Blacks just don't have the motivation or willpower to pull themselves up out of poverty.	-.63	29.0%

Blacks. However, this assumption was tempered by Sigelman and Welch's (1991) finding that Blacks and Whites are equally likely to cite Blacks' own shortcomings as the reason for economic inequality.

- (2) *Attitudes Toward Blacks*—Review of the work of Hurwitz and Peffley (1992), who conclude that racial prejudice is strongly linked to social intolerance and a fear of diversity, suggests that opposition to MCE is probably partly rooted in the public's general attitudes toward Blacks. Therefore, we expected those of our respondents who held a negative attitude toward Black people to oppose MCE. For our purposes, this negative attitude corresponded to respondent agreement with the factor four item stating that racial inequality is caused by Blacks' own shortcomings.
- (3) *Sex*—Recent studies have shown that men are somewhat more socially conservative than women (i.e., Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986). We expected this conservatism to carry over to racial issues due to the perceived negative impact of affirmative action on White males.
- (4) *Religiosity and Religion*—Although churches, particularly Black churches, have frequently been an organizing force for promoting racial equality (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990), Beatty and Walter (1984) found that deeply religious persons in the U.S. are generally more socially conservative and less tolerant of controversial groups than other Americans. Similarly, they found the nation's Catholics and fundamentalists to be socially conservative.
- (5) *Age*—Sigelman and Welch (1991) found that older Whites are more likely than younger Whites to place the blame for racial inequalities on Blacks. However, Easterlin and Crimmins (1991) have suggested that the post-1960s generation is more socially conservative and materialistic than its predecessor; hence, its members may be less tolerant of MCE.
- (6) *Education*—A number of studies going back to the seminal work of Stouffer (1955) and more recently Bobo and Licari (1989) have shown less-educated people to be less tolerant of controversial groups and more racially prejudiced than more-educated people. Sigelman and Welch (1991) found that better-educated Whites and Blacks are less likely than their less-educated counterparts to blame Blacks for the inequalities Blacks face. We expected this tendency to carry over to attitudes toward MCE.
- (7) *Occupational and Employment Status*—There has been strong debate in the U.S. regarding whether or not a person's class has a strong impact on attitudes toward social issues. Recently, Smith and Seltzer (1992) found evidence of a strong impact, while Himmelstein and McRae (1988) found a weak effect.
- (8) *Marital Status*—This factor was considered based on the work of Plutzer and McBurnett (1991), who suggest that people who are separated or divorced have experienced a trauma that may make them more willing to be broad-minded in areas of race.
- (9) *Number of Children*—People with school-aged children are those most affected by issues related to MCE because their children are the targets of the resulting curricular changes. Thus, while we expected that parents would be more aware of the issues, we were unsure how this awareness would affect their beliefs about MCE.
- (10) *Suburban Living*—Hacker (1992) has argued that many Whites fled the central cities because of their fear of Blacks and their resistance to sending their children to predominantly Black schools. Living in the suburbs is generally seen as having a conservative influence on one's political and social values. Therefore, we expected those respondents living in the Washington, D.C. suburbs to have greater opposition to MCE than those living in the city.
- (11) *Racial Composition of Friends and Neighborhood*—Whites who live in areas that are racially mixed or who have friends who are Black were expected to show a greater

tendency toward racial tolerance than were other Whites. Research by Jackman and Crane (1986) indicates support for this hypothesis; however, they note that the effect of this variable is often tempered by the class of the Black friend.

RESULTS

Overall Attitudes and Racial Differences

Strong support was found among our survey respondents for the general concept of MCE. Over 90% of both Blacks and Whites surveyed agreed with the item asserting that there should be more "required courses which teach children to appreciate other cultures." Almost three-quarters of both White and Black respondents disagreed with the item stating that teaching about other cultures would not leave enough time for "learning about America" (73.1%); 82.4% disagreed with the item stating that it would lead to increased interracial friction. Conversely, approximately half (53.2%) of all respondents agreed with the statement asserting that MCE placed too much emphasis on looking at different cultures at the expense of the "Three R's" (reading, writing, and arithmetic).

As expected, issues of implementation were more controversial, and interracial differences were generally larger than intraracial differences in this regard.² Indeed, any consensus between Blacks and Whites disappeared when implementation of MCE policies appeared to threaten White authority and privilege. White respondents were most apt to disagree with items claiming that the implementation of an MCE agenda is part of a "zero-sum" game, or one in which Blacks and other minorities benefitted at the expense of Whites.

For example, large attitudinal differences were evident between Blacks and Whites in their responses to items addressing the need for more culturally inclusive textbooks in the schools. We found that 77.2% of Blacks compared to 31.4% of Whites agreed strongly with the statement, "We should rewrite our textbooks so that Blacks and other minorities are featured more, even if this raises taxes." Over half (56.7%) of Black respondents agreed strongly that "There is too much stress on Whites in history courses," while only 15.8% of White respondents agreed strongly with this item. All the above differences remained significant after controlling for either education or area of residence in a series of log-linear models.

Weaker racial differences were found regarding responses to the items that address the second factor, which focused on the negative connotations of MCE. Some items, such as "Teachers should spend more time on the 3 Rs," and "If we teach about all cultures, not enough time will be paid to learning about America," yielded no statistically significant racial differences. One item, however, exhibited a "U"-shaped response curve: Blacks were more likely than Whites to both strongly agree (10.3% versus 2.4%) and strongly disagree (62.1% versus 49.1%) with the statement, "When you encourage pride in different ethnic groups, you encourage friction between these groups." For other factor two items, Blacks took more pro-MCE stands than Whites. For example, notable Black-White differences (46.6% versus 79.4%) were evident in responses to the following item statement: "We should encourage Black students to think of themselves primarily as Americans, instead of as Black Americans."

²The regression analysis points to the paramount importance of race. When we cross-tabulated all of the demographic variables by the attitudinal variables, race stood out as the variable with the strongest influence. However, space constraints preclude the inclusion of these cross-tabulations in this article.

Strong racial differences were found in response to items representing the third factor, which addresses affirmative action issues. Although Blacks were more likely than Whites to support affirmative action programs in education, there was a lack of consensus in either community.³ For example, 61.4% of Whites and 44.8% of Blacks agreed with the statement, "The use of racial quotas should be forbidden in student admission decisions to colleges and universities." Similarly, 40.8% of Blacks compared to only 7.2% of Whites agreed strongly with the statement, "Schools should hire more minority teachers, even if this calls for the use of quotas."

Strong differences between Blacks and Whites were evident on only some of the questions pertaining to the fourth factor, which addresses attitudes toward blacks. As expected, Blacks were much more likely than Whites to agree strongly that economic differences between Blacks and Whites were a function of discrimination (51.7% compared to 17.3%); nevertheless, 61.8% of White respondents agreed with this proposition. On the other hand, Black respondents were more likely than White respondents to agree with an item stating that these inequalities result because "most Blacks have less inborn ability to learn" (10.2% compared to 3.4%). This racial difference disappeared after controlling for educational differences.⁴ Black respondents were also more likely than White ones to agree with an item stating that inequality resulted "mainly because most Blacks don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves out of poverty" (37.3% compared to 19.1%). This racial difference also was not statistically significant after controlling for education.⁵

Several other survey items unrelated to the four factors also deserve attention. There was, as expected, disagreement between Black and White respondents regarding the extent of existing discrimination. Responses to the item addressing this issue showed that 63.9% of White respondents and 43.2% of Black respondents agreed with the statement, "A Black person with the same qualifications as a White person can make as much money." However, we suspect that this difference would have been higher if the phrase "is likely to make as much money" had been used instead of "can make as much money."

Some of the greatest surprises found in the data concerned the respondents' willingness to have their own children associate with children of other races. The majority of both Black (80.4%) and White (70.5%) respondents with children preferred that their children attend schools that were half-White and half-minority. A larger difference was found with regard to teachers' race. Half (50.0%) of the Black respondents and only 4.8% of the White respondents concurred that it was either very or somewhat important for their children to have "a teacher who is of the same race."

DISCUSSION

In the following discussion of our four factors, we first discuss the differences found between Blacks and Whites. Second, we discuss how our independent variables affected the attitudes of the White respondents. Third, we examine the effects of the independent variables on the Blacks surveyed.

³There is some evidence that beliefs in the negative consequences of affirmative action may have declined in the Washington, D.C. area over the past decade. In a survey conducted in this area in 1983, 47.7% of Whites respondents agreed with a survey item which stated that "giving special preferences to Blacks and other minorities will result in the hiring of unqualified individuals." The number of Whites agreeing with this statement declined to 27.4% in the present study, conducted in 1992. Among Blacks surveyed, the rate of agreement with this item declined from 33.3% in 1983 to 18.7% in 1992 (Seltzer & Thompson, 1983).

⁴LR² = 0.08, df = 1.

⁵LR² = 0.22, df = 1.

Positive Attitudes Toward MCE

Race was clearly the strongest predictor of positive respondent attitudes toward MCE (see Table II). Blacks were far more likely than Whites to advocate MCE. Black respondents averaged 83.6 on the pro-MCE index compared to 66.7 for Whites.

Among those surveyed, Whites who believed that racial economic inequality was caused primarily by factors intrinsic to Blacks were far more likely than other Whites to oppose the positive rationales for MCE. Hence, race was the strongest predictor of these attitudes among Whites. Whites who believed that economic racial inequalities were caused primarily by a lack of motivation among Blacks scored 16 points lower than other Whites on the pro-MCE index (53.8 compared to 69.8). Whites who rarely attended church were more likely to favor these attitudes, while White men were somewhat more likely than White women to oppose them. This latter effect was not statistically significant, however.

Among Blacks, three independent variables affected their attitudes toward MCE, and these variables were almost equal in their effect. Blacks were more likely to support the positive arguments for MCE if they had greater levels of education, if they were more likely to accept situational reasons instead of dispositional reasons for racial inequality, and if they were atheists.

Problems with MCE

Black respondents were less likely than White respondents to have problems with MCE (see Table III). However, though Black respondents scored six points lower on this index than Whites (39.3 compared to 45.1), race was not the strongest predictor of this set of attitudes. On the other hand, Whites were far more likely to perceive problems

TABLE II
Regression of Factor 1 Item Scores (Positive Attitudes Toward Multicultural Education)

OVERALL	<i>B</i>	<i>BETA</i>	<i>P</i>
Race = Black	19.8	.45	<.0001
Positive attitudes toward Blacks	0.3	.26	<.0001
Church attendance (5 = never)	2.5	.18	.0003
Number of children	-2.0	-.10	.03
Sex = Male	-4.0	-.09	.06
Years of education	0.7	.09	.10
$R^2 = 0.28$; Constant = 31.2			
Whites			
Positive attitude toward Blacks	0.5	.43	<.0001
Church attendance (5 = never)	3.4	.25	.0002
Sex = Male	-4.8	-.11	.09
$R^2 = 0.29$; Constant = 23.3			
Blacks			
Years of education	1.4	.20	.01
Positive attitude toward Blacks	0.2	.21	.02
Religion = Atheist	11.7	.15	.07
$R^2 = 0.10$; Constant = 49.3			

TABLE III
Regression of Factor 2 Item Scores
(Problems with Multicultural Education)

OVERALL	<i>B</i>	<i>BETA</i>	<i>P</i>
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.4	-.33	<.0000
Years of education	-2.0	-.25	<.0000
Age	0.3	.23	<.0000
Race = Black	-6.6	-.15	<.005
Religion = Catholic	6.5	.10	.03
Employed full-time	4.2	.09	.06
$R^2 = 0.28$; Constant = 86.2			
Whites			
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.4	-.36	<.0000
Age	0.3	.20	.004
Years of education	-1.3	-.17	.02
Religion = Catholic	7.9	.15	.02
Sex = Male	6.1	.15	.03
Live in Washington, DC	-6.3	-.11	.09
$R^2 = 0.30$; Constant = 83.3			
Blacks			
Years of education	-2.9	-.32	<.0000
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.4	-.28	<.0000
Age	0.4	.26	.0004
Employed full-time	6.5	.13	.08
$R^2 = 0.31$; Constant = 87.3			

with MCE if they believed that racial inequalities were caused by dispositional instead of situational factors. The presence of the latter belief was clearly the strongest predictor of anti-MCE sentiment. An 18-point difference emerged between Whites who believed that racial inequality was caused by a Blacks' lack of motivation and Whites who believed otherwise (41.5 compared to 59.1). Whites were also more likely to see problems with MCE if they were older, had less education, were Catholic, were male, and lived in the suburbs. These findings are in accordance with our hypotheses. Blacks were more likely to perceive problems with MCE if they were less educated, believed that racial inequalities were mostly a function of dispositional factors, were older, and were employed full-time.

Opposition to Quotas

Race was the strongest predictor of opposition toward quotas in education (see Table IV). Black respondents scored 20 points lower on this index than White ones (33.8 compared to 53.7). Among Whites, only one variable related significantly to attitudes toward quotas: Whites were far more likely to oppose quotas if they believed that racial inequalities were primarily caused by dispositional factors. A 17-point difference for this index was found between Whites who believed economic inequalities were primarily a function of Blacks' lack of motivation and other Whites (50.6 compared to 67.1). Two variables were of equal importance in explaining opposition to quotas in education among Blacks: Blacks were

TABLE IV
Regression of Factor 3 Item Scores (Opposition to Quotas)

OVERALL	<i>B</i>	<i>BETA</i>	<i>P</i>
Race = Black	-18.6	-.36	<.0000
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.4	-.29	<.0000
Years of education	-1.2	-.13	.01
Live in Washington, DC	-6.1	-.11	.03
$R^2 = 0.28$; Constant = 99.3			
Whites			
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.6	-.43	<.0000
$R^2 = 0.18$; Constant = 93.4			
Blacks			
Years of education	-2.5	-.30	.0002
Positive attitude toward Blacks	-0.4	-.29	.0003
$R^2 = 0.22$; Constant = 95.3			

more likely to oppose quotas (a) if they were less-educated and (b) if they believed that racial inequalities were mostly a function of dispositional factors.

Attitudes Toward Blacks

Surprisingly, race was found to have no effect on respondents' attitudes toward the reasons for racial inequalities (see Table V). Among Whites surveyed, education was clearly the strongest predictor. Whites with more education were much more likely than other Whites to believe that racial inequalities were caused by weaknesses inherent to Blacks. Whites who had only high school degrees scored 23 points lower on the index than Whites who attended graduate school (55.3 compared to 78.2). Additionally, Whites were more likely to hold such negative attitudes toward Blacks if they were male, had more children, and were divorced or separated. Blacks were more likely to hold similarly negative attitudes toward their racial group if they were religious fundamentalists, had less education, had more White friends, were female, and were atheists.

School Preferences

The differences in Black-White responses to the items on the preferred racial mix of teachers and students in schools are deserving of mention and several interpretations can be made. Large percentile differences (50.0% compared to 4.8%) were noted between Blacks and Whites in their responses to the item that asked respondents if they believed more Black teachers were needed in the schools. Conversely, the majority of both Blacks (80.4%) and Whites (70.5%) indicated that they preferred an even balance in the student racial mix. Regarding the former, it is possible that Black parents are more likely than White parents to see the imperative of having teachers of the same race serve as positive role models for Black children. Black parents' desires for teachers with whom their children can more readily identify and take pride have been noted in earlier studies (Hacker, 1992). On the other hand, it is possible that the White parents among those surveyed may have overstated their willingness to have their children associate with Black children and

TABLE V
Regression of Factor 4 Item Scores (Attitudes Toward Blacks)
(0 = Dispositional to 100 = Situational)

OVERALL	<i>B</i>	<i>BETA</i>	<i>P</i>
Years of education	2.1	.30	<.0000
Number of Black friends (5 = all)	3.0	.17	.005
Live in DC	6.1	.14	.01
Church attendance (5 = never)	1.3	.10	.07
$R^2 = 0.14$; Constant = 27.5			
Whites			
Years of education	3.1	.43	<.0000
Sex = Male	-7.3	-.19	.006
Number of children	-3.5	-.17	.01
Divorced/Separated	-8.1	-.12	.07
$R^2 = 0.22$; Constant = 30.0			
Blacks			
Religion = Fundamentalist	-8.7	-.23	.004
Years of education	1.4	.21	.01
Number of Black friends (5 = all)	4.5	.19	.02
Sex = Male	6.1	.16	.05
Religion = Atheist	-11.3	-.14	.09
$R^2 = .17$; Constant = 10.1			

Black teachers. Some theorists (Jackman, 1978) believe that more highly educated White respondents are likely to give the “socially correct” response to racial attitude questions because their greater education has taught them to do so, not necessarily because they are less racist than other Whites. Other analysts point out that people respond quite differently to abstract questions than they do to real-life situations (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).

IMPLICATIONS OF MCE FOR AMERICAN PUBLIC POLICY

Few would deny that fundamental disparities remain in the types and extent of formal education racial/ethnic minorities and White students of similar ages receive in the U.S. public school system. Despite some of the political and economic advances made in the area of social progress (education, housing, and personal relationships) as a result of the civil rights movement during the 1960s, the United States continues to be largely segregated by race and class. The inequalities extolled by Hacker (1992) will be present well into the 21st century unless drastic measures are taken to counter the downward spiral of poor education, low literacy, and diminished self-esteem that are associated with educational conditions found in most of our nation’s urban centers.

Most public policy prescriptions—including MCE—are not so much remedies for societal ailments as they are imprecise bandages over wounds too deep and broad to ever cure fully. Yet, public policy dialogue is vital to the function of any open democracy, and it is to the advantage of both the majority and minority communities to use the present decade as an opportunity to discover where their differences lie and where they converge. Trying to tie together the loose ends of what a public policy should represent with

respect to cultural pluralism (multicultural education in particular) will necessarily involve discussion about precisely how public policy can be tasked to resolve issues of race and racism. To date, most of the circuitous diatribes in the perennial debate about race-consciousness in the United States have yielded little in the way of concrete action. Indeed, the explosive nature of race relations in contemporary American society generally typify the undercurrents of alienation and antipathy both groups often exhibit toward each other.

Nevertheless, there are two reasons why MCE is not likely to retreat behind the smoke and mirrors of policy debate and quietly “fade to black.” One acknowledges the unasked question of the majority community—How long must reparation be made for African Americans because of slavery?—while the second responds to the minority community’s inquiry—When will there finally be justice and equality for all? To ignore these fundamental distinctions is to ignore the flesh-and-bone issues of redistributive public policy. Trying to avoid the unpleasantness of race hatred and bigotry in American society when addressing issues such as multiculturalism in education is as impossible as crossing a field littered with mines without the aid of sophisticated detection technology. What is needed to more clearly articulate the goals of a policy such as MCE is a sense of direction—a focus on the question of where this policy is supposed to take American education and race relations—and which tools or policy instruments should be used to facilitate this process.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to any of these questions. There is no evidence in any society in the world that heterogeneous communities can live harmoniously when either the majority or the minority controls access to the resources of power. The goal of a pluralistic democracy is to try and, despite all obstacles, to keep on trying to make all groups come together and work for the common good. The goal of MCE to further harmony within a pluralistic society should be central to its many objectives. The tools at hand are a Constitution that acknowledges the existence and relevancy of factionalism while stressing the importance of quality education, informed debate, and expert guidance on how to construct appropriate curricula.

It is probably impossible to fully disentangle the reasons for either White or Black opposition to MCE. Fears about MCE are real, and depending upon how it is implemented, multiculturalism in education has the potential of becoming a very racially divisive issue. Notwithstanding, in his closing chapter of *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, Takaki (1993) uses poetic symbolism to characterize the American willingness to value diversity despite a marred national history of divisiveness. His optimism may yet reverberate in the policies and practices of the schools in our nation’s future:

As Americans, we originally came from many different shores, and our diversity has been at the center of the making of America. While our stories contain the memories of different communities, together they inscribe a larger narrative. Filled with what Walt Whitman celebrated as the “varied carols” of America, our history generously gives all of us our “mystic chords of memory.” Throughout our past of oppression and struggles for equality, Americans of different races and ethnicities have been “singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs” in the textile mills of Lowell, the cotton fields of Mississippi, on the Indian reservations of South Dakota, the railroad tracks high in the Sierras of California, in the garment factories of the Lower East Side, the canefields of Hawaii, and a thousand other places across the country. Our denied history “bursts with telling.” As we hear America singing, we find ourselves invited to bring our rich cultural diversity on deck, to accept ourselves. “Of every hue and cast am I,” sang Whitman, “I resist anything better than my own diversity.” (p. 428)

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