TRANSGRESSIONS - CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Precarious International Multicultural Education

Hegemony, Dissent and Rising Alternatives

Handel Kashope Wright, Michael Singh and Richard Race (Eds.)

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TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION
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This book series is dedicated to the radical love and actions of Paulo Freire, Jesus "Pato" Gomez, and Joe L. Kincheloe.

TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy's (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity--youth identity in particular--the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some "touchy-feely" educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.

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Edited by

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PART I
PRECARIOUS MULTICULTURALISM

CHAPTER 1

MULTICULTURALISM AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: PRECARIOUS HEGEMONIC STATUS QUO AND ALTERNATIVES

Handel Kashope Wright, Michael Singh, Richard Race

Multiculturalism as a concept is both topical and relevant (Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011) as well as being perceived positively and negatively (Lott, 2010; May & Sleeter, 2010; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). The ongoing debates and continuing need to address multicultural education as policy and within classrooms and lecture theatres remains crucial when considering domestic and international practice as well as the changing nature of cultural diversity (Banks, 2009; Modood, 2010; Race, 2011). The essays in this collection address the viability of multicultural education. We are hoping they will challenge the reader through differently focused snapshots of the status quo, the problematizing of aspects of multiculturalism, discussion of the processes and discourses that are contributing to its supposed imminent demise and indication of examples of alternatives to multiculturalism and multicultural education that are emerging. This introduction provides something of a contextualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education today, proceeding through a generalized overview of the context of multiculturalism and multicultural education and the specific examples of conservative European leaders' contribution to the "death of multiculturalism" trope and cosmopolitan education as a specific example of a discourse in complex coexistence with multicultural education.

This collection of essay appears at what Handel Wright refers to in his chapter as a "moment of danger" for multiculturalism and less immediately apparent, for multicultural education. It is the culmination of a number of efforts at describing and understanding multicultural education at the present moment within and beyond individual national borders. In more specific terms, this collection is the result of several efforts from informal discussions and flurries of emails across continents, through a conference double session on "International Perspectives on the End(s) of Multicultural Education" (at the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies, 2009) to a more expansive follow-up, the Invited International Conference on Multicultural Education (hosted by the Centre for Culture, Identity and Education, University of British Columbia in 2009), as well as exchanges on Australian and Canadian multicultural education generated during Handel Wright's November and December 2009 Visiting Fellowship at the Centre for Educational Research, University of Western Sydney as part of the Centre's international research initiatives. The University of British Columbia event was initially conceived as a very small roundtable that would bring together

H. K. Wright et al (eds), Precarious International Multicultural Education: Hegemony, Dissent and Rising Alternatives, 3–13.

eight people to discuss the status quo of multicultural education in Canada, the United States, Australia and Britain. However, the event mushroomed into an international conference with some 26 presentations (a selection of which are included in this collection). This set of experts were brought together to address the initial question of the status quo and possible future of multicultural education in terms of constituent aspects such as youth and notions of identity and belonging; anti-racism as an older (but still quite relevant) discourse and policy alternatives to multiculturalism, with interculturalism and cosmopolitanism as newer alternatives; sport, cinema and music as sites of pedagogy that remind us to think of education broadly rather than as synonymous with schooling; the post 9/11, post 7/7 backlash against multiculturalism and multicultural education in both the United States and Britain (Eade et al, 2008); a tradition of "anti-multiculturalists'" dissenting progressive voices; Islamophobia in France, and a general rising xenophobia and the politics of difference in today's classrooms in western societies.

While the majority of the chapters in this collection are updated versions of essays presented at the CCIE conference, others (e.g. Michael Hoechsmann & Lisa Taylor's essay on multicultural literacy) were invited after the conference. In some cases the conference essays have been radically revised and/or extended, especially in response to recent global events. For example, the anti-multiculturalism comments by conservative European leaders have contributed to the backlash against multiculturalism and the end of multiculturalism discourse and this has led Peter McLaren and Jean Ryoo to add a substantial discussion on what this means for multiculturalism and representation and Handel Wright to replace his original paper (on the problematic of conducting empirical research on comparative Canadian and American multiculturalism in the context of theoretical turn to cosmopolitanism and other alternatives to multiculturalism) with a brief paper that addresses what the global "end of multiculturalism" discourse means for Canadian multiculturalism and multicultural education. Many of the essays are conceptual but others are reports on or discussions of empirical research, especially critical ethnography. Both types of essays come together sometimes to highlight similar issues. For example, Pearl Hunt and Sue Saltmarsh's ethnographies dovetail with Shirley Steinberg's conceptual contribution in highlighting the somewhat marginalized issue of social class, with Steinberg stressing the operation of a power bloc of the wealthy and the dwindling of the middle class, Hunt addressing the experiences of working class and middle class New Orleanians experience post-Katrina and the problematic of undertaking research in those circumstances and Saltmarsh indicating how economic discourse is implicated in the sense of self worth of and personal agency of middle class rural Australian women.

Despite the backlash and the sense in some quarters that multiculturalism is passé, there is still multicultural education, not only in the schools but as Sue Saltmarsh's contribution reminds us, in adult education as well, in the various countries represented in this collection and it is therefore necessary to make meaning of multiculturalism in general and multicultural education in particular in

the present moment. Making meaning of both multiculturality, Wright's (Wright, in press) preferred term for the juxtaposition of various cultures in community or society) and multiculturalism as policy, pedagogy and everyday practice demands what Lisa Taylor and Michael Hoechsmann (this volume) are calling "multicultural literacy." Part of that literacy is about making meaning of how multiculturalism is marshaled to understand or foster belonging, including the pedagogy of citizenship education (as discussed in the Canadian and British contexts by Maryam Nabavi and Richard Race respectively in this collection). At a time when the 99% Movement is protesting against Wall Streets' greed and corporate giants such as Qantas holding stranded air-travellers to ransom, Sue Saltmarsh (in this volume) addresses the question of financial literacy and consumerism amongst mothers and their primary school children in disadvantaged schools in rural and urban communities in Australia. It is also about knowledge about and taking cognizance of the anti-multiculturalist stances of Indigenous Peoples and other "minorities" as articulated by Annette Henry and how the politics of diversity and inclusion are to be engaged pedagogically as discussed by both Dawn Courage and Kal Heer. It is about having an overall sense of the history and status quo of multiculturalism and multicultural education (e.g. as in the accounts with varying accounts of the Canadian case in contributions by Dawn Courage, John Willinsky and Handel Wright).

It is clear that multiculturalism these days is not what it once was. We have come a long way from only a decade and half ago or so when Nathan Glazer (1997, 2002) declared, perhaps both wearily and warily, "we are all multiculturalists now." His acknowledgement of the hegemony, indeed ubiquity of multiculturalism has been replaced with a sense that multiculturalism is dead, dying or simply embarrassingly passé. Indeed there is much talk these days of "the death of multiculturalism," so perhaps we ought to join John Willinsky in speaking of it in the past tense, in asking as he does in the title of his keynote address at Conference and his contribution to this volume, "What Was Multiculturalism?" Even if we are not yet ready to concede the demise of multiculturalism we have to face the factors which have placed it on its deathbed, are supplanting it or at the very least are contributing to rendering it distinctly passé. These include its awkward subjects and their stances that Hesse (2000) would describe as "transruptive," such as Indigenous Peoples and their rejection of multiculturalism and ambivalence about inclusion of indigenous students and communities in multicultural education in the Australian, Canadian and New Zealand contexts. It also includes the tension between multicultural practice and policy and its alternatives, an example of which Paul Carr discusses in his essay on the co-existence of Quebecois interculturalism and multiculturalism and multicultural education in the rest of Canada (this volume). A third example is the set of cutting-edge theoretical successor regimes – cosmopolitanism, transnationalism and globalization/glocalization. Indeed at least one of these discourses, namely cosmopolitanism, is now being discussed in more concrete praxis terms as an

approach to education in Australia as illustrated in Michael Singh's and Bobby Harreveld's contributions to this volume.

Since the early 2000s across Europe, the condemnation by high profile conservative politicians of multiculturalism as a concept has increased. German Chancellor Angela Merkel's comments in November 2010, underline what has been termed the backlash against multiculturalism in Europe (Vertovec & Wesserndorf, 2010). Merkel was politically reversing her previous support for multiculturalism within Germany, a country which had experienced increased immigration, especially but not exclusively from Turkey. Various studies have tracked a similar retreat from multiculturalism in Australia (Luchtenberg & McLelland, 1998; Schwarz, 2004). Even acknowledging Merkel's desire to appeal to elements of the German electorate with her change in policy, what needs to be highlighted is this notion of the multicultural backlash. As Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010) argue: "The backlash discourse has been strong in its own right; it's fair to say that some political reactions have ensued – but these seem to have mainly taken the form of rhetorical adjustment rather than a significant alteration of course" (p. 27).

In England, Prime Minister David Cameron provided more evidence of this backlash, at a security conference speech in Munich (February 2011), when he suggested that the state must confront, and not consort with, the non-violent Muslim groups that are ambiguous about British values such as equality between sexes, democracy and integration. Claiming the previous Labour government had been the victim of fear and muddled thinking by backing a state-sponsored form of multiculturalism; Cameron talked about the need for less passive tolerance and the need for more active, muscular liberalism. Despite Cameron's criticisms, the previous Labour government in England were not strong supporters of multiculturalism as an idea, indication of which includes their strong support of "integration and accountability" in the Early Child Matters education policy (Race, 2011).

Interestingly, Nick Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Cameron's colleague within the Coalition Government in the United Kingdom, gave a speech in Luton (England) in March 2011 in which he opposed the notion of a backlash by supporting and praising the notion of multiculturalism. Clegg has indicated that multiculturalism should be seen as a process by which people not only respect but communicate with each other. Clegg supports a multiculturalism which welcomes diversity but resists division. Furthermore for Clegg, respect and diversity are important conditions of an open, confident society. France provides another European example of the perceived multicultural backlash. The banning of the hijab in public places was introduced in April 2011. As Amiraux (in Silj, 2010) highlights within education: "Schools have been … designated as the main place for illustrating the so-called 'failure of integration' in France. As in the headscarf controversies, public schools are considered to be in danger of overexposure to ethnic cleavages and their related effects" (pp. 74–75). Germany, England and

France – along with Australia (Ang & Stratton, 2006; Jakubowiz, 2002; Singh, 2000) – all highlight the recent complexity involved within the politics of difference. However, the banning of the hijab in public spaces in France needs to be placed in a context of recognizing French secularism as well as modern and current politics. Opposition to the banning of the veil is present nationally but vocally stronger internationally and is perceived universally as a potential political vote winner for the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy (BBC, 2011).

The European multiculturalism backlash has seen political reactions to the current educational, economic, social and cultural changes taking place all over the world. Change and the alternatives that are raised by all authors in this book have multicultural implications. Multiculturalism poses the fundamental question, who are we? Multicultural education in response focuses on struggles over students' identity – often more than one. Nilofar Shidmehr's contribution is in part concerned with knowing who you are, and reminds us of the heterogeneity of students' identities, and challenges stereotypical reductionism. The multicultural preoccupation with different identities spotlights students' particularities; it either tends towards withdrawal and self-absorption with regard to ethnicity, or produces ethno-cultural displays for the gaze of tourists, spectators or voyeurs (Buras, 2008). Students are motivated to center their concerns on their particular ethnic qualities, encouraging a desire to privilege this identity as self-enclosed. The assertion of a constrained or bounded ethno-cultural identity as one's most important attachment represents a protectionist, atomizing sense of identity. What counts for multiculturalism is the problem of identity and the accommodation of diversity – who am I and how do we live together? The identification and ambivalent defense of the integrity or authenticity of ethno-religious identities in the national context has become its particular focus.

There is a need to consider alternatives to this version or perception of multiculturalism because of several key problems it poses (Kymlicka, 2007). Is it necessary that respect for certain "ethnic" customs and practices requires the defensive insulation of ethno-cultural particularities? Given multicultural education's preoccupation with the excess of identities what alternative is there to appreciative celebrations of ethno-religious differences? While Charles Taylor's (1994) discussion of a politics of recognition is often lauded as an excellent response to addressing how we are to live together, Nilofar Shidmehr's chapter's sustained critique of Taylor's politics of recognition joins that of other visible minority scholars like Himani Bannerji (2000) and reflect progressive minorities figures' ambivalence about multiculturalism as a whole, e.g. Sylvia Wynter (1990) and Annette Henry (this volume) and Taylor's notion of a politics of recognition in particular (Bannerji, 2000).

In her chapter, Bobby Harreveld offers a view on cosmopolitan education that identifies reasoned, informed perceptions of threats to civil society, its political and economic processes, and developed the concept of *cosmopolitan capabilities* the strength of which is its explicit foregrounding fair dealing in the world's knowledge.

Jennifer Chan, in her contribution, explores the prospects for an alternative to multicultural education that foregrounds *pedagogy of acknowledgement and knowledge*. Such egalitarian cosmopolitan pedagogies are being promoting as alternatives for cultivating the ability to detach one's self from restricted ethno-cultural perspectives and circumscribed forms of ethno-religious interests, and to self-consciously engage global perspectives, communication and methods (Pinar, 2009). This requires the development of cosmopolitan capabilities for intercultural imagination and knowledge exchange. Given the suppleness of the idea of cosmopolitanism it is being reconstituted in the post-9/11 debates, because it encourages reflecting on one's ethno-cultural connections, developing an appreciation of many different cultures, and supports an interest in the well-being of people worldwide. Cosmopolitan pedagogy is being encouraged in opposition to the restrictions and constraints of the excesses of acute national, racial and ethnic parochialism. In this volume Sean Brayton analyses ethno-nationalist representations of immigrant labor, their cinematic depictions as ghostly zombies and monsters. With the rise of mass international communication, perspective-growing travel, and transnational movements of workers and students the prospects for broad-based rather than elite cosmopolitanism learning are increasing. Pearl Hunt explores the uses of music and sound as ethnographic data as a mean of making both theoretical and emotional connections to potential audiences and to analyse issues of social and environmental justice.

The problem is that it is not clear that the optimism associated with cosmopolitanism pedagogy is an intellectual enterprise for students (see Peter McLaren & Jean Ryoo, and Maryam Nabavi this volume). It is by no means clear that cosmopolitanism pedagogy is encouraging intercultural contacts and exchanges that focus on knowledge, especially theoretical rather than evidentiary knowledge (van Hooff & Vandekerckhove, 2010). Moreover, it is not apparent that cosmopolitanism pedagogy is directed at the fusion of intellectual resources from different cultures, let alone encouraging self-interrogation about Western intellectual hegemony. Alternatives to multicultural education are directed at fostering reciprocity in theorizing as the basis for transformative knowledge exchange. Kal Heers' chapter explores the pedagogically possibilities for building alliances between non-Western peoples of differing backgrounds within a Western nation-centered educational project. A worldly educational alternative embraces an expansion in the intellectual matter engaged through Western education, and thus, a shameless recognition that Western, Anglophone educators have to make productive use of their inability to transcend knowledge boundaries born of differences in linguistic and educational cultures. Richard Race in his chapter indicates the possibilities for engaging the concepts that lie behind both children's intellectual traditions and education policy-making, and foreshadows the need for educators to find pedagogies and to make policies for engaging with their lack of knowledge of these.

This does not mean that students or educators have to disconnect themselves from vital attachments, especially the nation-state given its continuing importance in local/global geopolitics. Nation-states have a key role in securing the well-being and protecting the rights of their citizens – and non-citizens. However, these chapters draw a distinction between ethno-nationalism, and civic nationalism associated with democratic will formation through public debate (Hollinger, 1995; Sen, 2006; Yang, 2009). Alternative pedagogies are directed towards promoting an overlapping civic national and egalitarian cosmopolitan identity through detached self-reflections oriented to building democratic communities, nationally and internationally, by seeking local/global intellectual connections, and in particular justifications for democratic institutions using the different theoretical resources available through culturally diverse knowledge communities (Keane, 2009).

Alternatives to multicultural education are part of complex intercultural exchanges that are driven by rich intellectual engagements that contribute to educational developments within, and beyond the nation-state. This alternative, refreshing intellectual outlook is a dynamic educational product of the transformative, transnational exchange of knowledge across ethnicity, languages, and religions. Maryam Nabavi's chapter points to important questions to be addressed about the relationship between imparting substantive knowledge and equality (also see Richard Race's chapter). If the idea of cosmopolitanism pedagogy is to be part of this alternative agenda then extending it beyond the usual associations with the Western metropolitan intellectual heritage would seem advisable, as it is no longer a Western privilege.

One of the important philosophical and policy exports from Canada in the late 1970s was multiculturalism. Through strategic contextualization in different times and spaces throughout the world it has been reconstituted through official policies, pedagogies, critiques and changes in everyday lived experiences. In his contribution to this volume Wright argues that multiculturalism is a floating signifier. This designation indicates that multiculturalism was always already multiple and shifting in terms of what it referred to (intellectual outlook, day to day informal guide for living with difference, official policy) and varying in its politics along the political continuum (from conservative through liberal to critical versions). Multiculturalism he argues has no pre-given destiny nationally or globally, but is continually being renewed and re-contested by policy actors and their varying forms of actions, ever-open to fresh possibilities which include the emergence of new ways of being, doing and seeing multiculturalism otherwise. Such a re-conceptualisation of multiculturalism ought to give pause to the basis for both the backlash against and arguments for alternatives to multiculturalism, namely that it is a fixed policy which promotes silos of group identity politics at the expense of social cohesion.

What alternative educational agenda might emerge from Western intellectual engagement with the diversity of non-Western theories? Among those non-Western theories that presently do not count in the West are Indigenous (Denzin,

Lincoln & Smith, 2008), Arab (Freely, 2011), Indian (Sen, 2006), Chinese (Yang, 2009) theories. Peter McLaren and Jean Ryoo (this volume) argue for pedagogies that challenge the imperialistic imposition of Western knowledge which is typically assigned a normative position within education, and instead to pursue a reciprocal intellectual relationship with marginalized or excluded non-Western theories. Likewise, in making problematic what counts as knowledge Lisa Taylor and Michael Hoechsmann (this volume) argue for a de-hierarchization of knowledge that engages the theoretical contributions of racialized minorities in contemporary processes of knowledge production. An alternative educational agenda is interested in rich and long-term intellectual engagement with non-Western theories, including, as Harreveld (this volume) argues those concerning cosmopolitanism and its pedagogies.

Multiculturalism as the defense of a particular ethno-cultural identity against others undermines the cross-sectional support needed for a range of struggles based on equality. It is with respect to these issues that Dawn Courage explores the metaphor of "harmony jazz" in her chapter. The struggles by those who do not count in any given society and throughout the world take intellectual equality as their presupposition and set out to verify these (see Michael Singh, this volume). Their claims on the equality, assert a stake in something we all share, establishing grounds for drawing peoples of diverse backgrounds together. Ethno-cultural identities do fracture and splinter. However, given the centrality of ethnicity in people's lives, either as a matter of ascribed and/or self-identification, what might this mean for an alternative educational agenda?

An alternative is to focus on being equal to others. Equality asks the question, what are we arguing for? "Pedagogies of intellectual equality" lives (Singh, in press) declassify students according to any and every particular characteristic so as to gather more and more under banners that claims all people are equal, that all people are capable of creating meaningful. Cooperative struggles for equality, for projects to create meaningful lives, cut against the grain of particular identities to encompass workers, environmentalists, Indigenous peoples, feminists, union organizers and sometimes even elected representatives. What counts, and provides the basis for arguing the grounds of commonality is the presupposition of equality. As Peter McLaren and Jean Ryoo argue (in this volume) under asymmetrical systems of power which exploit or promote the self-exploitation of labor power and deny participatory democracy, the presupposition of equality and the drive to verify it can disrupt these socio-economic inequalities. Sue Saltmarsh provides a sustained discussion of how economic discourse is implicated in the social worth, personal agency and imagined futures of rural and suburban women. Shirley Steinberg (in this volume) develops the idea of critical multicuturalism as a vehile for studing privilege in terms of interacting 'power blocs' constituted by class elites, white supremacy, and patriarchy.

The challenge for educators operating on the basis of alternatives grounded in this presupposition about intellectual equality is to verify it. This takes the romance

out of issues of educational equality by bringing the difficulties of its corroboration to the fore. Nilofar Shidmehr (this volume) argues against the reductionist treatment of identity as coherent, continuous, and homogenous, in favor of seeing identities as having cross-cultural and transnational layers. Students' multiple identities – which are shifting, multilayered and not necessarily opposed, rather than unchanging or motionless – are not rejected but incorporated into the alternative educational agenda for intellectual equality.

This alternative educational agenda begins with the presupposition, and seeks to verify the presumption of equal intelligence among non-Westerners and Westerners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Southern and Northern students, male and female alike (Singh & Meng, in press). It is this presupposition of equal intelligence that drives Indigenous struggles to have their knowledge counted wherever it presently does not count. The presupposition of equal intelligence entails seeing non-Western, Indigenous and Southern theoretical tools – metaphors, concepts and images – as being connected to struggles by those whose knowledge does not count around the world (see Michael Singh, this volume). Nilofar Shidmehr (this volume) takes a Foucauldian perspective engaging such "subjugated knowledge." In the work of Rancière (1991), non-Indigenous Westerners and Northerners may find grounds for committing themselves to the presupposition and the verification of the presumption of equal intelligence, and work to see what can be achieved on this basis.

The essays in this collection are firmly based in four specific national contexts – Australia, England, Canada and the United States of America. In that sense the book is an international collection of essays on the status quo of multicultural education. However, the sections employed, Precarious Multiculturalism; Difference and Representation in Multicultural Education; Streching Multiculturalism: Including Alternatives, are not nation-state based but rather highlight themes and developments across the countries. Indeed the same is true of the way we have chosen to discuss the essays in this introduction. Thus, the focus of this collection is on examining the status quo of multicultural education as an international phenomenon generally and more specifically on the idea that caught between historical and contemporary dissent from the political left and right; continuing post 9/11, post 7/7 bombings backlash on the one hand and the related rise of alternatives like cosmopolitanism and interculturalism on the other, multiculturalism and multicultural education are in a precarious position at the present historical moment.

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CHAPTER 2

WHAT WAS MULTICULTURALISM?

John Willinsky

Early into his United States presidency in 2009, Barack Obama gently chided Eric H. Holder, the first African-American to hold the position of attorney general, for suggesting that America was a "nation of cowards" when it comes to discussing race. Holder was surely right, if not politic, in naming what is, among other things, a fitting commentary on multiculturalism and education in general. In support of Holder's stance, Obama had to allow that "we could probably be more constructive in facing up to sort of the painful legacy of slavery and Jim Crow and discrimination" (Cooper, 2009, p. Y22). However, the sometime post-racial president also went on to say that he did not believe that "talking about race somehow solves racial tensions", but that "fixing the economy", as well as improving health care and the schools, would lead to more "fruitful conversations" (Cooper, 2009, p. Y22).

William Julius Wilson also speaks of the need to talk about race, and all the more so at this point: "These problems [of high crime rates among black males] will not be addressed, however, if we are not willing to have an honest and open discussion of race in America, including a discussion of why poverty and unequal opportunity so stubbornly persist in the lives of so many African Americans" (2009, p. 3). Richard Thompson Ford sees this talk now moving into an era of post-racism, growing out of a "weariness with contemporary racial politics" and calling for, in his eyes, addressing "residential segregation," which so magnifies social problems and which now needs to be addressed through a "language for discussing the persistent and destructive legacy of overt racism of the past that doesn't lay underserved blame on the present" (2008, pp. 341–342).

There's just enough presidential ambiguity in Obama's statement to allow that constructively facing up to the painful legacies can be tied to fixing the economy, health care, and education. That Obama *is* the president of the United States establishes that this era is already about more than just *talking* about race, even as his historic election stands as its own a declarative statement, pointing to the value of just such talk and introspection.

Following on from this divide, and necessary connection, between talking and fixing, I revisit in this paper a number of turns in the course of multiculturalism. There's much I missed the first time around, and in that there is much to talk about, as part of an effort to fix the economy, by which I mean, in this case, the economy of meaning in the construction of difference. What multiculturalism *was*, you might say, was at once largely inadequate and reasonably effective. For earlier critiques of multiculturalism, see McLaren (1994). More recently, McLaren has

H. K. Wright et al (eds), Precarious International Multicultural Education: Hegemony, Dissent and Rising Alternatives, 15–39.

noted how "capitalism has, after all, been multiculturalized" (2007, p. 294). He regrets how multiculturalism now finds its hope in changing "cultural practices at the level of the individual at the expense of challenging the structural determinations and productive forces of capital" (p. 292). It arose out of a truncated sense of culture, and still it gave people a way of changing their attitudes toward culture. But then *culture*, in this limited sense, had been an effective device, promoted by W.E.B. Bu Bois, Franz Boas and his students, for reducing some of the sting that had been invested by the end of the nineteenth century in a venomous notion of *race*, as a means of creating a greater divide among people. And *race*, in turn, has been used, all too well, to naturalize a history of economic and sexual exploitation, in what seems at bottom to be matters of property. Or so it seems to be now, looking back on the chain of oddly distorted signifiers – culture, race, history, economics, sexuality, property – that multiculturalism has left, too rarely spoken of, in its wake.

In being brought back to *multiculturalism*, rightly and smartly by Handel Wright's invitation to participate in this event, I feel compelled, if not gently pushed, to confront my own drift within this curricular and political movement. Multiculturalism's moment has spanned the better part of my teaching career over the last four decades. I would say that I am still trying to make something of multiculturalism, having moved from work on postcolonialism to my current absorption in the geopolitical economy of scholarly publishing, as I try to alter the political economy by which we, as university faculty, produce meaning. I want to retrace the unspoken parts of the multicultural journey – through tolerance and diversity, anti-racism, postcolonialism (and now anti-colonialism), Critical Race Theory (and now Critical Race Realism) – as a way of demonstrating how, as our ideas about multiculturalism have changed, our respective projects need to find new forms. I am also and undoubtedly indulging in self-justification here as well. How many remonstrances have I faced over the years, from those I greatly respect, for having seemed to have abandoned earlier work postcolonial analysis of curriculum? I have, then, selfishly taken hold of this opportunity to suggest the ways in which, well, all is not lost. But then, I hope, as well, that this paper does more than that, as it has done more than that for me to return to what multiculturalism was and may yet be.

THE CANADIAN ORIGINS OF MULTICULTURALISM

By way of a brief refresher of what multiculturalism was in Canada, we need to turn the clock back to October 8th, 1971. On that day, a few weeks after I had begun a teacher education program in North Bay, Ontario, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau stood before Parliament and rolled out what was to become this country's official policy of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism was the country's belated civil rights effort, following the failed Quiet Revolution in Quebec intended to establish French language rights (which had repeatedly been punctuated by exploding

mailboxes and other disturbances over the course of the previous decade, culminating in the 1970 October Crisis initiated by the Front de libération du Québec (FLQ) with political kidnappings, murder, which was met by the War Measures Act's suspension of civil liberties in Canada).

As part of the restoration that followed, Trudeau was careful that October morning in 1971 to frame "a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework", as he put it before parliament exactly a year after the October Crisis. "For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other" (Trudeau, 1971). At the same time, we all knew, in our hearts, that this was not true nor even possible. There was most certainly an ethnic group that did take precedence – and thus was not even ethnic but just English – even as the designation of French as an official language went some way in establishing a second *official* culture. Trudeau was promulgating, after all, an extremely truncated sense of culture. It was culture independent of language. Citizens' rights to their own culture were to be supported, if they acquired, as Trudeau put it in that speech, "at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society." To live within one's culture on Canadian soil – at least to do so in a language other than English or French – was to exist outside of Canadian society. In 1985, Canada passed the Act for the Preservation and Enhancement of Multiculturalism in Canada, the place of other languages was expanded to read that "the policy of the Government of Canada… to preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada" (Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1985).

Trudeau may have posed multiculturalism as eliminating this country's "barriers" and lack of "fair play". Multiculturalism was, he said, "a policy [that] should help to break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies." Yet looking back, it seems to astoundingly understate the mistreatment and injustices, the property rights violated and abuses suffered by First Nation people, as well as citizens of Asian and African origins.

What also needs to be appreciated in understanding multiculturalism is that Trudeau's cultural theme – with its line of "other ethnic groups" contributing "to the cultural enrichment of Canada" (1971) – was already a dated and somewhat tired response in 1971. At the turn of the century, W. E. B. Du Bois had drawn on the *cultural contributions* of African Americans in his search for a way of turning the "Negro problem" into the "problem of the color-line", a line which had been drawn in the sand by white society to keep African Americans separate and not the least equal (1903/2007). Du Bois set out to weaken that line by shifting attention from racial difference to cultural contribution, as part of a long march through the bandstands, sports fields, voting booths, courts, and schools of the United States to this day and still, necessarily, beyond. In 1897, Du Bois (1897/2007) gave a speech at the founding of the African Negro Academy entitled "The Conservation of Races", in which he spoke directly of the "wonderful possibilities of culture" that

African Americans brought to America: "Whose subtle sense of song has given America its only music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its made money-getting plutocracy" (p. 185). He spoke of the two races and "the peculiar contribution which each has to make to the culture of their common country" (p. 187). It was a deliberately anti-racist strategy, then, that Du Bois judged necessary not in the struggle, at the beginning of the century, for a multicultural nation, but for another sort of politics of recognition that would take on the social injustice and racist violence that continued to mark his already conglomerate country. This was the approach of Franz Boas and his students, as well, in seeking to undermine the racist play on racial differences in anthropology by emphasizing the value and plurality of culture*s* (Stocking, 1982).

Which is only to say that the famous politics of recognition within the Canadian mosaic, was still in Trudeau's hands a form of political diversion, directing our attention away from the historical patterns of discrimination, even as it proved capable of loosening the Eurocentric hold on what was otherwise the country's official cultural apparatuses (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, educational institutions, etc.). In just this way, Handel Wright has pointed out, as Canada did not afford him some sort of cultural recognition as black, in light of this new policy, rather it simply misrecognized the ways in which the dominant or official culture within Canada had made him black – "When I arrived in Canada I became Black" – within "the racist history of western conceptions of blackness" (Wright, 2007, pp. 316, 319). Which is only to say that multiculturalism was not really about culture. Multiculturalism was a way for the state to distance itself from a history of discrimination. As a policy, it reinforced the degree to which it takes extraordinary and belated measures to assert this inclusiveness, or as Rinaldo Walcott, author of *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* (1997), sharply observes about his own place in this country – "to imagine me as a Canadian, legislation is needed" (Walcott, 2007, p. 243).

Certainly, Aboriginal peoples understood that all of this talk of culture was a way of not talking about what mattered. In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood rejected the federal government's proposed assimilation of First Nations peoples into multicultural Canada, issuing its own pointed position paper, *Indian Control of Indian Education,* which placed sovereignty at the forefront, with culture, in the form of education, following (NIB, 1972). As another contributor to this collection Jan Hare points out, what mattered was "the development of self-determination" and "the restoration of self-governance among Aboriginal people" and from that, then concerns for the recognition of culture diversity could follow (Hare, 2007, p. 66). Otherwise, multiculturalism made a mockery of what had been taken and what was allowed, and to the government's credit, I agree to adhere to the paper's recommendations, at least in principle.

It should be clear that the use of *multiculturalism* follows George Orwell's famous dictum on politics and language, as it represents "a kind of euphemism" that falls about our ears "like soft snow, blurring the outline and covering up all the

details" (1946/1984). Here, then, was the perfect teachable moment, the very substance of a cutting edge curriculum, that would focus on how a policy concept of the significance of multiculturalism is constructed in ways that will divert, subvert and convert discontent into something more positive and promising – peaceful co-existence – but surely less educational as it blurs the outline and covers up the historical details, the root causes, the continuing inequities that define this country.

Legal scholar Richard Ford argues that that emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism is also "an essentially conservative project of cultural preservation and a fetishism of pedigree and tradition" which fails to pay its due to racial identity and the "potential eruption of new cultural forms… the creativity of the avant garde" (2005, p. 56). Yet the promotion of diversity in workplaces and schools is still a matter of tolerating differences, of turning them into a value-add for all parties, rather than recognizing that reinforcing differences based on group identification may not only exaggerate the concept of difference, does not begin to deal with the root of the issue, namely that these differences originally took on significance and meaning within the assertion of privilege and power.

This is not to say that a dose of even the most innocuous multiculturalism was not needed in the schools. When I started my teaching career, a year after Trudeau's speech, I had to lead that public school class in reciting the Lord's Prayer each morning, followed by the reading of a provincially prescribed passage from the *Bible*. And five years later, in 1977, when Ontario instituted a "heritage language" after-school program across the province, it was only after much controversy, even as it continued to be illegal in the province to use any language but English or French as a medium of instruction, except where it was held that the use of other languages might ease the transition to one of the official languages (Cummins, 1983). And today, Canada's Immigration and Multiculturalism minister Jason Kenney has recently taken a stand in favor of strengthening the language proficiency requirements for immigrants to Canada: "I think it's really neat that a fifth-generation Ukrainian Canadian can speak Ukrainian – but pay for it yourself" (Libin, 2009).

> "We want to avoid the kind of ethnic enclaves or parallel communities that exist in some European countries. So far, we've been pretty successful at that, but I think it's going to require greater effort in the future to make sure that we have an approach to pluralism and immigration that leads to social cohesion rather than fracturing" (Libin, 2009).

MULTICULTURAL TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY

If multiculturalism in Canada was a celebration of non-linguistic culture, in the first instance, then it was also to be, as I was soon to learn, a matter of tolerating some but not all differences. In 1984, when I began working at the University of