ANTI-RACIST WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES AND APPROACHES

Edited by

Anna Aluffi-Pentini and Walter Lorenz

Russell House Publishing Ltd
2. Oppositional and relational identity: a comparative perspective

Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Carol Anne Spreen

In the last few years both multicultural education and anti-racist youth work have been criticized for promoting polarization. Their proponents have been attacked for perpetuating a dichotomous perspective on intergroup relations by artificially dividing individuals into Whites and Blacks, majority and ethnic minorities, natives and immigrants, and, on a broader level, distinguishing between periphery and core, between sending and receiving countries of immigration, or as Stuart Hall has put it so astutely, between the 'West' and the 'rest' (Hall 1992).

Today, the research and practice of multicultural education in the United States and anti-racist youth work in Europe are facing major challenges. The research must now take into account the recent debates in the social sciences and in philosophy that are relevant to the field. In light of the debates on universalism and particularism, essentialism and difference, researchers of multicultural and anti-racist education need to come out against the criticism of having pursued an essentialist notion of race and ethnicity. Practitioners, in turn, need to prove that they truly moved beyond traditional approaches that amounted to nothing more than celebrating diversity and promoting a 'harmonious empty pluralism' (Mohanty 1994: 146).

Writing for a readership that is alarmed by rising levels of racism, anti-semitism and neo-fascism in Europe, particularly among youth, and addressing readers that are committed to improving intergroup relations, this study aims at drawing attention to a new anti-essentialist, multiperspective and antimoralistic perspective in anti-racist youth work. The perspective is based on the following observations:

First, contrary to commonly held beliefs among anti-racist youth workers, there is not too little, but rather too much awareness among youth with regard to cultural diversity, 'race' and ethnic relations.

Second, anti-racist youth work that focuses merely on minorities is prey to neglecting the relational nature of identity formations, and hence is oblivious to inclusionary and exclusionary processes that account for ethnic and racial intergroup tensions.

Finally, there are serious constraints upon adults teaching adolescents ethical and social issues, and it seems indicated that we find innovative strategies which facilitate adolescents in learning from each other on how to improve their intergroup relations.

This chapter has two parts. The first deals with the critique of anti-racism from a comparative perspective. We compare critical reviews of multicultural and anti-racist education published in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States. In this part we explore in more depth John Ogbu's work on oppositional identity and reflect upon its conceptual and practical significance to intergroup youth work. The second part presents one practical approach in which interpersonal conflicts are dealt with in ways that transcend essentialist notions of anti-racist youth work. To illustrate our argument we will refer to peer-mediation and conflict resolution programs, which are moderated by adolescents for adolescents. These programs have been increasingly implemented in inner-city public schools in New York City and throughout the United States.

Transnational flow of discourses

This study presents the preliminary findings of a large research project which compares relevant debates (on issues such as difference, alterity, essentialism, and universalism) in the field of multicultural and anti-racist education from a cross-national perspective. Other scholars researching comparative education also focus on comparisons of academic discourses. Paulston (1993) used the method of cartography to illustrate conceptual proximity and distance of comparative educational texts.

The cartographic method allowed Paulston to produce
insightful conceptual maps depicting the inter-relation of relevant theories in the field. In contrast to his pioneering research, our research project targets the transnational flow of discourses, and is, therefore, interested in texts that are cited outside their original context. The purpose of our study is to understand the specificity of (national) contexts by tracing the transnational borrowing process of discourses, and more precisely by examining adaptations and modifications, i.e., additions and omissions that have occurred in the course of a transnational transfer.

Scholars in comparative education research are used to keeping a close eye on developments and debates in different parts of the world. It is striking, however, how many concepts in multicultural and anti-racist education refer to debates that emerged in other countries. For instance, the demand to move away from cultural enrichment concepts and turn to educational concepts that combat structural discrimination emerged first in England in the early 1980s. A similar demand then surfacéd in Canada and Australia in the late 1980s and on mainland Europe in the early 1990s (Steiner-Khameh, 1990, 1992). Identifying the process of "borrowing" in this case the adoption of anti-racist education concepts by education researchers and practitioners, is meaningful for three reasons:

Firstly, it allows us to specify the geographic origin of a debate, and then to map the direction of the transnational flow of one specific debate, from its geographic source to other national contexts. Almost all debates in educational theory and practice emerge either in Europe and flow to North America, or the other way round. The transnational discourse on postmodern theory, for instance, moved from Europe to the United States, and from there, the politicized version of postmodernism moved back again to Europe (Huyssen, 1990). Another example of this heavy transatlantic traffic is the transnational flow of the decentralization and privatization movement in formal education. These movements, emanating from debates regarding "choice" and "excellency in education" (Glenn and Wite, 1990), emerged in the United States during the Reagan administration and were subsequently borrowed by policy makers in England during the Thatcher administration (Flade and Hammer, 1990). They are being discussed at length in continental Europe in the mid-1990s, at a time when European states have chosen to drastically cut down on public expenditures. To our knowledge, the only discourse in education which did not originate in Europe or North America, has been Freirean pedagogy. It would greatly contribute to comparative studies on educational discourse to examine exactly how and why Paulo Freire's work, developed in Latin America and Africa, has found fertile grounds in North America and Europe.

There are several conditions that account for the inequity of research production and dissemination. Sociologists of education oriented towards Dependency Theory and World-Systems Theory have discussed at length the reasons for the accumulation and control of knowledge in highly industrialized nations of the western hemisphere (see Featherstone, 1990). Bourdieu (1979), for instance, uses the concept of cultural capital to explain how one body of knowledge, based on specific middle-class values, becomes framed as general knowledge or "official knowledge" (Apple, 1993). In education, about everything and for everyone, will subsequently gain prevalence and global dissemination. More importantly for our international framework of study, we need to acknowledge that cultural capital is embedded in an economy of cultures and languages. As a result native speakers of certain languages (English, French) have easier access to publishing companies than others, and hence, are more likely to contribute to the production of what is generally viewed as cultural capital.

Secondly, it is meaningful to map the transnational flow of debates and discourses in order to obtain a clearer picture of where exactly an educational concept, or an idea, is circulating. Verbalizing intergroup and interpersonal tensions in terms of inter-ethnic and racial conflicts is such an idea that has circulated widely. It was meant to replace traditional multicultural education concepts which were criticized for emphasizing commonalities and mutual cultural enrichment. In contrast, not verbalizing racial and inter-ethnic conflicts directly, but working instead with underlying images and symbols of racism and anti-semitism is another idea that Cohen has developed and adopted for educational practice (1992, 1993), see also Cohen and Bams (1988). Again, this second idea has found considerable resonance in continental Europe. On closer examination, we can see that new ideas and educational concepts draw concentric circles around the North American, European, and Australian continents. It is only when these ideas become out-dated and...
are dismissed in these highly industrialized parts of the world that they are usually handed over to the rest of the world. It is not surprising that the speed with which new debates in any one particular field are emerging, circulating and then fading away is constantly accelerating. Wallerstein views this preference for 'newness' as a consequence of capitalism's requirement for movement and change (1990: 36ff.). He relates his observation to the 'conditio sine qua non' of capitalism: capitalism's urge to believe in inevitable progress. Being innovative in capitalism means being powerful. Conversely, cultural hegemony in the modern world-system is based on the ability to constantly innovate.

The third purpose of mapping transnational discourses is to understand the diversity of national settings by examining how changes that have occurred in the course of a borrowing process have become crystallized in ideas and concepts. When educational researchers, youth workers, or practitioners adopt or borrow ideas that were developed elsewhere, they drop certain aspects or add their own conceptions and ideas according to the context in which they are operating. The concept of anti-racist education has changed drastically over time and it has taken on different meanings in different geographical locations. Hence, it is very informative to trace this modification process in order to understand what is going on in any one specific context. To make matters more complex it needs to be said that every idea and concept is contested, and that there is within each national context a multitude of contending concepts. Having highlighted the fact that there is always a pool of ideas and concepts, it becomes crucial to identify which ones have found resonance, and which ones went unnoticed outside their original national context.

**Strategies of multicultural and anti-racist youth work**

In this preliminary study, we focus on the literature produced in Great Britain, Germany and the United States. Hamburger names three educational strategies that have been applied by practitioners of multicultural education in Germany (1995: 33ff.). One is to highlight difference and to adopt education programs that promote tolerance of difference. The second is to highlight commonalities and to create a general sense of belonging. The third strategy is to promote an ethic of justice, equality, and equivalence without emphasizing either difference or commonality. The third strategy, which he favours, and to which we also adhere, differs considerably from the first two strategies. The third strategy addresses young people as individuals and not as representatives of a specific nationality, ethnicity, or 'race'.

Our assessment of various anti-racist education and training programs in different countries leads us to suggest that anti-racist youth work has mainly adopted the first and second strategies. However, they still differ substantially from former multicultural concepts that were based on a harmonious model of cultural enrichment and mutual understanding. Instead of enforcing inter-ethnic and inter-racial harmony, anti-racist training programs now centre on notions of conflict, power, exploitation, structural discrimination (Gaine 1988) and, in some more psychologically oriented programs also on 'white' guilt (see Sivanandan 1985, Steiner-Khamsi 1992).

On a broader level, however, there are striking similarities between the two concepts. The prevailing critique of anti-racist education concepts uses arguments which were formerly levelled at traditional multicultural education projects. However, the most serious charge to which neither the proponents of multicultural education nor of anti-racist education have been capable of responding satisfactorily is the charge of being essentialist. It is argued that both multicultural and anti-racist education perpetuate the myth that ethnicity and 'race' are fixed categories and that this tends to reduce the multiple self-representations and identities of individuals to manifestations of ethnicity and 'race'. Rather than dismantling ethnicity and 'race' as constructs that are, more often than not, used to legitimize inequality and exclusion, multiculturalists and anti-racists view these social and political constructions as essential and biological categorizations. This supposedly determines the social position of individuals, often in a very simplified binary way: either exploiter or exploited, oppressor or oppressed, majority or minority, native or ethnic, black or white.

This charge of essentialism has been expressed in the relevant literature of the three countries we have been scrutinizing. In Germany, Radtke (1992), Bommes (Bommes and Radtke 1993) and Bukow and Haroy (1988) were among the first to analyze inequity and segregational programs in schools that resulted from insisting upon cultural difference and ethnic...
identity. In Germany, an extensive process of critical self-reflection among multiculturalists resulted in the demand to depart from essentialism (Steiner-Khamsi 1992).

Similarly, advocates of multiculturalist and anti-racist education in Britain have been engaged for quite a while in critical self-reflection. Proponents of a non-essentialist perspective include scholars at the University of Warwick (e.g., Treena, Rex), at the University of London's Institute of Education (Centre for Multicultural Education, Gundara Cohen), and internationally renowned scholars in cultural studies (e.g., Hall). The volume "Race, Culture and Difference", edited by Donald and Rattansi (1992), compiles several contributions by authors based in Britain that deal with multicultural and anti-racist education from a non-essentialist perspective.

In contrast to Germany and Britain, multicultural education research in the United States has only started to combat essentialist notions of multicultural education in the 1990s. Originally, this departure from essentialist notions of intergroup relations was mainly informed by academic debates on essentialism, universalism/particularism, and difference in the humanities and feminist theory. It emerged to a much lesser extent from critical self-reflection within the education research community. Lately, however, an increasing number of American scholars in multicultural education have chosen to pursue a non-essentialist perspective on multicultural education. The volumes edited by McCarthy and Crichton (1993), Heath and McLaughlin (1993), and Havelock and Jackson (1995), contain contributions reflecting a non-essentialist perspective on multicultural education.

In this preliminary study we do not analyze the common sources for the paradigm shift in multicultural and anti-racist education. Other publications analyze the process of critical self-reflection and scrutinize the impulses that the field received from ongoing debates in other academic disciplines (Steiner-Khamsi 1995, 1996). Instead, we would like to use our literature review to trace the transnational flow of three critical issues that seem to hold the key for a more thorough understanding of anti-racist youth work: firstly, 'othering' and racialization; secondly, difference and identity; thirdly, relational and oppositional identity.

‘Othering’ and racialization

Does the emphasis on ethnicity and 'race' in anti-racist youth work help adolescents to formulate a counter-discourse to the racist discourse in society? Or, on the contrary, does it support racialization processes which we can observe in the United States (Omi and Winant 1986), Britain (Miles 1990) and in Germany (Bittlich and Radtke 1990, Radtke 1995)? More importantly, does such an emphasis merely reinforce the division between 'them' and 'us' along lines of ethnicity and 'race'?

Some authors prefer to use the term 'alterity' (French: alterité, Italian: alterità, German: Alterität) instead of 'otherness'. However, authors in these different countries use a similar analysis to depict the process of 'othering'. In describing the process of 'othering', many authors have argued in a manner similar to Memmi (1992) who outlines the tripartite construction of racism as follows. First, (cultural and racial) differences between individuals of two different ethnic or racial groups are emphasized and highlighted (e.g., educated – non educated, urban – rural). These differences are then semantically framed in a hierarchical structure (educated, urban, etc. means 'civilized', 'modern', whereas non-educated, rural, etc. means 'uncivilized', 'barbarian'). In a third step these value judgements are used to essentialize ('they have always been like this'), to generalize ('they all look the same'), and ultimately to legitimate unequal distributions of power.

Difference and identity

It is important to recognize the basic assumption that identity is always based on the perception of individual difference, and, moreover, to recognize findings in developmental psychology that suggest that the search for sexual, professional, and political identities are key themes during the phase of adolescence. However, the question anti-racist youth workers really need to come to terms with is the following: Do we want to reflect, or reinforce, cultural and racial categories for the identity formation process during adolescence?

There is a striking inconsistency in the way adults react to identity choices of adolescents. Adults tend to take the slightest manifestations of ethnic and racial identity among youth very seriously and expect them to last for the entire life
span. Other manifestations of identity choices, such as professional and political preferences, are generally viewed as transitory. At stake is the question, For what purposes do adults see ethnic and racial self-representations of adolescents as immutable?

At this point, we cannot present different kinds of explanations and answers to this question in a conclusive manner. One plausible answer, however, relates to ethnic and racial relations as a societal concern. It is a commonly held belief that ethnic and racial identity contribute more than any other form of self-representation to social cohesion or social disruption in society. It is interesting to note here that sociologists and educators in Germany have only turned their attention to white or German identity after German unification, at a time when Germany was hit by an outburst of increased racism, neo-fascism, and anti-semitism. In the early 1990s, several authors suggested that this outburst of racism should be viewed within the context of an overall national identity crisis in Germany. According to these authors (Heitmeyer 1992, Heitmeyer et al. 1992, Krafeld et al. 1993, Eisenberg and Groeneveld 1993, see also criticism by Leipzelt 1993), adolescents from former East Germany were bound to be afflicted by a major identity crisis, as they experienced the economic and social disadvantages of unification more acutely than other German groups. They perceived themselves as second-class Germans, losing out in the process of modernization (German: "Modernitsätzwettbewerb") and losing their jobs as a result of unification. Their racism towards immigrants and asylum seekers was interpreted as a demonstration of newly-awakened Germanness, i.e., as an attempt to cut non-Germans off from rights and resources in order to demonstrate that everything on the unified German territory belonged rightfully and exclusively to Germans only. These studies suggest that this act of exclusion by male German adolescents, often very brutal and violent, is closely linked to their urge to reconstitute a sense of ethnic identity as German. Being racist and acting in an exclusive manner allowed them to regain a sense of collective identity and helped them to constitute a functional in-group with common values (machismo, German supremacy, etc.). We find these studies worth considering since they draw on a relational concept of identity formation in which acts of exclusion are viewed as a means to generate a sense of social identity, belonging, or inclusion.

From a comparative perspective, however, this body of research, which treats the cohesion and identity creating effects of exclusion as a basis for explaining racism (German: "identitätssüchtige Wirkung von Ausgrenzung"), is fundamentally flawed. It disregards the structural racial features of Germany and those of other countries where ethnicity, nationality and "race" permeate every social interaction. In addition, they neglect the fact that ethnicity, nationality and "race" had already been in place as lines of division before unification and hence could be readily activated as markers for both exclusion and inclusion.

Oppositional and relational identities

Ogbu presents a series of interesting comparative and ethnographic studies (Ogbu 1987, 1991, 1995) in which he introduces the concept of "oppositional identity." He uses this concept to explain why academic achievements of one ethnic group vary considerably depending upon the national setting. He shows that minorities are performing academically better in countries where they have the status of an immigrant minority than in countries where they are involuntary minorities. Ogbu refers to the fact that West Indian children are the least successful in Britain, where they are seen as citizens of a former colony, whereas they are academically most successful in the United States where they are one immigrant group among others. In Canada, where they are identified as part of the Commonwealth, they score in the middle ranges.

Ogbu identified a series of survival strategies that children of involuntary minorities develop to resist assimilation of values that are associated with whites. To survive socially among their peers they choose to develop an oppositional cultural frame of reference and identity which can become detrimental in a school setting. Referring to an ethnographic study in Stockton, California (Ogbu 1991: 27) he writes: "It follows that involuntary minority students who adopt attitudes conducive to school success are often accused by their peers of acting like their enemy, i.e., like their 'oppressors'. Among U.S. blacks, such students may be accused of acting white or acting like Uncle Toms. They are accused of being disloyal to the group and to the cause of the group, and they risk being isolated from their peers."

For several reasons, Ogbu’s work seems relevant for
intergroup youth work. First of all, he studies in depth how adolescents actively reproduce a cultural frame of reference and an identity that helps them to survive in a racialized society. Secondly, his research perspective reflects the relational nature of identity formation processes. He shows that in a racialized society, adolescents constantly use ethnicity and 'race' as identity markers. Thirdly, he demonstrates the severe limitations of adult interventions, a potential cause for reinforcing oppositional identity, and points out, instead, the strength of peer influence.

Ogbu's work, and the studies of other authors reviewed so far, suggests that anti-racist and intergroup youth workers should de-emphasize and de-essentialize ethnic and race relations, and instead develop ways that allow adolescents to drop ethnicity and 'race' as the main cultural frame of reference. This approach differs fundamentally from both a 'colour-blind' perspective and from the political approaches, since it acknowledges the fact that ethnicity, nationality and 'race' are powerful markers that are used to legitimate inequity. We doubt, however, that anti-racist education practices which adopt and perpetuate existing racialization patterns will allow adolescents to develop empowering cultural frames of reference that can reach beyond existing distinctions of ethnicity, nationality, and 'race'.

**From intergroup to interpersonal conflicts**

Having so far outlined the three major challenges to traditional anti-racist youth work, we now turn our attention to the key question that addresses every form of intergroup approach: What makes us believe that framing a conflict in terms of an ethnic and racial intergroup conflict is more efficient than dealing with these conflicts as interpersonal conflicts?

Evaluation and research studies dealing with intergroup conflict resolution programs suggest that the long-term outcomes and the efficacy of programs that focus specifically and exclusively on ethnicity and 'race' are indeed minimal. We would like to confine ourselves here to a study that has been carried out by Casparis (Eigennössische Jugendkommission 1992). Casparis evaluated the short-term and long-term effects of a program that aimed at improving intergroup relations by explicitly addressing ethnic and racial tensions. The group on which he focused his study consisted of white and black Swiss adolescents, young immigrants, and two white Swiss adolescents who identified themselves as 'Skulls' (skinheads). The two 'Skulls' had been previously accused of trespassing on a Brazilian party and of engaging in acts of racism, violence, and vandalism. The organizers of the event withdrew their charges on the condition that the two 'Skulls' participate in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial group that discusses ethnic and racial conflicts. Two researchers took part in these sessions as participants observers. They documented how the two 'Skulls' actively engaged, shared their views and experiences on race relations, and seemed to come to grips seriously with their past racist actions. Moreover, in the course of the ten sessions, the two 'Skulls' developed close friendships with other members of the group across lines of ethnicity and 'race'. However, the program did not succeed in leaving any long-term or generalized effects whatsoever. Already during the program, the 'Skulls' began to frame the immigrants and blacks of the group they were beginning to form friendships with, as 'special cases' and as 'atypical' of immigrants and blacks in general.

**Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs**

In this second part we present a new approach that aims at improving intergroup relations without focusing explicitly on 'race', nationality, or ethnicity.

Since the early 1990s, a new approach to teaching social responsibility, conflict resolution, and conflict mediation has been developed and implemented in numerous inner city high schools in the United States. One such program is Project SMART. Project SMART, which has been adopted in many New York City high schools, is a peer mediation program designed to help students, staff and families resolve disputes and disagreements through mediation. The project is usually staffed by an adult coordinator and 25 trained high school students. In Project SMART mediators help individuals involved in disputes to identify, discuss, and resolve their differences through negotiation and compromise. Programs such as SMART assist students in developing conflict resolution and other mediation skills which are critical in communities with diverse needs and perspectives.

In the past, conflict resolution programs were introduced into
schools when relationships between students reached the point of violence. Gradually, these programs moved away from a reductionist approach that focused on violence. Instead, they began to emphasize negotiation and mediation skills in order to prevent conflicts from heating up and the need to have more long-term effects on peer relations. This violence prevention, or crisis management approach, was combined with training that focused upon the constructive aspects of conflicts by teaching long-term positive resolution methods and problem-solving strategies in a non-labeling and non-moralizing way. Thus, peer mediation programs such as Project SMART, that emphasize conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation, have enabled students to negotiate intergroup and inter-racial conflicts and to develop meaningful long-term relationships across lines of ethnicity and ‘race’. The executive director of the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) estimates that 5,000 schools in the United States now have peer mediation and/or conflict resolution programs (Raider 1994).

Whilst violence prevention training teaches students to identify and disengage from potentially life-threatening situations and to deal productively with anger, negotiation and mediation skills training goes further because it empowers students to know that they can handle conflict through positive means. According to Raider, training Director of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College, Columbia University (ICCER), “conflict resolution and peer mediation training teaches students how to discuss feelings, communicate openly with each other, and make practical group decisions. They learn how to compromise, apologize, meet out fair punishment, and forgive each other” (Raider 1994: 6).

**Pedagogical practices for conflict resolution and peer mediation**

Peer mediation and conflict resolution training aims to develop social skills, e.g., communicating, perspective-taking, social problem-solving, finding common ground, and sharing through student-directed learning situations. An emerging body of research is beginning to identify those practices and conditions in schools that enable all students to succeed (Lee, Bryk and Smith 1993, Darling-Hammond, Ansciss and Falk 1995, Lucas, Henze and Donato 1990, Meier 1995, Newman, Marks and Gamoran 1995). These studies concur that personalised, caring, learner-centre schools that provide challenging and authentic curricula and multiple opportunities to learn in diverse ways, increases the students’ chances of achieving higher performance standards. As Fine (1991) has illustrated, teachers in inner city public schools in the United States are reluctant to discuss issues such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class domination because they fear they will create more intergroup tension among students. In contrast to more traditional approaches, where teachers structure discussions and address racial and ethnic issues directly, often in a very moralizing way, these new programs have chosen a new approach. Central to this new approach is the notion that conflict resolution is most efficient when it is moderated by peers and not by adult facilitators. These peer-directed strategies provide a structure and opportunity for adolescents to engage in meaningful discussions with each other in a non-moralistic and non-threatening way.

While there is an emphasis on violence prevention and the process of negotiation, these programs also address ‘group process skills’ and working together effectively in cooperation learning situations. Role play, group activities and discussion groups are utilized as practical applications of negotiation skills to the students’ lives at home, and in school, community and work settings.

Students have the opportunity to practice mediation skills by facilitating constructive conflict resolution. By helping others they can reinforce their desire to apply these newly acquired skills to their own conflicts. These skills lead to an improvement of those social skills which facilitate positive intergroup relations. According to Deutsch (1993: 3) “the increased positiveness of the student’s social environment toward him/her would, in turn, lead to greater self-esteem as well as more frequent positive mental states (e.g., ‘cheerfulness’, ‘life is interesting’) and less frequent negative mental states (e.g., ‘upset’, ‘tense’, ‘depressed’).” As the students’ self-esteem increases and their social environment becomes more positive, students gain a greater sense of control over what happens to them.

**Methods for teaching conflict resolution**

Conflict resolution training methods range along a continuum from those using lectures and discussions to more experimental
types. Methods include role play, simulation exercises, cooperative reading, discussions, practice dyads, controlled space, 'fishbowl' (where an inner circle of participants are observed by an outer circle), negotiations with trainer feedback, questionnaires, readings, lectures, demonstrations, performance of what has been learned, journal writing, and video/tape recording of role plays.

Mediation training for students consists of 10-15 hours of initial concept and skills training with subsequent follow-up supervision as they begin to mediate. For instance, ICCRCR's training teaches students the steps of mediation including: setting the ground rules, hearing each disputant's perspective, helping disputants walk in each other's shoes (perspective-taking), brainstorming solutions, and writing the resolution contract. While an adult coordinator is always within reach, the students conduct mediations themselves, either singly or in pairs.

Learning objectives of peer mediation programs

Peer mediation programs emphasize the following learning objectives: knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Knowledge objectives are designed to give students new information about the components of negotiation and conflict resolution. These may include: the ability to identify the difference between cooperative and competitive negotiations, identify the difference between needs and positions, identify five conflict resolution behavioral styles, or discuss how culture can impact upon the negotiation process. Skills include: active listening, asking open-ended questions to probe for underlying needs, reframing conflicting interests into a joint problem to be solved, diffusing anger. Attitude examples might include: valuing cooperation, appreciating and respecting cultural differences in conflict resolution styles, attention to tendencies toward bias, misperceptions, misjudgments, and stereotypical thinking commonly occurring during heated conflicts.

Integrating conflict resolution into the curriculum

Some schools and districts have brought conflict resolution into the curriculum as either a stand-alone course or as units within existing programs. The International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, Children's Creative Response to Conflict, Educators for Social Responsibility, The Community Board, and Johnson and Johnson Inc., to name only a few, have developed curriculum and training programs which have been widely implemented in public schools in New York City and across the United States.

These curricula provide lessons and activities grouped under such themes as: understanding conflict, communications, dealing with anger, cooperation, affirmation, bias awareness, cultural diversity, conflict resolution, and peacemaking. Besides offering an innovative contribution to improving intergroup relations among youth, peer mediation and conflict resolution programs have applications in broader aspects of school change. In fact, it is imperative that these fundamental changes in students' abilities to handle conflict and reduce the risk of violence go hand in hand with efforts towards change in the culture of schools. The literature on school improvement in the United States provides plenty of evidence of the difficulty in changing school culture to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population. One of the major obstacles inhibiting successful school reform is interpersonal and intergroup conflict (Leberman 1991). Such restructuring efforts will not have the intended impact on fundamental system changes without specific training in cooperative conflict resolution and problem solving.

Significance for anti-racist youth work

Because of its relative newness, little research had been conducted on the long-term effects of training in peer mediation or conflict resolution, although initial studies indicate that there are positive effects on students (Johnson and Johnson 1989, Deutsch 1993, Lam 1989). These data show that as students improved in managing their conflicts, they experienced increased social support and less victimization from others.

Social skills can be seen as learned behaviour that individuals use in interpersonal situations to find common ground. By focusing on interpersonal or social skills, adolescents learn to situate intergroup conflicts within a wider context. These programs help to support adolescents to develop identities that are not exclusively based on a process of in-group and out-group distinctions along racial, national, and ethnic lines.
Moreover, through peer mediation, adolescents are exposed to situations where they come to realize that their ethnic, national, or racial self-representations and alliances within the peer-group vary, depending upon situation and context. In contrast to traditional anti-racist youth work, peer mediation and conflict resolution programs do not force adolescents into taking sides because they de-emphasize polarization, essentialism, and labeling. Instead, these programs allow adolescents to experience how their identity is, in fact, a product of relationships and therefore always relational and situative. Furthermore, the renunciation of a moralistic and value-driven setting imposed by adults empowers adolescents to engage in forms of self-representation that are not reactive or oppositional.

Thus, peer mediation and conflict resolution programs can prove to be a viable alternative to traditional anti-racist youth work. These strategies transcend the critical issues of anti-racist youth work that were discussed earlier in 'Othering' and Racialization. Difference and Identity, and Relational and Oppositional Identity.

References


ANTI-RACIST WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE


OPPOSITIONAL AND RELATIONAL IDENTITY


3. The specific and complementary nature of inter-cultural and anti-racist pedagogical approaches

Anna Aluffi-Pentini

This chapter has two basic aims. The first is to demonstrate the necessity of viewing the approaches of 'inter-cultural education' and 'anti-racist education' [1] as being complementary to one another. The second aim is to argue that both these approaches are means of putting into practice fundamental pedagogical principles in the conditions of modern multi-cultural societies. These principles have always been based on universal values such as respect for fellow human beings, and the dignity and uniqueness of the individual throughout life.

In Italy, the concept of 'inter-cultural education' (Demetrio 1990; Demetrio and Favaro 1992, Durino and Allegra 1993, Paletti 1992) is used in preference to the concept of 'anti-racist education' (Giustinielli 1991). This reflects the belief amongst educators that to know and to value another culture is quite sufficient as a means of preventing intolerance and discrimination amongst school pupils. Although the interests of teachers for inter-cultural themes and their readiness to deal with other cultures in the classroom favour the integration of a child from a foreign background into the Italian education system, this alone does not necessarily prevent the development and spread of racist attitudes. When I wrote on this topic in an Italian publication (Aluffi-Pentini 1995) and placed the emphasis on anti-racist education as a distinct and necessary measure complementary to the inter-cultural