RESISTING RACISM

A Teacher's Guide to Equality in Education

Carola Eyber
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with Andy Dawes, Gillian Finchilescu and Crain Soudien

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Lesley Foster, Neville Alexander and Gerda de Klerk for their comments on the drafts. Also to the many teachers who provided ideas, examples and food for thought. Grateful thanks to the Chairman's Fund Educational Trust - Anglo American and De Beers and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung for funding aspects of this project. Also to the Joint Educational Trust for its continued financial support during the process.

Copy-editing: Kerry Cullinan and Dorothy Dyer

Illustrations: Karen Allsopp

Cover and Book Design by Manik Design

Published by the Teaching and Learning Resources Centre (TLRC) and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa).

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ISBN: 1-874864-46-2

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Introduction

While South Africa's new democracy has meant that schools are now open to all, there is still racism in our schools. The changes in schools have in some cases exacerbated racial tensions and mistrust. Teachers everywhere are struggling with the changing dynamics of their classrooms and schools.

There is much talk about how to work against racism. Various programmes and schools have developed different ways of dealing with it. All have particular ideas about how best to counter it. *Resisting Racism* aims to discuss and understand the beliefs and assumptions underlying many of these approaches. We look at the theories behind the different practices, present a range of ideas to illustrate them and consider their limits and possibilities.

The book is a starting point for teachers and schools to reflect on their practices and help them to work out new strategies in the classroom and school. The approaches described will probably work best if they are used together, specially adapted to the specific context in which they are to be used.

In the first part of the book we look at psychological and sociological explanations of why people are racist. Four different ways of looking at the issues are described. Each suggests practical ways of dealing with racism in the classroom and in the school.

Chapter Three, on multi-cultural and anti-racist education, covers similar ground but from a slightly different angle, looking at curriculum debates about race, culture and equality.

The final section looks at the concerns that many teachers

have every day, such as "How can I deal with the language problem?" and "How can I involve parents in these issues?" In discussing these questions we have tried to use current theory to inform the practical ideas suggested.

You will discover that this book is not neutral. It does have a point of view. It seeks to explain the limitations of assimilating students into a status quo and asks that schools take a critical look at their policies and practices. There are no easy answers or quick solutions. However thinking about and understanding the issues of racism and the ways in which it may be resisted can only bring us closer to positive change.

Chapter 1

Racism: What is it and where does it come from?

1.1 What is race?

According to most geneticists, there is no such thing as race. The genes that determine the colour of our skin account for approximately 0.6 percent of our genes and are about as significant as the genes that determine the size of our toes.

People living together for centuries have drawn on the same gene pool, and so common traits have become identifiable. However there is usually more genetic variation between people from the same "race group" than there is between people from different "race groups".

The apartheid government was dedicated to enforcing racial separation, but even it found race very hard to define. The Population Registration Act of 1950 was amended 15 times before 1986. An African was defined as "a person who is, or is generally accepted as, a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa". A coloured person was "a person who is not a white person or a black". A white person was "a person who: a) in appearance obviously is a white person, and who is not generally accepted as a coloured person, or b) is generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person".

Riders were then added to these definitions. For example, "habits, education, speech and deportment and demeanour in general shall be taken into account" when defining a person's race (described by West, 1988:100).

Despite these definitions a number of reclassifications of South Africans took place. In 1980 Alwyn Schlebusch, then Minister of Justice, reported to parliament that in that year "a total of

101 coloured people became white, one Chinese became white, two whites received coloured classification, six whites became Chinese, two whites became Indians, 10 Malays became Indians, 11 Indians became coloured, four Indians became Malays, three coloured people became Chinese while two Chinese were classified as coloured people." (Alwyn Schlebusch, Minister of Justice, 1980)

1.2 What about racism?

Although the basis for the idea of race is questionable, there is no doubt that racism exists. For centuries, there has been a belief that some groups of people are inferior to others and thus need to be treated differently.

> "Racism is constructed by different societies in different ways. It is historically specific and not necessarily directed against the same group of people at all times and in all places." (Epstein, 1990:17)

Extreme racism would probably be based on a combination of the following beliefs:

- it is legitimate and valid to divide people up according to different race groups;
- there is a natural hierarchy amongst "races", particularly in terms of intelligence, morality, spirituality and civilization;
- exclusion and/or domination of certain "race groups" by others is justifiable (Moore, 1991).

But there are also other more subtle forms of racism. Although the people involved would not subscribe to the beliefs outlined above, the consequences of their actions would still lead to discrimination. For example, school authorities at schools previously reserved for whites or coloureds may believe that new African students choosing to come to these schools must adapt to school norms. There is no thought of the school

adapting in any fundamental way to the students. This can be seen as form of racism, and will be explored further in later chapters.

1.3 Racial terms

South Africa was notorious for its system of apartheid, which was based on white domination of all South Africans who were classified "non-white". However, apartheid did not simply seek to divide black and white. It also sowed divisions between those it defined as "non-white", creating a hierarchy with Africans at the bottom.

The apartheid government divided "non-whites" into coloured, Indian and African categories. Then it created different "group areas" for each "race group". The worst, most remote areas were usually set aside for Africans. Indian and coloured "group areas" usually formed buffer zones between African and white areas. Indian and coloured schools received higher subsidies than African schools. Social services (such as pensions) were higher for coloureds and Indians than for Africans.

Although the white, apartheid government was replaced by a democratic government in April 1994, the legacy of apartheid's racial classifications has not disappeared. In the Western Cape, for example, some people classified coloured under apartheid have embraced a coloured identity. This sometimes manifests itself as racism, where some coloured people believe that they are not only different from, but also better than, Africans. However, there are many other people who regard themselves as coloured who do not interpret this in a racist, anti-African way.

This book uses the terms African, coloured, Indian and white – not because we believe they are valid categories of classification but because they have, in some ways, become part of people's identities in this country. We also use the term

black when we refer to all of those who were oppressed by apartheid.

1.4 Racism in South Africa

Modern racism in our part of the world began with the arrival of European settlers in southern Africa around 1498. European ships started calling at the Cape of Good Hope in about 1600 to collect supplies. By 1652 the Dutch had set up a small permanent supply station there.

Soon afterwards wars broke out between the settlers and the indigenous people, the Khoi and the San, as the settlers sought more land for what was shortly to become the Cape Colony. The Khoi and San were conquered and forced to live under settler rule. While the Dutch outlawed the use of local people as slaves, they allowed slaves to be imported. Thus, from as early as 1658, slaves were regularly brought to the Cape from places such as West Africa, Malaysia and India (the Bay of Bengal).

In the latter part of the 18th century "scientific racism" became a wide-spread theory in Europe. One of its fundamental assumptions was that distinct "races" existed and that the capacities and destinies of racial groups were biologically determined. This supposedly resulted in a "natural hierarchy" of the different "races".

> The only pressing needs of a savage are those of food and sex, and the conditions of native life in Africa are such that these are as a rule easily supplied.
>
> (Transvaal labour commission, 1904)

The European powers used these ideas to justify their colonial domination of the people and territories of southern Africa. Colonialism and racism were thus intimately related and the theory of white superiority was translated into an official policy of segregation between black and white (Foster, 1991).

Racism became a convenient rationalisation for Europeans to deny political rights to "inferior" blacks. Lord Alfred Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa, explained the official settler government's view in 1903:

> "The white man must rule because he is elevated by many, many steps above the black man... which it will take the latter centuries to climb and which it is quite possible that the vast bulk of the population may never be able to climb at all." (Marks and Trapido, 1987:7)

In 1948, under the newly elected National Party government, the ideology of racism was formalised through apartheid. Racial separation was presented as the best means to avoid racial conflict. The system of apartheid sought to reduce racial contact to a minimum and to segregate all levels of society (Foster, 1991).

However in the post-World War II era, segregation based on the belief that black people were inherently inferior became more and more difficult to defend. Hitler's *Herrenvolk* policies had demonstrated to the world that the logical consequence of "race" thinking was the extermination of "impure races". Thus racist beliefs, when taken to the extreme, justified large-scale murder.

Social and biological theorists started to question the existence of "races" as it is not possible to define the characteristics and features of a "race". Opposition to apartheid grew – both inside and outside of the country. This led to the National Party government trying to disguise the concept "race" by using "ethnicity" to justify continued segregation. Ethnic groups were seen as separate groups with their own lifestyles, values and identities. Coloured people, for example, were divided into different ethnic groups, such as Malays, Griquas and Cape Coloureds.

Thus the concept of "culture" came to replace the concept of

"race" as the cornerstone of apartheid. The new cultural racism defined "race" as a matter of difference rather than as a question of hierarchy. However, culture was seen as the fixed property of social groups which could be defined and determined by the dominant white culture.

In 1958 Werner Eiselen, the Secretary of Native Affairs under Hendrik Verwoerd, expressed the National government's ideas on the promotion of different cultures in the following way:

> "The duty of the native is not to become a black European but to become a better native, with ideals and a culture of his own." (Dubow, 1987: 86)

The Nationalists used ethnicity to justify an even greater fragmentation of South Africans, particularly in allocating African people to different homelands and "groups areas" (Alexander, 1985). "Tribalism" or "multinationalism" was asserted as an objective fact – and ethnic separatism as the logical response. However, the white population was consistently presented as one ethnic group or nation.

In 1981, Prime Minister PW Botha explained apartheid as a system which recognised "multinationalism", rather than a system which entrenched white, minority domination:

> "The acceptance of multinationalism, the recognition of minorities, the existence of various cultures, ideas and traditions is not an ideology; it is a reality. We did not create it, we experienced it. It is a reality we have to take into account." (Cited in Posel, 1987: 421)

Today, racial discrimination and the division of people according to "cultures" is no longer enshrined in the South African Constitution. However this does not mean that there is no longer any division. Some people still ascribe to blatantly racist beliefs and many people use "culture" to describe perceived racial groupings.

1.5 Making sense of culture

> "The real challenge now is not racism, but how racism works side by side with the assertion of different cultural identities... It is at that cultural level that people have been racially reconstructed... This is a real challenge for anti-racist education as many will perceive it as an attack on their culture and their traditions." (Yosuf Said, interviewed in Moore, 1993:31)

As the previous section explains, the apartheid government started to use culture instead of race to foster division and separation. Many people still use the term to explain difference today.

Some people, for example, talk about Zulu culture as if all Zulus have the same beliefs, wear the same clothes and act in the same way. At one school, a teacher attributed a student's bullying behaviour to the fact that: "He is a Zulu. They are like that."

This way of understanding culture not only entrenches differences, but fails to explore the effect that power imbalances and issues such as class or material living conditions have on people.

Everything can be explained away by saying "that is their culture". But who is defining what this culture consists of? Who is the viewer and who is the viewed? Whose interests does it serve to use the term in this way? Doesn't culture change all the time? People do derive a feeling of identity from being part of a "culture". However when it becomes stereotyped or exclusive it becomes constraining.

We would prefer to see a much broader definition of culture. We find it more useful to see somebody's culture as the way s/he approaches life and makes sense out of it. Groups' beliefs and approaches are usually determined by the conditions they found themselves in. Culture is a continuous process of change and the boundaries are always porous.

> "We have in South Africa an emerging and evolving core culture to which all South Africans contribute... by drawing from the cultural streams in which they originated. The flowing together of... traditions in South Africa has created a huge new river without eliminating the contours of the original tributaries." (Alexander, 1995:40)

1.6 Racism in South African schools

The first school in South Africa that accommodated people other than the children of European settlers was for slaves. It was set up in 1658 and aimed to teach slaves to speak Dutch so that they could be more efficient in serving their white masters.

In 1799 the first school for Africans was started by missionaries. Its aims were generally more benevolent than those of the slaves' school, although the ideas of white superiority in terms of religion and lifestyle were never questioned. Once the British government took over at the Cape in 1815 more schools were set up as a way of spreading the English language and British traditions.

White children were trained for power and domination. The Cape Superintendent-General of Education said in 1889 that colonists "should have at least an education as their peers in Europe enjoy, with such local modifications as will fit them to maintain their unquestioned superiority and supremacy in this land" (Molteno, 1984: 47).

From 1902 education became free and compulsory for white children. But black education was generally left to the missionaries, and most black children did not go to school. The government only started to provide schools for black children in the 1930s. But a government report at the time clearly spelt out how the white rulers saw these schools, saying: "We must give the native an education which will keep him in his place" (Molteno, 1984:62). And in 1945 J.N. le Roux said in Parliament: "We should conduct our schools that the native who attends .. will know that to a great extent he must be the labourer in the country." (Molteno, 1984:66)

Once the National Party gained control in 1948, it introduced Bantu education, which was specifically aimed at making black people into the servants of whites. Mission schools were also forced to either close or toe official the line. Many did their best to resist this.

From here the divisions in education were entrenched. White children had a rigid Christian national education in well-resourced schools. Black children crowded into classrooms and were taught about white superiority and the virtues of obedience.

Dissatisfaction simmered until it boiled over in the 1976 uprising. The immediate catalyst was the order that most subjects for matric had to be studied and written in Afrikaans, a language generally associated with oppression. This order was withdrawn but the inequalities remained.

Government expenditure on each school child:

	AFRICAN	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE
1970	R 17	R 73	R 73	R282
1980	R139	R253	R513	R913

(Blignaut, 1981 and SAIRR Survey as cited in Christie, 1985:98)

The schools remained an arena of struggle during the 1980s. Black students fought for recognition of their Student Representative Councils (SRCs) and Parent, Teacher, Student Associations (PTSAs). They called for "People's Education" and education for liberation.

Many white schools had "terrorist" and bomb drills in response to the growing panic of many white South Africans. The government tried to appear as if they were reforming their policies but they remained committed to separate education and the amounts spent on white and black students remained very different.

When the new ANC-led government came into power in 1994, it ensured schools were opened to all and started moving towards equal spending on all students. More money was spent on previously disadvantaged schools. Principles of equity and access were, and continue to be, dominant in new policy formation.

These changes have brought their own problems, and led to new divisions. Provinces that used to get more money in the old dispensation are having to cut back on staff at many

Photograph: Sasa Krajl

Western Cape teacher's march in protest against retrenchments in 1996.

schools. This has caused resentment and anger, generally in the previously white, Indian and coloured schools.

Some of the traditionally privileged schools are battling to maintain their identities and are voicing concerns about drops in standards. Other schools are seeing few signs of the redress they have been promised for so long. These conflicts and concerns are often expressed in terms of race, making racism as visible as ever before.

Chapter 2

Ways of looking at racism

When exploring ways of resisting racism it is useful to start by looking at basic, unconscious assumptions that people hold about why racism exists. This section looks at different ways in which people explain racism and what implications these have for combating racist behaviour.

The approaches have been divided into four "theories" for the sake of clarity. In reality, people seldom subscribe to one belief only, and the most effective anti-racist strategy would probably combine all of them.

2.1 "Some people are like that"

Many people see racism as a part of an individual's personality or psychological profile. Some people are racist and some are not. Some are more so than others.

Theories which locate the source of racism in inner psychological dynamics are largely based on Sigmund Freud's work. Although Freud never formulated an explicit theory of racism, he tried to find explanations for the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany during the 1930s and the destruction and brutality which occurred during World War II. (Freud, 1939)

According to Freudian theory, people's actions and behaviour are always influenced by their unconscious. Freud was pessimistic about people's ability to conduct their lives rationally.

> "One has, I think, to reckon with the fact that there are present in all men destructive, and therefore anti-social and anti-cultural, trends and that in a great number of people these are strong enough to determine their behaviour in

human society."(Bocock, 1983:100)

He thus saw human aggression and violence as natural and irrational. Some theories based on Freud see racism as one form of aggression through which people can express their inherent destructive and cruel instincts.

One such theory explains adult racism as a consequence of childhood events. All children get angry with their parents when they are prevented from doing what they want to do. Children learn to cope with these feelings as they grow up.

However if parents are particularly strict and rigid and demand unquestioning respect and obedience, children suppress their feelings of hostility and obey their parents and other authority figures slavishly. They then find safer outlets for their suppressed aggression. Their targets are usually people who are in a weaker position than they are, or are viewed as being different in some way. Often these will be members of oppressed and less powerful groups in society.

Similar theories maintain that racism can also be caused by other internal conflicts. If a person feels insecure or threatened they will blame the outside environment.

These defence mechanisms are formed to protect the individual from uncomfortable feelings and from recognising their difficulties as part of themselves. One common defence mechanism is called projection. This is when a person attributes his/her own negative impulses to someone or something else. Bad workers blame their tools or kick the innocent cat. In the context of racism, a white person may not accept his/her own feelings of aggression towards others and, instead, claim that black people are being aggressive towards whites.

Another defence mechanism is where people deny that people and situations are complex. They divide people into goodies

and baddies, and put themselves into the goodie group. Anything bad that happens is simply the fault of the others.

This is similar to scapegoating, where groups or individuals are blamed for both personal and social problems. So, for example, unemployed Gentiles may blame Jews for unemployment. Similarly, a lack of discipline in schools may be blamed on a new intake of black students. Blaming others is useful for people who don't want to look at themselves and their own performances.

An extreme case of scapegoating arose in the trial of mass murderer, Barend Strydom. He stated that one reason for his hostility towards black people was their effect on the quality of air in Africa, as "there has been a decrease in the oxygen level in central Africa because the blacks removed the trees there" (*Natal Witness*, 18 May 1989).

One of the central ideas in psychodynamic theory is that prejudice fulfils certain needs in the individual. It can give an outlet for frustration and aggression. It can give reassurance for past failures and it can help one to feel less insecure. As author Herman Bahr explains:

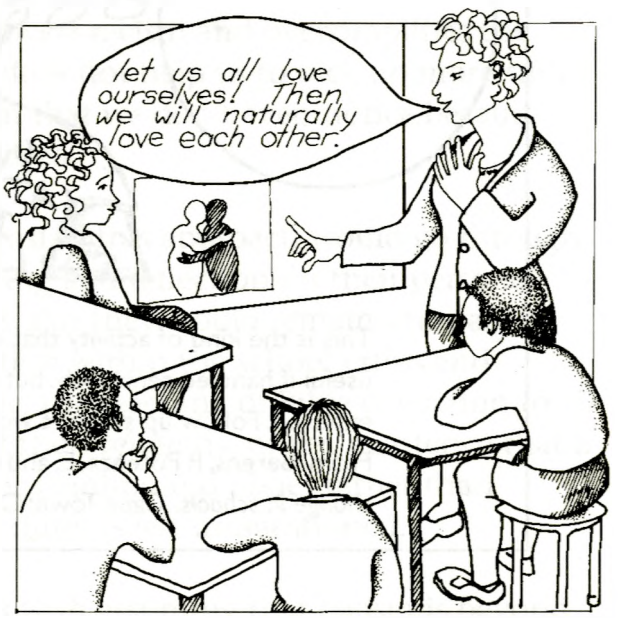
> "The rich take opium and hashish. Those who cannot afford them become anti-Semites. Anti-Semitism is the morphine of the small people... Since they cannot attain the ecstasy of love, they seek the ecstasy of hatred... It matters little who it is they hate. The Jew is just convenient... If there were no Jews, the anti-Semite would have to invent them." (Cited in Allport, 1954:343)

The belief that racism is the property of a few disturbed individuals is widespread. Only people who are psychologically unstable or who have unresolved personal problems are said to be racist.

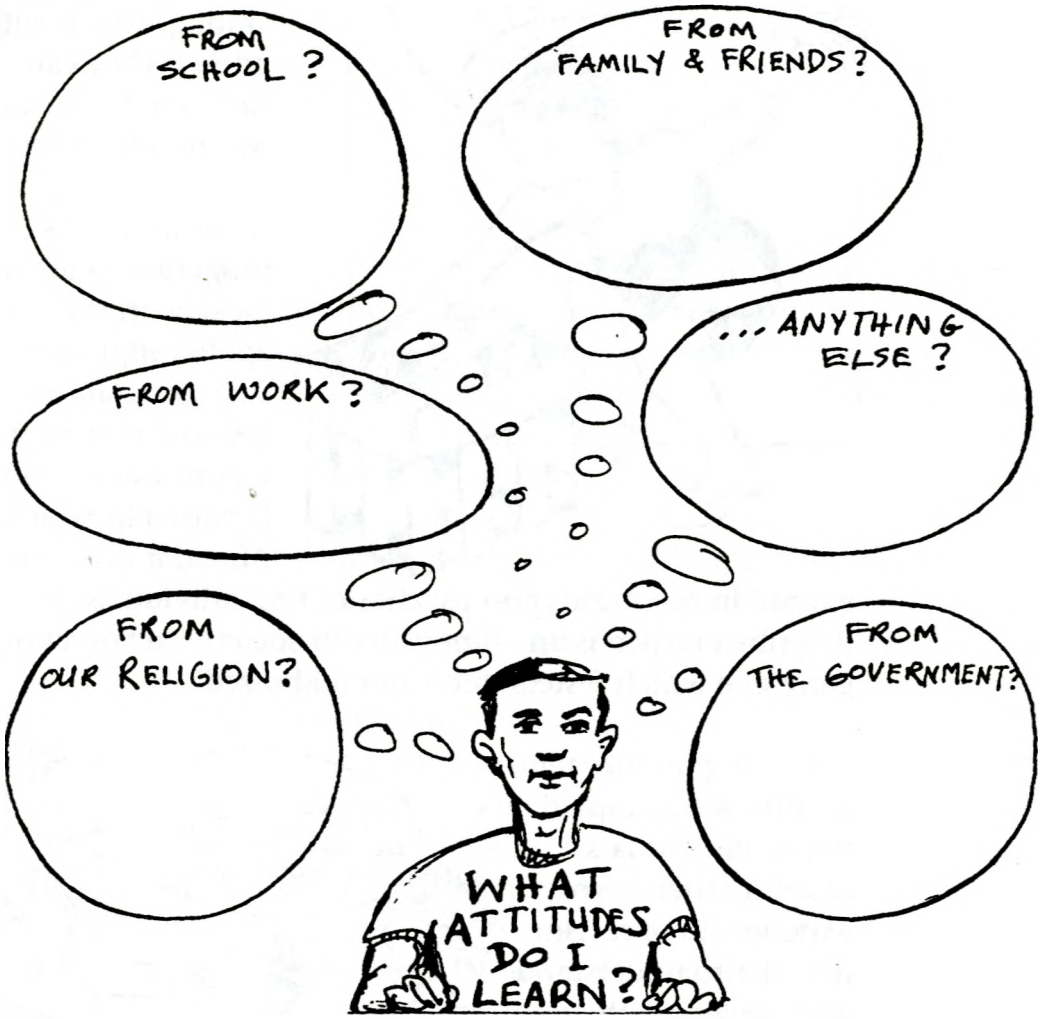
This is sometimes referred to as the "rotten apple theory" of racism, in which there are a few rotten apples amongst the healthy ones. If they can be sorted out, our society will be a healthy one.

A few anti-racist programmes are based loosely on this "rotten apple" approach. One such programme asserted that because racism was no longer legalised in South Africa, it now only existed in the minds and psyches of the individuals. It described racism is an "illness in our society"; a "psychological gangrene which festers if it is not addressed".

Such programmes tend to offer workshops where individuals examine their own experiences of racism in order to understand and "unlearn" their feelings and responses. Because individual insecurities are acknowledged, these programmes aim to affirm the prejudiced person's self-esteem so that it becomes



unnecessary to degrade others. Thus the programmes are aimed at providing a kind of therapy and self-healing to individuals.



This is the kind of activity that encourages participants to soul-search. It can be useful if handled sensitively, but if done badly could make people feel judged or exposed. Follow up support work is essential.

From: Berens, P, Potenza, E, and Versfeld, R. (1992). *Making a Difference: Ideas for change in schools.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press and Idasa.

Limits and Possibilities of this Approach

This psychological approach highlights the emotional aspects of racism. It also accounts well for extreme forms of prejudice in some people. Racist beliefs are frequently held with great conviction and feeling and it often does seem as if little can be done to change people's attitudes.

Psychodynamic theory helps to explain this. But it does not help to account for most of the forms of racism in society today. People with racist views in contemporary society are not only disturbed personalities. This approach on its own fails to look beyond the individual for the causes and treatments. Racism is not confined to a few disturbed individuals and prejudice will not be eradicated by "curing" individuals of their irrationality.

There is no acknowledgement or examination of the forces and ideologies in society that perpetuate racism. For example, it does not explain why certain groups become the target of racism and aggressive hatred and how this aggression becomes a collective phenomenon.

It also concentrates on overt racism and oversimplifies the process of prejudice. It does not help us to pick up more subtle manifestations of racism that we don't even notice because they are so institutionalised.

Individuals in a school using this approach would go through a process of soul-searching and reflection on their personal behaviour and attitudes. But they would remain unaware of the implicit discrimination within the school ethos and curriculum. For example, the teaching of Bible education to all students, irrespective of their religions, or the insistence that a good school orchestra has violins and oboes rather than marimbas and bamboo flutes is left unquestioned.

There are also problems with assuming that racism is beyond

conscious control and that individuals are victims of irrational, psychological forces and their upbringings. If we view racism in this way, then it means we see it as an uncontrollable phenomenon that is inevitable in certain people.

Thus the theory is of limited value in understanding racism as a whole. This does not mean that it is worthless as it can help us to highlight the emotional component that is involved in prejudice.

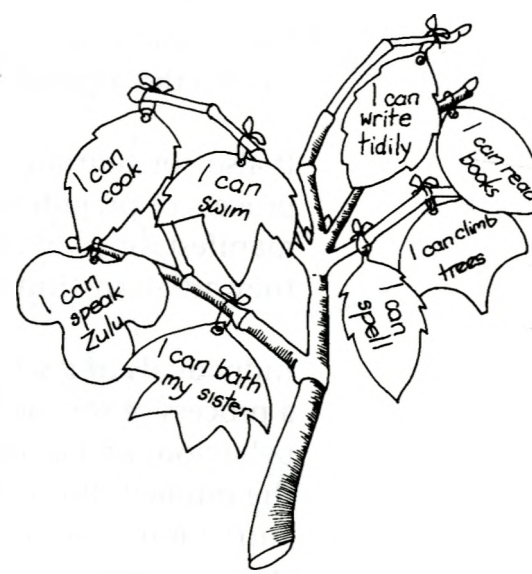
The solution it offers – that of building up a person's self-esteem and security – may not cure racism but it is certainly a healthy practice when done with sensitivity.

Further activities

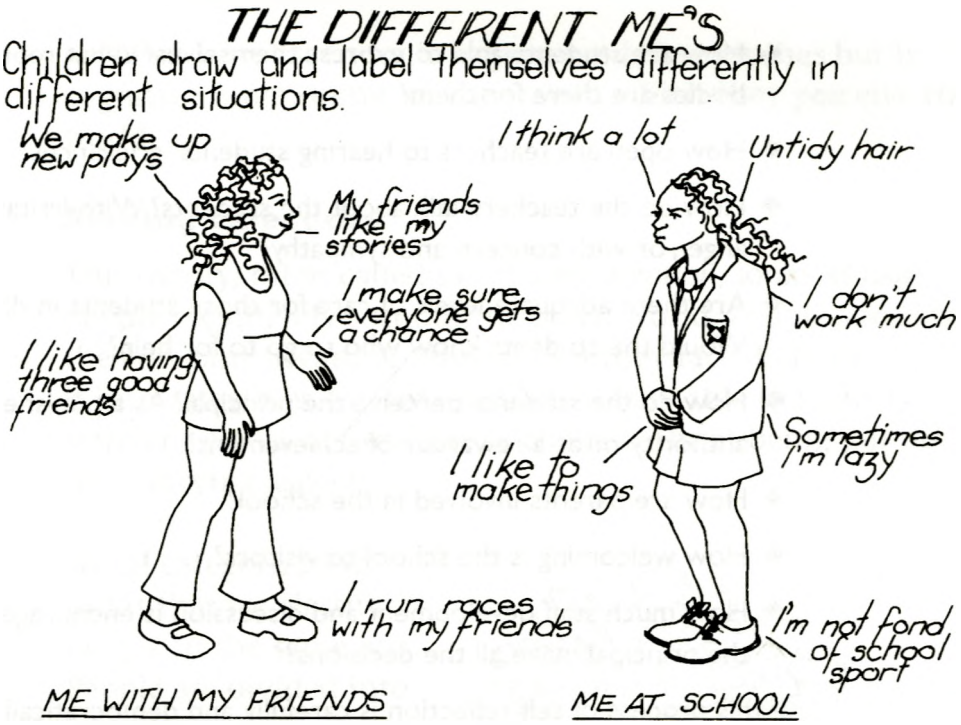
Building students' self-esteem in the classroom

Make An "I Can Tree"

- *Find a good-sized dead branch and bring it into the classroom (like a large Christmas tree).*
- *Each child makes about six large paper leaves (different leaf shapes).*
- *Everyone writes one thing they can do on separate leaves – one thing on one leaf (about six leaves per child).*
- *Each child displays her/his leaves by hanging them or sticking them onto the branches.*
- *Stand up the branch for all to admire.*



Things our class can do



Building students' self-esteem at school

It is important that every child is valued and their voices are heard in the school. This might not be enough to combat racism but it is certainly a first and important step.

> "Every school has what can be called an ethos, or characteristic spirit. Some schools are harsh and punishing; others are inviting and rewarding. Some are characterised by the relative isolation of teacher from teacher; others are places where teachers consistently interact professionally. Some are goal directed; others appear to be moving in several directions at once. Some are problem-solving environments; others are reactive.
>
> "A school which has a healthy ethos, characterised by the more positive statements above, is likely to be more effective in conventional terms – for example, in terms of pupils' results and in efforts to promote teacher growth and development." (Griffin, G. 1987 as cited in Epstein, 1990:27)

It is thus important for schools to reflect on what ethos they wish to create and how best to create it. They need to consider:

- How are students able to express themselves? What representative bodies are there for them?
- How open are teachers to hearing students' grievances?
- How do the teachers talk about the students? With irritation and anger, or with concern and sympathy?
- Are there adequate levels of care for those students in difficulties? Would the students know who to go to for help?
- How do the students perceive the principal? As a punisher and authority or as a rewarder of achievement?
- How are parents involved in the school?
- How welcoming is the school to visitors?
- How much staff development and discussion is encouraged, or does the principal make all the decisions?

If this process of self-reflection is carefully and democratically done, it will strengthen the morale of the staff. Aspects of this activity suggest institutional change. This is looked at in the fourth section of this chapter.

[Adapted from Epstein, D and Sealy, A. (1990) *Where it really matters: Developing anti-racist education in predominantly white primary schools.* Birmingham: Development Education Centre.]

2.2 "To know is to love"

Racists are frequently seen as people who do not know any better. People who hold this view believe that racists have not had the opportunity to meet and get to know people who are different from them. Their attitudes arise from their ignorance. As a result they tend to generalise about, and stereotype, other groups and form biased judgements.

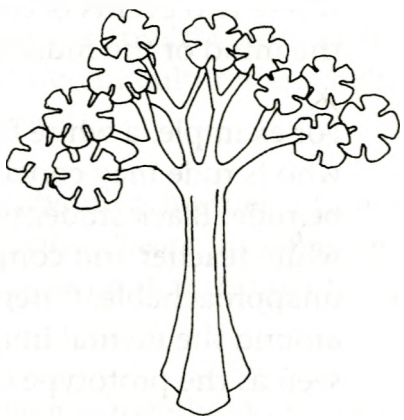
This approach to racism is similar to the psychological one discussed previously in that it also identifies racism as an individual problem. An important difference, however, is that racism is thought to stem from a lack of knowledge. The

problem is not seen to lie in people's inner psyches but in their cognitive functioning, or the way in which they perceive the world.

Making categories

This theory, often called *social categorization*, looks at how people cognitively sort out the social world. People simplify the constant stream of information they face daily by placing it into categories. So, for example, we are able to identify different pieces of furniture as chairs without being put off by their varying aspects.

Social categorization holds that we classify people in the same way. People are divided into groups on the basis of any number of features – such as appearance, gender, nationality, beliefs. It is assumed that all members of these groups are the same and different from members of other groups.



This tree has red flowers therefore all trees have red flowers.

From this perspective, racism is primarily the result of faulty thinking where the individual is deluded into generalised and biased judgements.

People are no longer seen as individuals but are categorised as male, fat, Indian, Afrikaans etcetera. While the people making up a category or group have some shared characteristics (for example, a need for bigger clothes; a knowledge of Afrikaans), presumed irrational characteristics are added which are formed without adequate evidence (for example, Afrikaners all eat

boerewors or all fat people are lazy). When categories become linked to presumed characteristics, we have stereotyping.

Stereotypes

Stereotyping occurs when a specific set of traits is attributed to everyone who is identified as being part of a particular social group. It is now generally accepted that stereotypes develop as a result of socialisation, and are given content by parents, the mass media and prevailing social norms.

Some social categorization theorists believe that stereotypes may be formed through a cognitive process of association where two events occur together and are then connected in the mind of the individual to form a stereotype.

For example, a white teacher who encounters a black student who is rude may conclude that all black students are likely to be rude. Black students might encounter a hostile, unhelpful white teacher and conclude that all white teachers are unapproachable. Categories may thus become organised around the mental image of a striking exemplar, who is then seen as the prototype of this category.

Selective attention is then applied, where people take more note of behaviour that confirms the stereotype than behaviour that is inconsistent with it. This makes it difficult for people to modify their categories and prejudices as they do not pay attention to anything that may contradict their preconceived ideas.

Those who subscribe to this theory conclude that racism can be treated by educating people and bringing them together to break down the stereotypes that have been built up.

Others do not necessarily subscribe to the ideas of social categorization, but also believe that racism is caused by a lack of understanding between people who have lived separate lives.

Many attempts at breaking down racism include teaching people about each other and putting them into situations where they meet each other and discover similarities. From this it is expected that people will find out they share a common humanity and will give up their prejudices and stereotypes.

This approach is relatively easy to implement in schools: knowledge and the cognitive domain is what schools commonly work with. The idea of reducing ignorance by increasing access to information through contact or teaching can easily be incorporated into school practice.

Some schools adopt a notion of "multi-cultural education" and teach children about the different cultures and beliefs of people from all over the world.

The other way of learning about each other is to meet each other – sometimes called *contact theory*. Teachers say "all our children play together", implying that this contact proves there is no racism.

Many programmes bring people together to try to break down barriers and encourage people to communicate and empathise with each other. One example is the idea of twinning schools, where a school from one area joins up with a school from another, for different events.

Another example of this contact theory was evident in a Cape Town-based project, Peace Visions, aimed at high school students from different backgrounds. Its purpose was to "engender a community of consensus and an understanding of contradictions and differences about the meaning of peace and national identities".

Here selected students from different schools participated in a programme which included a weekend on Robben Island and follow-up workshops in art, drama and conflict resolution. The

students attended a number of sessions on tolerance, prejudice, stereotyping and issues around exclusion and inclusion. They then went back to their schools and communities and participated in projects which relayed what they had learned.

Limits and Possibilities of this Approach

The idea of stereotyping encourages us to examine and challenge the stereotypes we hold. The notion of bringing people together encourages communication and mutual understanding. However there are some questionable assumptions behind these approaches, and they are of limited value if they are used in isolation without the benefit of other theoretical approaches.

People are seen as fundamentally rational. In order to change people's minds, you just need to supply them with new information. Thus, eradicating racism is merely a cognitive re-ordering process.

This ignores any vested interest that people may have in their prejudices as well as any emotional content that racism may contain. But people do not always change after they have learnt more about others from books or from meeting a few individuals.

Although this approach does acknowledge society as a factor in the formation of stereotypes, it still sees racism as an individual, not a collective, act. This, like the psychodynamic theory described in the previous chapter, neglects the fact that racism involves economic, social and political interests.

The racism of some British youth against Pakistani immigrants, for example, is not purely motivated by the negative stereotypes of Pakistanis held by the British. Nor is it purely motivated by psychological insecurities, as described in the psychodynamic theories. It has a lot to do with the fact that

Feeding in facts to change people's attitudes. (These facts themselves can perpetuate cultural stereotypes.)

Pakistanis are perceived to be an economic threat because they take British jobs. All these aspects are interlinked.

In this situation, stereotypes become the justification for racist acts, but are not the cause. This racism is unlikely to be cured if they all went away on a weekend together.

Research has shown that contact between different groups does not always break down prejudice. In fact, it can even have the opposite effect of reinforcing stereotypes as people are not totally rational and can reject or ignore information that does not fit into the desired mould.

It has also been found that positive personal interaction may change somebody's attitude towards an individual but not towards an entire group. Billig (1976) gives an account of an interview with a teenage member of the British National Front who held explicit racist views. The same girl was later seen walking arm in arm with and Indian girl, laughing and talking.

This is more common than many people think, and is illustrated by the well-known phrase: "Some of my best friends are black/ Asian etcetera, but..."

Successful contact situations have to be carefully planned. Psychologists have put together a long list of conditions that should be met for the ideal contact situation (Mynhardt and Du Toit, 1991).

Ideal contact situations need the following conditions:

- Contact must occur under pleasant social conditions and must be voluntary.
- Norms of tolerance must apply in the situation and be made explicit and supported by the authorities.
- The individuals involved in the contact situation do not confirm negative stereotypes.
- Equal status is necessary for everybody involved.
- Common goals and shared coping are important where co-operation is necessary in order to achieve a goal. This also gives the contact situation meaning and purpose. It is also important that the outcome of the activity is successful – otherwise participants will feel negatively towards the entire situation.
- The proximity and frequency of contact is important where an increase in these will lead to more favourable attitude change.

However, it is particularly difficult to fulfil these requirements in schools, as students are not there voluntarily with the aim of breaking down barriers. (See 'Birds of a Feather', section 2.3, which looks at group dynamics more closely.)

A problem that arises when people work with stereotypes is that they may actually reinforce the very stereotypes they are trying to break down. They do not question the existence of

different groupings based on skin colour or culture, but instead question the validity of giving common attributes to members of the same group.

Another potential problem with teaching people about different cultures is that the concept of culture can become static and can reinforce stereotypes that the programme was originally meant to challenge. (For example: the Cape coloureds enjoy singing and dancing and have a famous festival called the Coon Carnival.)

Often there is little exploration of cultural change or the reasons behind the inequalities of people or of culture as a broader, dynamic concept.

Further activities

Looking at stereotypes

Ask students to draw a farmer, a burglar, a lawyer, a doctor (or any other potential stereotypes). See what race and gender stereotypes are produced. Are all the lawyers, farmers and doctors white males? This is not an activity to prove students wrong, but to encourage them to be aware of what stereotypes they hold.

Depending on the level of the class, this exercise could lead to a discussion. For example, the class could discuss why we do not expect black women to be lawyers. Teachers could explain that this is so because there have not been many black women lawyers in the past. One important reason is that apartheid made it very difficult for them to qualify.

It is important to expose stereotypes so that students can challenge the hierarchy and assumptions that living under apartheid has set in place. Stereotypes presented in textbooks can also be challenged in this way.

Learning about cultures

Use activities that recognise cultural complexity and change. Use the

children themselves as resources, but never assume that students have particular cultural knowledge because of what colour or religion they are. Ask students to discuss, write about or draw a special festival or celebration they have had at their home. If written or drawn, these stories or pictures could be put together in a book that all the students could read.

Other topics could be: "My favourite food", "Me and Religion", "The thing I like doing best". These topics allow students to explore aspects of how they and their classmates live without imposing any expectations on them.

However these sorts of personal activities can only be done safely if there is already a feeling of trust and tolerance in the class.

Exploring culture and power

The exercise below gives an example of setting questions that encourage students to recognise the relationship between culture and power as well as exploring cultural change.

> The shack stood on a piece of land on which the Twelfth Apostle Christian Church of Jerusalem congregation hoped to build a proper church, perhaps of red brick with a polished wooden cross and who knows, perhaps a huge church bell. Just like they have in the leafy suburbs of nearby Pretoria. Baba Mfundisi parked his bakkie in the shade of an acacia tree in the churchyard, and headed for the small church. Inside, members of the congregation were already humming hymns to the beat of a cowhide drum and the rhythmic tinkle of a little silver bell.
>
> Shuffling his feet and moving his body to the rhythm of the drum and tinkling bell, Baba Mfundisi entered the church. Dancing his way through the rows of benches he finally reached the lectern. Baba Mfundisi raised his hand, ordering his flock to stop singing.
>
> [Extract from Masilela, J. (1995). Baba Mfundisi the clergyman, in *Crossing Over.* L. Rode and J. Gerwel (Eds.). Cape Town: Kwela Books.]

1. What aspects of this situation are familiar to you?

2. What aspects are different?
3. How many possible explanations can you find for these differences?
4. What does this tell you about the ways in which cultures evolve? OR Think about your place of worship. How does this reflect the shifting cultures of its users?

2.3 "Birds of a feather"

Different groups exist in society: religious groups, social groups, gangs, political and labour organisations, interest groups or clubs and so on.

It seems natural and normal for people to identify with particular groups and not with others. We can identify with different groups at different times. A girl, for example, may complain about boys when angry with her boyfriend and about teachers when she is with her male and female classmates. We all have multiple identities and relate to other groups in terms of these identities.

In South Africa racial identity has played an especially powerful role. Distinct racial groups have been defined and set up against one another in competition for power, status and resources.

This has been an institutionalised and dominant feature of life here. Because this "race" group identity has been institutionalised and has material implications, theorists would argue that this form of social identity is particularly ingrained in people.

Intergroup relations

Relations between groups cannot be explained simply in terms of the psychology of the individual members of a group. There are a number of different social, situational, political and

psychological processes which come into play.

Researchers investigating intergroup relations have conducted experiments with artificially created groups in order to gain insight into the processes between groups. One well-known set of experiments is known as the Summer Camp Studies (Sherif and Sherif, 1953; Sherif et al., 1961).

In these field studies, 11 and 12-year-old-boys arrived at a summer camp and were initially left to form friendships with each other. In the second stage of the study the boys were divided into two groups such that friends were assigned to different groups. Activities were planned in which the boys interacted with their own group only. This led to a switch in friendship choices as well as the development of a group organisation where hierarchies and behavioural norms formed.

During the third stage of the experiment, the camp authorities organised a number of intergroup competitions where there had to be a losing and a winning group. This led to hostility and conflict between the groups. Groups developed negative stereotypes about the "other" group and greater cohesion and positive images of their own group.

In the last study, the experimenters introduced a fourth stage where they tried to reduce the negative intergroup relations by introducing common, superordinate goals. These superordinate goals had compelling appeal and were desired by each group but were unattainable without the participation of the other group (Sherif, 1961).

The boys had to pool resources or participate in joint action to achieve a mutually desired end result, for example pulling a broken-down food truck, or repairing a faulty water supply. These activities led to a decrease in intergroup hostility and eventually friendship choices extended to members of the other group.

The researchers concluded that:

- incompatible goals or competition between groups over scarce resources leads to intergroup conflict;
- superordinate goals or co-operative activities between groups induce social harmony.

Another important point added by other theorists is that working together for a common goal can only be successful if groups have equal status and equal access to resources.

These ideas about intergroup relations were applied to real-life settings, including desegregated schools in the United States (Aronson et al, 1978).

WORKING TOGETHER BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS

The typically competitive classroom environment was changed to promote co-operation in the hope that positive racial attitudes would result. The "jigsaw" method was used to introduce co-operative interdependence between students. Pupils worked in small groups where each member was responsible for a piece of information crucial to the finished product. Repetition of this exercise led to an improvement in overall school performance and in inter-racial attitudes and behaviour.

Various South African schools have also

investigated ways of increasing co-operation between pupils. For example, Ailex Lowenherz, a Standard Two teacher, has developed ways of democratising her classroom and increasing co-operative learning. Her aim is to both maximise the learning that takes place and facilitate social development in her students.

To do this, she and her students develop a programme where both co-operative and independent learning are central. Lowenherz works out weekly contracts and activities with her students. Each Monday morning the contracts are negotiated by everyone and the students have a chance to say if they feel the workload is too much or too little for them.

Name: Queenie

CONTRACT FOR: 19-23 September

MATHEMATICS	Finish Tables Trail 3	Minimaths with partner	MBMp122 No 30
ENGLISH	Spelling	THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN *	The New South Africa or Misterieland
AFRIKAANS	Toneelspeletjie	Slimkat voltooi alles tot bl. 56	
Geography/ Science	Weather	Finish weather book	
XHOSA	READING MARATHON		
HEALTH	BONES: 1st Aid Care of bones	Knitting	Skills Test *
Handwork	Just So Stories	SERVICE - Do something for somebody	LIBRARY BOOKS

Each child has a copy of the contract or work for the week. They may agree to add or cross off certain items. The ones marked * are to do together as a class activity. The rest are for individuals or groups. Children cross the activities off as they complete them.

Different children take on different workloads. Each child is responsible for covering the material in the week. They learn to pace themselves and decide what activities and exercises they want to do when and how.

Lowenherz offers inputs and discussions on topics in one area of the classroom at certain times and it is up to the students whether or not they want to participate.

While different personalities are expressed in the way the children work – on the floor, at their desks, in pairs or in groups – there are always certain tasks which cannot be done individually. To complete these, children have to work together and take responsibility for one another.

Lowenherz argues that children are empowered by this co-operative, child-centred and democratic approach. It is important to them that their opinions count and they are responsible for their learning and managing their time. They learn to respect one another's abilities and differences and together form a cohesive group.

Some Western Cape Schools also embarked on a project aimed at teaching democracy and encouraging integration. The idea was to involve the whole school community in decision-making and curriculum development. The traditional boundaries of age-group, academic ability and teacher authority were dissolved for the duration of these once-a-week "lessons".

Students set up clubs of their choice in normal school lesson time (anything from hairdressing to politics). Teachers joined in as equal participants. Each group selected its leaders and together designed its curriculum for the term.

Leaders from all the clubs would meet to look at how to support each other and work on an Open Day together. The

central idea was co-operation between groups and not competition.

Teachers found the change in the balance of power very difficult initially but said it became easier as students with leadership qualities emerged and the group learnt to take responsibility. The "superordinate goal" of planning and running an Open Day together did much to create a stronger school identity.

However, schools found that democracy was such a new way of working that it was very difficult to implement. All stakeholders have to be committed, including the principal. The difficulties provided food for much thought and discussion about how democratic schools actually are.

Limits and Possibilities of this Approach

The idea of group identities has helped to inform a great deal of anti-racist practice. Some of the possibilities for classrooms and schools have already been described in this chapter.

An activity we have seen in some anti-racist training programmes serves as an example which distils all the elements. It involves participants, all from the same business or organisation, identifying all the groups that exist in their workplace. So, for example, they may suggest the different sections of the organisation, the status of the different jobs, gender, religion, shared tea areas, age groupings and so on.

Each participant then looks at which different groups s/he fits into and where they overlap with others. From here they reflect on the different dynamics in the workplace and come to a greater understanding of how different social relations and alliances are formed.

This can be useful, both on the cognitive level, by recognising

how different relationships are formed, and on the organisational level, by seeing how new relations may be engineered by changing the groupings.

In the last part of the activity, participants decide on what changes need to be made within their organisation.

Recognising how structures and shared opportunities can develop co-operation and mutual respect is important for developing anti-racist practice. Many schools have acknowledged this to a degree with teams, houses and clubs.

However these have not primarily been created to encourage integration and democracy, and elements of competition and status have entered into the groupings.

There is seldom an overarching goal which is dependent on co-operation rather than competition. Sherif's notion of a "superordinate goal" or a goal which cannot be achieved by any one individual is vital.

Common goals may be difficult to construct initially as much of the school system and curriculum is geared to individual achievement. Here again, understanding how groups work can help to develop a more co-operative environment.

The importance of equal status and equal access to resources cannot be underestimated. There is no point in having both rugby and soccer clubs if the only field available is for rugby. The message is similarly clear when lessons are interrupted for choir practises but not for the writing club. All groups must be valued equally.

Another issue to consider is that students have different identities at different times. Thus, co-operation between students in one context – such as the classroom – does not mean students will also co-operate in a different context – such

as the playground. To be effective, there must be multiple contexts for learning co-operation.

Structures need to be changed so that they become meaningful to all those who participate in them. This should affect the life of the school as a whole. So, for example, clubs could be integrated into the formal curriculum or classroom learning could be organised to encourage everyone's contribution. The idea of changing structures is discussed further in the next chapter.

It seems important that change happens on emotional, cognitive, social and organisational levels. Everyone needs to be part of the physical change process as well as being aware of group dynamics and social engineering.

The approach described in this section offers ways of doing this and can be a very important component of anti-racist practice. It opens up multiple possibilities for classrooms and schools which need to be explored further.

Further activities

Group work can be a useful tool to get students to interact with each other an equal basis. However it can also be disastrous if it is not carefully planned. Make sure that the activity planned is suitable for groupwork and that each student will have something to contribute. Here are some examples of group work tasks that encourage co-operation:

Mathematics

To be done in groups of five. Measure the length of five children's feet. Record them on a graph. What is the average?

Measure the same five people's hands. Is it true that there is a relationship between foot and hand size?

Science

Do experiments in groups of four. One person in each group must be responsible for each of these tasks:

- instruction reader;
- equipment organiser;
- timer;
- note-taker.

As each student has a vital role to play in conducting the experiments, no one can be excluded. These roles can be adapted to the activity planned.

Language

Let us think of as many words in as many languages as we can for "Welcome". We will then make a poster with these words for the school entrance.

2.4 "It's the System"

Another way of viewing racism is to look at society as a whole. Individuals are racist because the structures, practices and values of our society are racist.

Competition over scarce resources (such as money, power and land) has led to systems developing to protect certain interests and entrench the status quo. Racism is part of this status quo. It is produced and reproduced through the media, by politicians, by communities and in institutions such as schools or religious organisations.

Thus, if real change is to happen, our political, legal, social, economic, educational and health systems, and other systems and institutions that govern our lives, will need to be transformed.

Some theorists argue that racism is present in any society

which has a disproportionate number of one group of people in power or authority, as opposed to other groups in that society. If, for example, a disproportionate number of blacks are unemployed, there is some mechanism in place in society which prevents black people from reaching the same level of educational and vocational experience as whites. There are probably also discriminatory hiring practices.

This is certainly true in South Africa where the belief that people are different and unequal has justified many exploitative practices in the past. Even today when there is no legally entrenched racism it is obvious that South African society still operates on a racist basis.

Ideology

It is often difficult to identify the person or people responsible for perpetuating racial discrimination because it seems to be everywhere. When people try to explain how racism works in the general society they sometimes use the term *ideology*.

There are many different ways of understanding ideology. One explanation that is currently used is to say that ideology encompasses all the beliefs, common-sense understandings and practices that uphold a particular status quo.

It is difficult to challenge the status quo as ideology is not just a set of beliefs that a certain group of people holds that is forced on to everybody else. Instead, it has become part of the way we all think and live.

Ideology constructs our reality for us by informing us about what is good, right and beautiful in a way which makes sense to us. This is an ongoing process.

Institutions reflect ideological positions in their structures, practices, traditions and overt and covert agendas. In schools, for example, the ceremonies, songs and sports, hierarchies

amongst staff and students, curriculum and hidden curriculum all reflect the prevailing ideologies.

Students may be taught, amongst other things, to know their place in the system, to be proud of their uniform and to work individually and competitively.

These values suit the functioning of our society as it is structured at present. There is no conscious plot of indoctrination. It is simply that, for the current system to be perpetuated, life has to make some sort of sense in terms of the balance of power in society. Thus the values that become dominant in society are those that serve the interests of the groups in power at that particular time.

Affirmative action

Affirmative action is a good example of an attempt to consciously change the power structures and ideology of a country. Affirmative action is aimed at "levelling the playing field". In the past, blacks and women have been severely disadvantaged in society. The list of the oppressive laws that ensured particularly black exclusion was extensive.

Now racist laws have been removed, but the past cannot simply be wiped out. Previously disadvantaged people have not suddenly got good education and years of experience.

If nothing is done, the ideology instituted by apartheid – that whites are more capable than blacks – will be entrenched by the social conditions it has produced, which ensured whites were better equipped for skilled employment than blacks.

That is why affirmative action has been introduced. The debate about what exactly it means continues. To some companies, it has meant employing a few blacks who are ill-prepared for the job and are given little support. This has reinforced white

prejudice rather than challenged it.

However other companies are more selective, looking for potential and putting resources into training. These companies recognise different types of experience and knowledge, rather than emphasising paper qualifications.

Language and power

Some theorists focus on how the language and the words that we use help to maintain or challenge oppressive power relations in society.

Today in South Africa, some discriminatory practices are justified with new ways and words. For example, the practice of teaching all students through the "international language" of English disadvantages those who speak other languages.

Another example is the idea of "equal opportunity". This usually encourages or enables people to join the established practices of the dominant group, rather than transforming that dominant group to accommodate all. This takes the pressure off having to change practices which, by their very nature, may be discriminatory and continue to exclude the disempowered.

On the other hand the words and language that we use can also be liberating. For example, when people refuse to accept labels which others impose on them, or by changing terms which have lost their intended meaning. An example of that would be changing "affirmative action" to "corrective action" which emphasises the reason and function of this practice.

Look at results, not intentions

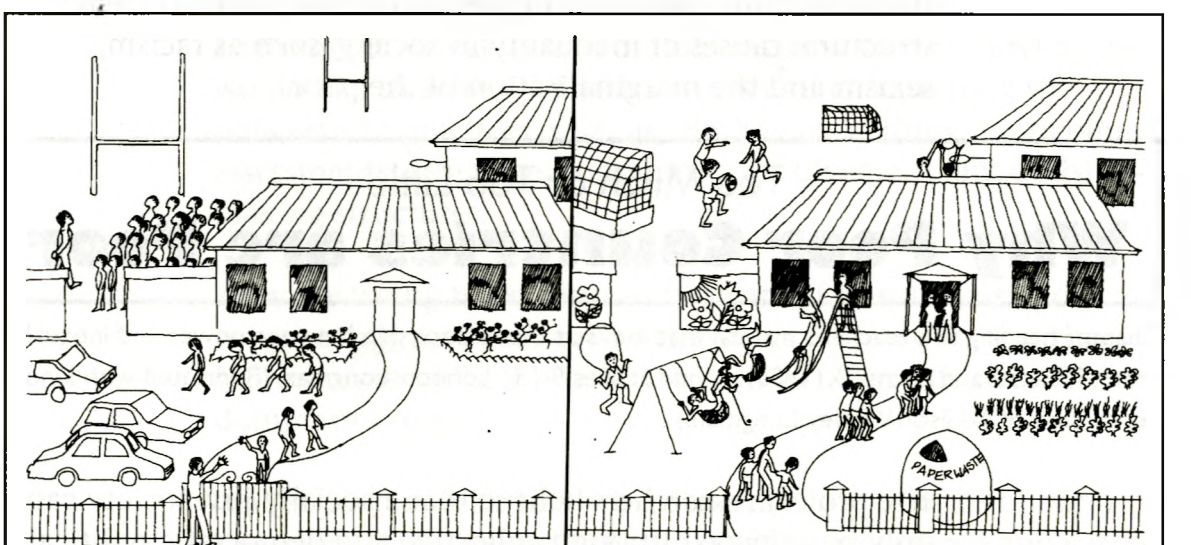
Ironically, apparently well-meaning attempts to challenge racism in society are often based on assumptions that perpetuate the status quo. By focusing on the results of actions rather than the intentions behind them, it is possible to gain a

better understanding of racism in our society and institutions. We can start to question the status quo by looking at who is excluded from what and who is disadvantaged in what way.

Many bridging classes, for example, are offered by schools who wish to help children who have had less access to resources and are not up to the established standards of the school.

This argument sounds convincing but may prevent its protagonists from questioning the standards they are upholding. It is focused on getting the child to fit into a system rather than trying to change the system itself to suit all the children it must serve.

While it is true that certain children have been disadvantaged it is important to re-examine the nature and function of schools themselves. Many researchers have found that bridging classes marginalise and alienate the children they were designed to help. Bridging classes have also allowed teachers to continue teaching their classes as before, rather than making them more appropriate.



SAME BUILDINGS, DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES

It is important that every school becomes aware of its ethos or ways of being and the assumptions that its actions rest upon. A good starting point is to consider how a complete outsider would describe the school to another outsider. Such a person would see the consequences of various practices rather than the ideology or intentions behind them. These consequences are what finally matter.

Anti-racist practitioners who look at the racism in our broader society do not concentrate on changing individual attitudes and behaviours. They may begin by pointing out how certain ideologies and behaviours serve discriminatory purposes. Their focus then shifts to finding ways of transforming the system or institution so that actual practises are no longer exclusive.

Teaching for Resistance

An interesting example of how a structural analysis of racism may be introduced into a school curriculum can be found in the Teaching for Resistance project initiated by the Education for Social Justice Research Group in Adelaide, South Australia.

Its primary aim is to investigate how schools can challenge the structural causes of inequality in society, such as racism, sexism and the marginalisation of the poor.

Too Much or Too Little

Why Poor Countries are Poor

Chapter heading in a teacher's manual that looks at the relationship between power and inequality. From: Fisher, S. and Hichs, D. (1985). *World Studies 8-13.* London: Longman. (Reprinted with kind permission of Addison Wesley Longman.)

The project researchers believe that a socially just society can only be achieved through collective and democratic political action. They advocate teaching students skills to become involved in the social and political issues which affect their lives.

The researchers believe it is essential that young people become aware of the various traditions of struggle against oppression. Students are also helped to become actively involved in identifying, naming and focusing on issues of social justice.

Once students have selected a particular issue to tackle they learn more about it by interviewing community groups, affected individuals and anyone else who will help them to understand the problem.

They then select, plan and take strategic actions to tackle the injustice. Finally, they evaluate their resistance action to lay the foundation for their next one.

Changing schools

It is difficult to find schools that have taken their understanding of institutional racism beyond the curriculum and into their own organisational structures and practices.

However, more schools are embarking on processes of analysing their values and building shared visions of what they would like to achieve. These schools are re-examining their policies and practices, such as admissions, staffing, curriculum, assessments, language, community involvement and decision-making structures.

They are trying to be constantly aware of how beliefs and values can justify particular behaviours and to question the "common sense" assumptions which so often ride over the less dominant voices.

One school had the following sentence as part of its mission statement: "We are dedicated to creating an ordered and caring environment which involves our community and serves its needs."

All the teachers had lived with this, each understanding it in their own way. However, a discussion about how the school involved its community quickly revealed how limited this relationship was. For example, unemployed and illiterate parents, a sizeable body, were not represented on any committees.

After some discussion the teachers themselves identified the problem as being one where the school saw itself as a service, offering "improvements" on its terms. There was no real sense of involvement with the community in which it was located.

Limits and Possibilities of this Approach

The strength of this approach, which explains racism as an integral part of how society functions, is that it recognises racism as a pervasive force in society. It looks at the many different levels that racism operates on and at how laws, institutions, and the very way we speak, favour and disfavour individuals and groups.

It resists assimilating people into a particular way of life that will inevitably favour some over others. It rather seeks to identify ways of effecting change which ensures that no-one suffers from discriminatory practices.

Unlike the previous three approaches described in this book, this approach uncovers the underlying political and economic reasons for inequalities. The interplay between racism and economic exploitation cannot be swept under the carpet. Nor can the role of ideology in explaining certain practices go unquestioned.

Seeing how society perpetuates racism is crucial for a thorough understanding of how racism happens. This is essential in any anti-racist programme. However, a focus on the system can also give individuals the excuse to sit back, saying it has

nothing to do with them as society at large is the problem.

In schools, students should not only learn about how racism perpetuates the status quo but also be in a school environment that itself challenges the current powerful ideologies.

But this is difficult to implement. Some theorists argue that this is impossible, as schools are ultimately designed to reproduce society and perpetuate its values, not change it.

The analysis of how racism operates is easiest to teach cognitively and consciously by imparting and exploring information. As previous theories have demonstrated, merely giving people alternative information might not change their behaviour.

Simply teaching an analysis of the causes of racism can also lead to a form of indoctrination: this is the right way to look at the world and my task is to make you all agree with me!

The Teaching for Resistance example does well in avoiding indoctrination as it works consciously at involving a range of different people in identifying the issues and in collecting different points of view. It is a process of action and reflection.

It does, however, require teachers who are able to stand back and allow students to learn in a far more open-ended and experiential way than has traditionally been the case in our schools.

Implementing this approach in a school is also very difficult as it requires a real commitment to changes that are not always in the interests of those in power. In addition, schools have to complete national curricula and students have to write examinations.

However, even if change is very slow, which it nearly always is,

it is important that schools and teachers reflect on these issues and develop a vision for their school. Otherwise the changes that happen might be only in response to crises and so be haphazard and even potentially destructive.

Further activities

Developing school policy

The impact of a single teacher in a single classroom on what students learn is limited. The school as a whole – its culture or ethos – is responsible for the overall happiness, competencies and attitudes of its community. Unless issues are actively addressed by the whole school, the patterns, hurts and inequalities will be perpetuated.

As this book focuses on combating racism, this section looks at developing school policy on racism. However, you could use the ideas outlined here to develop other policies such as gender, language, setting timetables or staffing. You will find that they are all intricately intertwined.

The process of developing a policy is as important as the resulting policy itself. It provides an opportunity to:

- look carefully and critically at what is actually happening in the school;
- inform oneself about the different approaches and their underlying implications;
- identify the important values and what the school would like to be doing to ensure that they are realised.

Here are a number of steps your school could follow:

1. Establish a process for developing new policy and ensure that a cross-section of interest groups are invited to participate in a policy group.
2. Spend some time identifying and reaching a common understanding of the problems and their context.
3. Agree on what values the school would like to encourage.
4. Consider a wide range of ways to address these issues. You may want

to invite people with specific expertise in to advise or assist you.

5. Propose some tentative policy guidelines and suggested actions and distribute them for discussion to stakeholders beyond the policy group.
6. Reconsider these guidelines in the light of comments you have collected. These are often useful as they tend to be grounded in school realities.
7. Write up an official policy statement and a schedule of action plans and people responsible for implementation.
8. Fix a date for reviewing both the policy and the implementation.

Below is a checklist of questions you could ask when developing a policy to combat racism at school (you may wish to add to this):

- Whose interests is the school reflecting?
- What is the dominant culture of the school and how may others feel excluded?
- What does the school reward?
- What events does the school celebrate?
- What extra-mural activities are and are not offered?
- What languages are recognised and given status: on the playground? in classrooms? at assemblies and functions?
- To what extent does the staff profile reflect the student profile?
- Have textbooks which oppose bias and stereotyping been selected?
- Is the curriculum content sensitive to the backgrounds and experiences of students?
- Have school staff (including those who are not teachers), parents and students been given the opportunity to discuss racism and discrimination? Or is there an assumption that all is well?

[Adapted from Corson, D. (1992). *Language Policy across the Curriculum.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.]

Chapter 3

Multi-cultural and anti-racist education

Just as programmes are based on various attitudes and theories about racism, so the formulation and implementation of the school curriculum is determined by how people see racism and how they think it can be combated.

Multi-cultural education is the term most often used to describe what schools are doing to address racism, prejudice and cultural conflict. There are many different approaches to, and understandings of, this concept. Some of the major thrusts are described and commented on in this chapter.

Multi-cultural education as assimilation

Initially, at least in the USA and Britain, multi-cultural education was aimed at students who were not white. Particular groups targeted were black Americans as well as students from Asian, Latin American and African countries. The aim was to help them to fit in with the mainstream culture of the school. The schools did not consider changing to cater for the new pupils.

While this approach has been challenged in the USA and Britain, it has become the norm in many South African schools. Newly desegregated schools have instituted extra-lessons, bridging and enrichment classes to try to help the new black students "fit" into the school.

This assimilationist approach has been criticised for assuming that the education taught by schools that previously did not admit Africans is neutral, but that African students simply aren't ready for it without help. Some people say that these schools just produce "coconuts": people with black skins and white insides.

An African student at a previously coloured school felt that, socially, other students and staff expected African students to make an effort to fit in.

> "(People say Africans) must try to mingle and the coloureds must just sit back and wait for us to mingle. I mean it's a two-way thing, you know. That's what I think about it." (Fakier Y. *Cape Times*, 2 September 1996)

Learning about cultures

The multi-cultural initiative overseas has led to the expansion of the mainstream curriculum to include facts about different cultures. This has also become popular in South Africa.

The argument goes that learning about people's different cultures is a way of enhancing mutual understanding. Children learn about the foods, religious traditions, music, dress and features of different cultures.

But a difficulty here is that culture is often used to underline differences. While it is important to acknowledge that people have differences, this particular multi-cultural approach draws heavy lines between the groups it wishes to highlight and tends to ignore the similarities.

It also assumes that a culture is a fixed construct that is the result of a unique set of circumstances which the "owners" of that culture alone can control.

In the heyday of apartheid, for example, the Minister of Culture debarred two children, one who was classified Indian and the other African, from participating in a classical music competition because Beethoven and Mozart were not part of their culture.

Teaching about cultures in isolation does not only focus on difference, but it often makes other cultures seem fascinating or extraordinary. It also makes crude stereotypes possible. A

focus on Xhosa culture, for example, may lead students to make generalisations such as: "The Xhosa are subsistence farmers and get circumcised."

Generally the norms of the dominant society are not even stated, let alone explored or questioned, because they are regarded by that society as the template by which everything else is measured. A curriculum that teaches students about other cultures should also give equal attention to the behaviours of the dominant society.

One branch of multi-cultural education suggested that the curriculum should centre around a previously subordinated culture. It proposed, for example, an African-centred curriculum which "challenges the western historical perception of European pre-eminence in art, culture, science, mathematics, religion and philosophy" (Hazzard-Gordon, 1991). This approach raises interesting possibilities but on its own is also limited by definitions of ethnicity and culture.

Salad bowl approach: Cultural groups exist separately and maintain their practices and institutions.

There are other notions that have been popular in North America and have influenced thinking here in South Africa. The "salad-bowl" is familiar to South Africans who have heard of the ideals of Verwoerd.

In this approach each ethnic group has a unique contribution to make to society. Cultural groups exist separately alongside one another and have the right to maintain their practices and institutions.

Some would argue that this is still a good idea – provided that access to resources is equal. Others would say this is an impossible proviso and also point to the fact that culture is neither static nor a permanently and

clearly defined entity. The beetroot flavours and colours the lettuce and can you distinguish between the different kinds of onion and their hybrids?

Melting pot:
The idea is that all cultures become reflected in one common culture. However this is generally the culture of the dominant group.

Another recipe is the "melting pot". Here the idea is that all aspects of the different cultures become reflected in one common culture. Multi-cultural education should thus teach about the different cultures, but at the same time emphasise the common culture which all are said to share.

North America is often given as an example of a melting pot. However, this common culture is generally the culture of the dominant white American group with a few other infusions that do not affect the flavour much.

The main problem with all the above approaches is that they don't explore how culture and ethnicity change and develop, and how and why some cultures are more powerful than others.

Students learn about culture as static sets of behaviours. And the assumption is, if they know about it, they'll be more tolerant – "To know is to love" (see Chapter 2.2).

However, as already discussed, to know is not necessarily to love. Cultural knowledge does not in itself stop racism. Our attitudes and reactions to difference are all too often left unexplored.

So, for example, a lesson may centre around why Indian people eat curry and may describe the need to preserve meat in hot climates. Yet children may still go away thinking that all Indians reek of curry and should use fridges.

What we have just described could possibly be written off as a stereotypical view of multi-cultural education in itself. Practices can be far more sensitively fashioned.

There are, for example, some excellent books which guide learners through the different approaches particular cultural groups take to common themes such as marriage, death and punishment.

Many schools do well to stress that harmony is about accepting differences and not trying to make everyone the same. Lessons take the form of children sharing their own views and experiences (as described on p28). They are less overtly multi-cultural in that they tend not to focus on a particular cultural group or to label particular practises as being typical.

However, even if this kind of education does not fall into the stereotyping, tourist-viewing and patronising traps it is still not enough. Students need to learn about power and inequality to fully understand the dynamics in the society they live in. This idea is resisted by some schools who feel that to move forward we need to deny the past. Their argument is that the curriculum should be promoting nation building, rather than dwelling on prejudices and resentments. Some new textbooks have also glossed over the past without mentioning the bitter struggle behind the new South Africa.

Everything indicates that this attitude does not eradicate racism or awareness of race but just suppresses it. A student at a mixed school said that at their school the colour issue "doesn't really pop up that often except when there's a fight or... a major disagreement; then race always comes into it" (Fakier Y. *Cape Times,* 2 September 1996).

A teacher interviewed in 1992 who was teaching a mixed class said: "Nobody ever mentions colour... We don't even think about it. Perhaps deliberately we suppress talking about it."

And during a discussion about the effect of light on colours – white being a better reflector, black a good absorber – he sensed "some discomfit among my students". (Berger, J. *New York International,* 14 May 1992)

Change is not easy, but pretending that everything is fine makes it harder. Students' and teachers' prejudices may silently increase rather than decrease as there is more integration but no discussion.

To combat this the idea of *anti-racist education* emerged and has become popular in Britain and America. Anti-racist education asserts that learning side by side is not good enough and that issues of equality and justice need to be visible in both the formal, or taught, and informal curriculum. Some feel that the term is still too narrow and that other issues (such as sexism, classism, fatism) should be included. So the idea of *anti-bias education* has been developed.

These approaches are informed largely by the ideas described in the section called "It's the system" (Chapter 2.4). Here individual attitudes are seen as being a reflection of the structural inequalities of our racist society. Children need to develop a political literacy which includes an understanding of how racism functions at social, economic and institutional levels. (Moore, 1993)

It is a difficult approach to implement as it means changes to the curriculums for all subjects, and a change in the functioning of the school. We believe that it is important to move towards this kind of schooling despite the difficulties.

There is no single right way of doing things. Each of the approaches described cannot be used in isolation. Teachers can adapt and blend ideas to suit their own needs and the needs of their students. What is important is for teachers to recognise what assumptions they are working on and to be open to new ideas.

Chapter 4

Questions you may ask

4.1 How do children become racist?

There is a common perception that young children are not racist and don't notice what colour a person is. But research has shown that young children are aware of race by the time they start primary school and are aware of categories and attitudes from a young age.

Teachers who believe that "at our school we are colour-blind" and "if we do not draw attention to differences the children will also not be concerned with these issues" (Cowley, 1991:5) might be neglecting important areas of exploration.

It was found that while children were under pressure to be "colour-blind", their awareness of racism and connected difficulties, such as feelings of isolation and aggression, were evident in their drawings (Cowley, 1991).

Thus, although some adults may pretend otherwise, children are aware of race and racism at a young age. There are various explanations for how this process occurs. Some of these explanations are rooted in the theories described in Chapter Two.

One theory already described sees racism as an individual phenomenon which is partly a product of suppressed aggression. Children of authoritarian parents cannot channel their hostilities towards those in power and find more suitable outlets for their emotions. (see Chapter 2.1)

The *social cognition developmental theory of prejudice* (Aboud, 1988) gives a different view. According to this view, children learn racism as they develop cognitively and socially. At first the focus is on themselves and on how their needs are met. As they get older they begin to become aware of how similar or dissimilar people are from themselves, and make categories. These will often be based on the more obvious external characteristics, such as skin colour. Prejudice will occur through these perceptions of dissimilarity as the child develops a basis for self-identification.

Then, says Aboud, at about eight or 10 years of age, the child becomes aware that people are individuals and are able to respond to them on that basis. It is at this point that the child will be most responsive to information and anti-racist intervention.

According to this model, prejudice is inevitable as it is part of a child's way of understanding and dealing with the world. The prejudice is, however, not necessarily enduring because it is caused by a young child's way of thinking which can

eventually change and disappear. Intervention programmes entail children breaking down stereotypes and encouraging communication between groups of children.

The limitation of this model is that it does not explain why some groups are targeted and not others. It also does not look at how the dominant ideologies influence children's development. Although it might be useful, it is important to use it in conjunction with other approaches.

A different theory that looks specifically at racism is based on the associations with the colours black and white (Williams and Morland, 1976). According to this view, every child has experiences early in life which makes him/her prefer light to dark. Children are attracted to light and frightened of the dark which they associate with scary things and danger. This may cause a child to evaluate light things more positively than dark things.

This is reinforced by the cultural tendency to use light and light colours as positive symbols (for example, white for marriage) and black as negative (for example, black sheep to symbolise outcasts).

Thus what appears to be racial bias in the young pre-schooler is not racial in its origins, although it later develops into racism as society reflects these "truths" about how "white is right".

This theory is problematic as it implies that there is something natural about the development of racial prejudice. However, its use is in pointing out the hidden messages that language carries and makes us aware of the potential bias in language and the images used in literature and other contexts.

Another theory states that children learn racism from society, and simply reflect the values and attitudes of those around them. This is called the *social reflection theory*.

Children identify with their parents or want to please them, so they adopt the attitudes of their parents and others who are significant in their lives. This often follows the pattern of liking the in-group and disliking the out-group.

According to Allport (1954), children may imitate the emotion associated with a particular label without even knowing the group referred to. For example, an American primary school child said in an interview: "I dislike the Russians because Hitler was their chief".

When the child understands what group is referred to by the label, the negative emotion crystallises into a negative attitude and the child rejects the whole group. This attitude becomes integrated with the child's personality and is hard to change.

Troyna and Hatcher (1992) explore how children become socialised and warn against viewing children as empty slates. There are many contradictory attitudes and ideologies within society. Children do not merely function in a mental vacuum and absorb everything that their parents say.

They are active participants who choose how to make sense of their worlds with what's around them. This is demonstrated by the fact that not all children of prejudiced parents share their parents' attitudes, beliefs and values. It is possible for all children to think, feel and engage with social justice and human rights issues. We believe it would be wrong to discourage them from doing so.

4.2 African children in my class suffer from a lack of self-esteem. How can I make them feel more confident?

Some research has been done into how African students feel about their attendance at predominantly white, coloured or Indian schools (Christie, 1990; Govender, 1991). Many teachers are concerned about these students and feel that they

are marginalised and out of place. Some teachers go further and say that their African students suffer from a lack of self-esteem.

Although this attitude is well intentioned, it is not always helpful. Perhaps the student is naturally quiet. In a sense, individuality is denied to African students when teachers interpret their behaviour in terms of their group membership or skin colour.

Another potential problem with this attitude is that it can lead to teachers seeing black, particularly African, students as victims. A child might be feeling marginalised in the classroom, but that does not necessarily extend to the rest of their lives.

While the idea that racism affects black people negatively in all aspects of life is not disputed, black academics and activists have argued against the idea that black children feel inferior to white children, suffer from a lack of self-confidence and have a negative individual and group identity. They feel that too often blacks are seen as passive victims and whites as the oppressors and perpetrators. This perception of black children as victims can perpetuate discrimination.

> "Without telling the stories of the courageous and determined resistance of the oppressed we end up constructing them as essentially weak. We also construct them as dependent on those who have oppressed them for their salvation. Further, by not drawing on this resistance tradition we fail to provide any significant ideas about forms of social behaviour to counter injustice." (Education for Social Justice Research Group, 1994:27)

The implication for classroom practice is that teachers should be wary of seeing black students' reluctance to participate as the students' problem. It is more important to look at how the

classroom environment does not suit the students' needs and interests. If black students are quiet it may be because they are naturally introverted. However it may also be — and commonly is — because what is happening is not understandable, relevant or interesting to them. We would argue that it is the problem of the school and classroom organisation, and not necessarily the individual child.

A researcher who was observing racially mixed classes described classes where African children generally did not participate because they seemed to feel marginalised (Schlebusch, 1994).

She described the few occasions when she saw African children contributing in class. One occasion was when the children were doing a project on African cultures. The children literally ran to the shelves to get the books. They also delighted in being able to help with the pronunciation of words. For a rare time they were the experts instead of the disadvantaged.

Another time was when the English teacher used drama. A previously shy girl blossomed as she sang and moved in a performance of an advert. In an Accountancy class the black children all sat in the front and answered questions. The only difference in this class was that this teacher used some Xhosa words and spoke directly to the Xhosa-speaking students.

In a Science lesson a particularly sensitive teacher managed to get all students to feel comfortable and talk openly without feeling judged. The researcher also noted that students generally participated more when they were in groups, and did better in the section of her research test that used visual stimuli (pictures and cartoons) rather than the sections that were purely verbal.

4.3 What can I do about the language problem?

Many teachers in newly integrated schools talk about students with "language problems" or students with "no language". What this view fails to recognise is that the students they are referring to do not have a language problem in their first language and are indeed more multilingual than their teachers. They simply have difficulty with English. The teacher has a language problem in that s/he doesn't speak their languages. This may seem to be a trivial point but it is very revealing of the attitude of some teachers to students.

Very few South African classrooms have children who only speak one language and have no personal link to any other. A person's identity cannot be separated from the languages they have learnt. We are what we speak. A teacher who fails to recognise the linguistic abilities students bring to the classroom also fails to recognise important parts of their identities. It is therefore essential that all children's languages are brought into the classroom in a real and vibrant way.

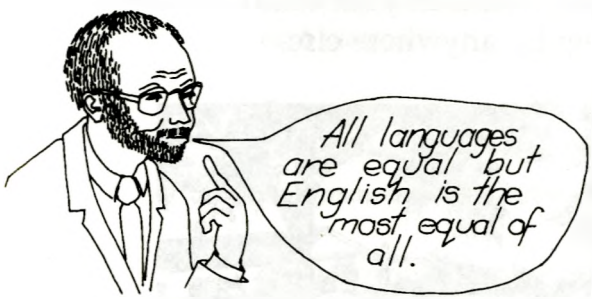
Teachers who recognise their students' languages testify to how it affects their students' behaviour. A housecraft teacher, Ursula Truter of Tafelsig Secondary School, talks about how things changed once she got all her students to learn and use Xhosa terms for equipment:

> "What I've noticed after doing this often, every week, is that my Xhosa pupils become more relaxed in my class. They would greet me outside class, something they never did before, and they're more at home in my classroom because I've acknowledged their Xhosa." (De Klerk, 1995:12)

Another reason for creating a classroom where all languages are recognised and used is the importance of what the theorists call *additive bilingualism*. This can be described as the acquisition of a second language without any loss or weakening of the first language. Current research shows that

the effective learning of a second language is dependent on fluency in the first. In other words, you will develop your second language better if you are also developing your first.

South African schools have rather subscribed to the idea of *subtractive bilingualism*. The first language of the majority of the learners has been edged out of the classroom and school environment. English, or in some instances Afrikaans, has then been used as the medium of instruction. The thinking behind this is that English is the language of empowerment and that the best way to learn a language is to speak it. This, as we have briefly outlined, is not necessarily so.



The powerful role of English in South Africa needs to be questioned as does the way that it is introduced in schools. There is no denying that people want to learn English or that they should be given access to it. Good language lessons and a multilingual environment can achieve these goals. It is the essentially monolingual nature of our school curriculum and classroom practices that undermine their very aims.

Activities

Below are some suggestions to help you to deal with a multilingual classroom:

- Find out what languages your students speak. Talk about how they feel using different languages in the classroom.
- Make sure that different languages are visible in the school and in your classrooms. Label objects, pictures and diagrams in different languages.
- Let students speak their home languages in group discussions, amongst themselves while playing or when asking questions. Use other students to interpret for you and other students where necessary.

- Give students opportunities to read and write in their own languages, even if you do not understand.
- Try to become less language dependent. Get your students to draw, use drama and work with pictures. (This is possible at any level, in any subject.) In this way students can interact with the material in their own languages, on their own terms.

4.4 What about racism in old textbooks? And how should we select new textbooks?

Imagine being a school child and going to a school each day where everything seems foreign or different from your life outside of school. Even the pictures in your textbooks are of things you would not recognise anywhere else.

From: Earle, J. (1981). *The World Around Us, Standard 4.* Cape Town: Juta. (Picture reproduced with kind permission of Juta.)

While this picture may reflect reality for some, it is presented as though it is the only reality — or as the way things ought to be. South African texts need to show a range of lifestyles as normal and natural.

If the only textbooks available do not reflect student realities then teachers need to challenge them. For example, the teacher can make it clear that a picture such as the one on page 62 is but one example of how some people spend their weekends, and encourage students to describe what their families do on a Sunday afternoon.

Read these examples from a Maths textbook:

A labourer earns R8.50 per day, but is fined 50c every time he is late. After 30 days' work he received R255. How many times was he late?

Mr White's monthly salary is R640.00. He saves $^1/_{10}$ of this for rates and insurance; he uses $^1/_5$ for clothes; and $^5/_8$ for food, travelling expenses, and other requirements. He saves the remainder. How much money is used for each purpose?

From: Archer et al. (1990). *Modern Basic Mathematics, Standard 3.* Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman. (Reproduced with kind permission of Maskew Miller Longman, who have subsequently updated this book.)

To counter the obvious bias in perspective, the teacher could just ask briefly: "What name shall we give this labourer? Why do you think he might be late? Do you think it's fair that he gets fined? Does the businessman get fined every time he is late? Why not? Can I fine you every time you don't do your homework?"

Other useful exercises that encourage students to imagine the experiences and thoughts of those not represented in the textbooks is through drama and empathy exercises.

More generally, children can investigate the concept of bias and explore different points of view. Language lessons can investigate the powers of the language of persuasion and propaganda. In younger classes teachers can help students to make their own simple books that feature the children themselves and their experiences.

Evaluating textbooks

There are many new textbooks on the market, some better than others. In choosing books it is important to note how textbooks deal with race and cultural issues. Here are some points to keep in mind:

- Could a child of any ethnic group retain her/his cultural pride and dignity while working with it?
- Does the book give a sensitive portrayal of people, emphasizing the fact that they are real people, or does it use stereotypes?
- If there are black characters in the illustrations, do all the faces look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as genuine individuals?
- Does the book reflect the fact that societies everywhere are changing, or does it still reflect cultural stereotypes?
- Does the book fairly present the cultural and social mix of the society it describes?
- When poverty is discussed, does the book recognise that the wealth of many whites and poverty of many blacks has historical explanations and that poverty cannot be blamed on the poor's incompetence?
- Are issues of conflict handled openly or are they glossed over as if no problems existed?

[Adapted from Twitchin, J.(Ed.) (1988). *The black and white media book handbook for the study of racism and television.* England: Trentham Books]

4.5 How can we involve parents in these issues?

Many studies have found that students do better at school when their parents are involved in, and supportive of, their education. Yet many schools struggle to involve all parents in school-related activities. Parent-teacher meetings are typically a very one-sided process, with teachers telling parents how their

children are doing and how they should be doing. Some white teachers complain that African parents don't come to meetings, or else are very silent and make no suggestions.

One school encourages parents to come to meetings with invitations in English and Zulu, and personal phone calls from teachers. Where possible, at the meetings there is also a translator (a parent or a teacher) and a chance for parents to speak in their own language about their concerns and needs. Meetings are arranged at times that suit working parents, such as on weekends (with childcare facilities) or on week nights.

It is important to approach parents personally. Teachers should recognise the experiences and potential contributions of the parents, even if they do not have a formal education. Patronising parents reinforces the feeling that they have no role to play in their child's education.

Parents can be drawn in and supported as co-educators of their children. Topics of school meetings could range from "Health" to "Supporting Home Learning" and "Communication between Parent and Child". In all meetings parents should be encouraged to draw upon their own experiences and give their own ideas. Those parents who can should be encouraged to attend the school and help with translations for students or in the day-to-day running of the school.

Students can also participate. They can read their writings, or demonstrate what they have learned to groups of parents. This is exciting for the students and a good drawcard which encourages student-parent communication and learning.

If parents can become more integrated into school life, students will see that all are part of the school and that nobody is an outsider. For happy students and productive learning, this is essential.

4.6 All this talk about racism, but what about class and gender differences? Aren't they crucial too?

Some people who attended discussions about this book felt that we should deal with the issue of sexism. Others felt that we were simplifying complex issues by looking at race without looking at class. They may be right. However, we felt that, for the sake of direction and clarity, we would concentrate on racism here. There are many other books that need writing.

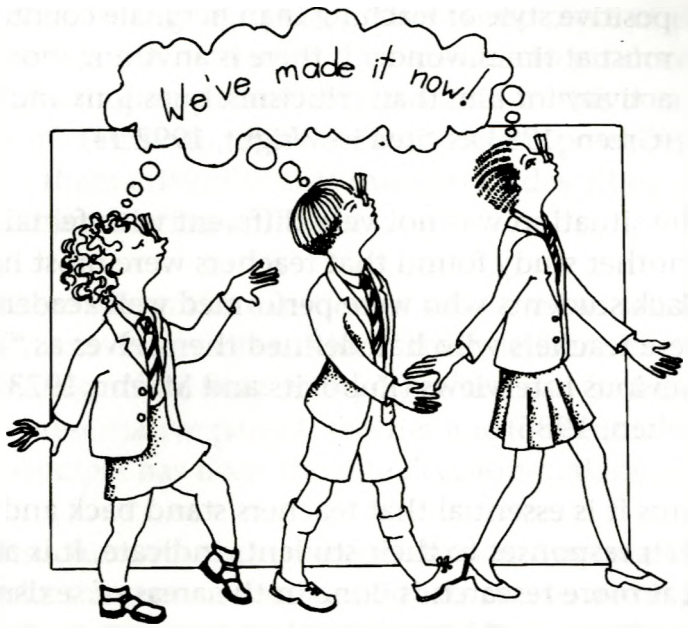
But we need to recognise the importance of these issues. In many Zimbabwean schools and some South African schools, for example, African students have been assimilated into the class and culture of previously white schools. This has resulted in African children rejecting their own background and class.

One Zimbabwean teacher describes this:

> "Quite a number of those kids who have been to school with whites don't want to speak Shona anymore. You can compare the way I speak to the way they speak — it's different. And some of them make you feel inferior because of that... We have a name for them. We call them the 'Nose Brigade'. Because those who are in the Nose Brigade speak through the nose, and we speak through the mouth." (Frederickse, 1992:64)

This is one of the consequences of an assimilationist approach which is going to become more and more evident if our schools do not change the way they operate.

It also points to the importance of a more equal spread of resources. Unless this happens, schools under the old Department of Education and Training (DET) which are situated in previously African areas will continue to be seen to be inferior to schools in the more affluent suburbs, previously



demarcated for whites. This will ensure that schools will continue to perpetuate a divided society — but now in terms of class, rather than race.

Sexism is also a crucial area of research. Studies have shown that boys generally get more attention and time from teachers than girls. (Wright, 1992:13) Boys' opinions are generally taken more seriously by teachers and fellow students.

Teachers seem to notice and intervene more often if a boy gets left behind or does not participate. Boys tend to perform better in matric than girls. There are also marked differences in curriculum choices. These factors indicate that girls and boys at school face different pressures.

The relationship between sexism and racism is complex. A study that looked at mixed classes in Britain found that, while white boys got more attention, black boys got the most negative responses.

> "The girl of West Indian origin, whilst she is relatively ignored by her male teacher, appears to receive a more

positive style of teaching than her male counterpart, who must at times wonder if there is anything more to classroom activity for him than criticisms, questions and directives." (Green, 1983 as cited in Wright, 1992:14)

The situation was not very different with female teachers. Another study found that teachers were most hostile to male black students who were performed well academically. These were teachers who had defined themselves as "liberal" in previous interviews (Rubovits and Maehr, 1973, as described in Cohen, 1986).

Thus it is essential that teachers stand back and look at what their responses to their students indicate. It is also essential that more research is done in the areas of sexism and classism in schools, and how they relate to racism.

4.7 What would your ideal school look like?

It is impossible to describe an ideal school as each "ideal" would be fashioned by its context. However, the happiest schools are probably those that are continually questioning how they operate and making changes where change is needed.

Many people see policy as a fixed set of rules laid down by someone in authority. However, policies can be described as enabling checks and balances which direct, protect and support. They provide guidelines which regulate and unite activities, creating shared practices that all feel ownership over. When policies are not clearly articulated, the way is open for suspicion, insecurity or looseness. Management problems inevitably result and decisions are seen to be arbitrary and unfair.

An example of a school policy which is seldom clearly stated and simply taken as a given is language policy. Most teachers are somewhat taken aback when asked to describe their

school's language policy. There is no piece of paper which spells it out. However, they are able to produce one by reflecting on the school's practices in this area. A good school would strive to articulate its different practices and then reflect on them critically. This can also be described as making the hidden curriculum visible.

There is also the question of whose views school policy reflects. Some schools limit their deliberations to their senior management only. Many have not had boards of governors or representative parent, teacher and student bodies and the principal has been the sole decision-making figure.

Structures for wider consultation and accountability help to take the pressure off individuals and to involve the entire school community in determining direction — staff (including non-academic staff), students, parents and others living in the area or with a stake in the well-being of the school.

The process of establishing such structures is important. No single model can be forced on to a school. Different models may be presented so that the school community can find an effective way of working in its specific context. These decision-making structures, like all aspects of policy, should be continuously reviewed.

Schools should develop their own strategy for resisting racism. The way a policy is developed is as important as the policy itself. (See p46 for a step by step outline.)

An anti-racist policy, like any other, may be changed as the experiences and circumstances of the school change. An ideal school will either have such a policy or will be working towards one. Its policy will not be a fancy piece of window-dressing brought from outside but will rather be understood and owned by its creators and implementors.

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South African schools are now open to all. However, this has not eliminated racism in education. In some cases, these changes have heightened tensions. Teachers throughout the country are battling to manage the changing dynamics of their classrooms.
The experiences and everyday problems of both primary and high schools are addressed.

Topics include:
Ways of dealing with racism
Race, culture and equality in the curriculum
Teaching multilingual classes
Whole school development

This book aims to serve as a practical guide, providing the necessary theoretical background to help teachers make their own, informed decisions.

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Published by the Teaching and Learning Resources Centre (University of Cape Town) and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa

ISBN 1-874864-46-2