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ABSTRACT

This article reviews the relationship between ethnicity and early academic success and examines the rationales of several ethnic groups for the education of their young children. An implication is made that "all" American children reflect cultural group diversity. It is recommended that early childhood educational programs should be available to all children and reflect their unique backgrounds and needs. Research is needed to identify the specific ethnic values that have served both in an historical and contemporary way to engender positive group identity. It is also necessary to discover effective methods of transmitting these values to young children in an early educational setting. Finally, a question is posed concerning the impact on the interpersonal relationships within the family that may result from the preschool child's participation in an ethnic-oriented learning environment. (Author/CS)

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ETHNICITY AND EARLY EDUCATION

by

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ETHNICITY AND EARLY EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

by Esther Hovey, Ed.D.

This article reviews the relationship between ethnicity and early academic success and examines the rationales of several ethnic groups for the education of their young children. The implication is drawn that all American children reflect cultural group diversity and that early childhood educational programs should relate to and build upon these characteristics.

ETHNICITY AND EARLY EDUCATION

by Esther Hovey

As the United States approaches its bicentennial landmark, it is apparent that the term American does not bring to mind a uniform, clearly defined, monolithic cultural image. It is more likely that a cultural description of a United States citizen would be given in hyphenated terms such as: Italian-American, Afro-American, Jewish-American, middle-class American.

The richness of the cultural diversity of the American nation has greatly contributed toward the development of the democratic ideals of equality and the brotherhood of peoples. At the same time, variations among different ethnic populations and social classes have often provided the dominant groups with a distorted justification for their privileged status in society.

Since the civil rights movement of the 1960's, serious attention has been given to the concept of equal educational opportunity as one means of providing children from all groups with the chance of developing their fullest potential. This quest for equality of educational opportunity has led educators to concentrate on compensatory education. In this approach it is assumed that equality will be achieved when the "culturally deprived" child catches up to the norms attained by the white, middle-class students (Bloom, Davis, and Hess, 1965). Another approach to educational equality is through the process of racial integration, per se. Here, the assumption is drawn from Coleman's (1966) reporting: "Finally, it appears that a pupil's achievement is strongly related to the educational backgrounds and aspirations of the other students in the school (p. 22)."

There is an alternative approach which argues that in our pluralistic society the school must relate to the particular cultural patterns and values experienced by the children of its community. Equality will be achieved, not by conforming mechanically to the dominant standards, but by allowing the "culturally different" child to develop in accordance with his unique cognitive style and with motivation for learning derived from a positive self-concept.

It is this writer's contention that the term "culturally different" need not be interpreted as applicable only to non-white lower-class persons who are somehow "different" from white middle-class persons. Indeed, the expression "white middle-class" is an ambiguous one, which on closer examination may be seen to include quite a variety of ethnic groups which historically have been "culturally different" from one another.

The term white middle-class is not on an equivalent plane with such ethnically descriptive names as "Chicano," "Irish-American," "Black," "Chinese-American." In everyday parlance, white middle-class usually refers to the dominant socio-economic groups which comprise the mainstream society in the United States and whose general characteristics are thought to set the standards of the "American way of life." A careful analysis of the way in which this term is commonly used indicates that middle-class white describes persons of fair coloring whose ancestry include a multitude of national groups found in Europe.

With this viewpoint, one may consider all American children to be members of groups which reflect variations in their linguistic behavior, category systems, traditional beliefs and customs, economic and social organization, and artistic expressions. Rather than being an obstacle

to be forcibly "melted" away as soon as possible, cultural diversity in children may be considered an asset in an early childhood educational setting. By consciously relating to the young child's social and ethnic background, the teacher may provide a properly matched link between the earliest experiences of the home and the first step into a broader institution. In planning educational programs for young children, it would appear that recognition of cultural differences would be an important determinant of the curriculum.

ETHNICITY AND EARLY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Standardized measurements of the mental abilities and early academic achievement of children of different ethnic groups indicate a high correlation between their ethnicity and the test results. Whether these differences are the result of innate intelligence or a host of environmental factors is still a hotly debated issue among educators and social scientists.

McClelland (1961) found that the level of achievement motivation varies among different cultures, but that the same group of people may have displayed more need for achievement at some times during their historical development than at others. A study of Japanese, Filipino, Portuguese, Anglo-Caucasian, and Hawaiian children on the island of Kauai, by Werner, Bierman and French (1971) revealed significant ethnic group differences on the Cattell Infant Intelligence Scale before age two.

In his much discussed study, Coleman (1966) found:

> With some exceptions - notably Oriental Americans - the average minority pupil scores distinctly lower on these tests at every level than the average white pupil. The minority pupils' scores are as much as one standard deviation below the majority pupils' scores in the first grade (p.21).

Further evidence of the association between ethnicity and school achievement in the first grade was provided by Lesser Fifer, and Clark (1965):

> On each mental ability scale, the scores of the middle-class children from the various ethnic groups resemble each other to a greater extent than do the scores of the lower-class children from the various ethnic groups. That is, the middle-class Chinese, Jewish, Negro and Puerto Rican children are more alike in their mental ability scores than are the lower-class Chinese, Jewish, Negro and Puerto Rican children (p. 133).

Thus, it appears that membership in the middle-class tends to equalize the performance ability on standardized achievement tests of different ethnic groups.

While there is apparent agreement on the existence of ethnic differences on measures of academic abilities, a consensus has not been reached, thus far, on the degree of causation among many possible associated variables. The lines are drawn most clearly between the "innate deficiency" and the socio-cultural-economic schools of thought. This, of course, is the old dilemma of heredity versus environment.

Genetic Determinism

Black people, in particular, have been singled out by some social scientists as carriers of an inferior genetic inheritance. Starting with such an assumption, Blacks are necessarily doomed to a lower social and economic status despite well-intentioned efforts afforded by the best of educational procedures and legislated equal job opportunities.

According to Jensen (1969), one's capacity for analytical thinking necessary for academic success is inherited. He contended that 80 percent of the variability found among individuals on IQ tests was due to genetic factors. From results of studies of twins, Jensen concluded that there was an average deficit of 15 points in the IQ scores of Blacks as compared

to those of whites in the United States. As cited by Chomsky (1972), Herrenstein agrued that American society was drifting towards a stable hereditary meritocracy, i.e., a social stratification determined by inborn differences and a corresponding distribution of rewards. His judgments were based on correlations found among IQ, occupation, and social standing.

Another advocate of genetic determinism was Eysenck (1971) whose basic argument centered upon the positive correlation of achievement (academic and occupational) with measured intelligence scores. Having accepted the validity of standard IQ tests as indicators of innate intellectual ability, Eysenck maintained that since Blacks score lower in these tests, they must have lower intelligence and therefore must inevitably fare poorly in school and in society. Except for "gene-pools", Eysenck eliminated all other possible reasons for IQ differences between Blacks and whites.

Jencks (1972) posed the probability that "genes explain about 45 percent of the variance in American's test scores, that environment explains about 35 percent, and that the tendency of environmentally advantaged families to have genetically advantaged children explains the remaining 20 percent (p. 66)." In fairness to Jencks, however, it should be reported that he regarded mathematical estimates of heritability as telling us "almost nothing about anything important" and also that he favored environmental explanations. He stated: "If an individual's genotype affects his environment, for whatever rational or irrational reason, and if this in turn affects his cognitive development, conventional methods of estimating heritability automatically attribute the entire effect to genes and none to environment (p. 67) "

Environmental Interaction

At a conference on "Testing Problems" sponsored by the Educational Testing Service, Hunt (1972) indicated that the range of IQ which may be affected by environmental factors could be as much as 75 points. Hunt concluded: "Special child rearing can boost the mean achievement for white children of poverty and for Black children from mothers with IQs of 75 or below well above the population average (p. 10)."

The variables cited most frequently as having a possible effect upon ethnic group differences in early school achievement include: cultural group differences in child-rearing attitudes, historical traditions and customs, and learning styles; language; socioeconomic status; family background; characteristics of the school and of the student body; teacher quality, expectations, and attitudes; self-concept of the student; and, finally, the "culturally-biased" tests themselves.

Cultural Group Differences. Psychologists and cultural anthropologists have been investigating the specific effects of the cultural environment upon learning patterns. The basic thesis of Cole et al (1971) was that the cultural setting in which a person is reared produces particular and unique learning styles and cognitive strategies. Different cultures provide for different learning requirements and experiences. The tasks that a culture frequently poses for its members will be the ones with which they deal effectively. The major conclusion of the Cole study was: "Cultural differences in cognition reside more in the situations to which particular cognitive processes are applied than in the existence of a process in one cultural group and its absence in another (p. 233)."

Concepts of time and space are culturally derived. Waters (1969) compared the Euro-American concept of time as a medium of linear measurement leading to a preoccupation with programs, schedules, and budgets with the Hopi Indians' view of time as a temporal relationship between two events. The Hopi's time is not a motion but rather "a storing up of change, of power that holds over into later events. Everything that ever happened, still is - though in a different form. . . For the realm of objective events stretches away to the realm of mythical events which can only be known subjectively. Hence, the immediacy and emotional strength of mythical happenings as enacted in Hopi ceremonialism (p. 104-5)."

In the previously mentioned study by Werner et al (1971), it was conjectured that the differences found on the Cattell infant tests between the various ethnic groups may have been due to "variations in child-rearing practices, to the relative emphasis on the acceptance of maturation as a leisurely process not to be hastened or interfered with (p. 120)." Werner also speculated how much a different concept of time might have contributed to low scores on performance tests (where time is limited) among Portuguese children in Hawaii, Puerto Rican children in New York, and American Negro, Mexican-American, and American Indian children.

Language. Based on cross-cultural studies of many societies, Berghe (1970) found that of the several criteria of ethnicity, a common language has most often been the paramount one. Language ability is recognized as a basic factor in early academic achievement.

In Piaget's view of child development, adaptations are beginning to be mediated by symbols and signs at the end of the sensorimotor

period (stage VI, 18 to 24 months). Symbols are result of internalized imitation. Hunt (1961) stated: "Images are idiosyncratic symbols depending upon the child's own private and active interactions with the environment (p. 185)." Words (signs) are then assimilated and "matched" to the young child's unique symbol system. According to this theory of early language acquisition, the young child's first language may be seen as a direct expression of his initial experiences within his cultural and social environment.

Cole et al (1971) asserted that thought processes of all peoples were functionally equivalent and could be inferred from linguistic behavior. They stated further:

> Transformational analysis has emphasized that all human speakers must be highly structured. . . Differences in knowledge are readily accepted, but differences in capacity or the "deep structure" of language are denied. These assertions combine to form a point of view which de-emphasizes cognitive differences between different linguistic (cultural) groups (p. 12).

The history of the United States has fostered the development of many colorful vernaculars[1] reflecting the ethnic, regional, and class influences. Children living in a polycultural nation are often bilingual. The phenomenon of growing up with an expressive home language that differs from the kind of English generally used at school is indeed a widespread one. Perhaps an operational definition of bilingualism pragmatically useful for the field of early childhood education might be: Bilingualism connotes the understanding and use of both standard American English and any other vernacular learned at home and in the community.

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[1]Webster (1969) defines vernacular as: "The mode of expression of a group or class."

When the young child's "mother tongue" is deemed to be unacceptable as a mediator for conceptual thought within the school setting, the possibility for early academic success b[illegible]re remote. Williams (1971) observed:

> We must avoid confusing language differences with deficiencies. Careless interpretation of standardized tests has caused some of the problem on this point; bias on the part of researchers and their techniques may account for much of the rest. Children with true deficiencies of language require quite different programs from those whose language mainly differs from that of the mainstream society (p. v).

One may add that the "mainstream society" children may also be heard expressing themselves in a variety of linguistic patterns.

Social Class and Family Background. A well-known fact of American life is the tendency of certain ethnic groups to be found (or confined) within certain social class boundaries. Frequently, the high correlations existing between the child's family environment and social class membership with his measured intellectual ability and early school success are applied to the ethnicity variable.

The actual quality of educational stimulus provided by the family appears to be only moderately related to its social class position. Miller and Woock (1970) stated that the family environment variable has a stronger correlation to school achievement than does the social class variable because "the prediction on the basis of family environment includes some of the already explained variation due to social class (p. 162)." Havighurst and Neugarten (1969) indicated that the school system tends to treat children of higher social status as though they had higher intellectual ability, thus reinforcing the self-fulfilling prophecy syndrome.

Family factors relating to early school achievement include economic status, ethnic traditions, level of parents' education, experience

of academic success providing upward mobility, attitudes towards time and planning, and parents' aspirations. Describing th family background of "culturally deprived" children, Bloom, Davis, and Hess (1965) stated:

> The size of the family, the concern of the parents with the basic necessities of life, the low level of educational development of the parents, the frequent absence of a male parent, and the lack of a great deal of interaction between children and adults all conspire to reduce the stimulation, language development, and intellectual development of such children (p. 15).

On the other hand, it is possible for educators to recognize and work with positive aspects of lower-class family life styles. These traits include extended family relationships, church and ethnic values, creative use of available resources, non-conforming survival patterns, and more dependence accorded to children. For example, while Moynihan (1966) emphasized the break-up of the Black family and its disastrous effect upon the lives of the children, Billingsley (1968) held that the wide variety of Black family structural patterns reflected necessary survival behavior and actually showed the Black family to be an amazingly resilient institution.

Schools and Teachers. Coleman (1966) found that the achievement of minority pupils (with the exception of Oriental Americans) depended more on the characteristics and resources of the schools they attended than did the achievement of majority pupils. The composition of the student body, especially, has a strong relationship to the academic achievement level of Black students. Although Blacks achieved higher in desegregated schools, Jencks' (1972) reevaluation of the Coleman Report showed that desegregation was associated with higher test scores only if it involved socioeconomic as well as racial integration. He stated that there was little evidence that Black test scores were any

higher in schools where the whites were as poor as the Blacks.

In a classic study of the self-fulfilling prophec demonstrated by teacher attitudes, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) revealed that the most dramatic effects of increased teacher expectation occurred in the first and second grades. It has been frequently observed that the teachers of lower-class minority students tend to be middle class in their own lifestyle and instructional methodology. Their attitudes were described in the following manner by Wax (1964):

> Knowing little of their pupil's life, and terrified or appalled by what they do discover, they justify their avoidance with a 'vacuum ideology' of cultural deficiency and deprivation which ignores or derogates the values and knowledge that the pupils have acquired in their homes and neighborhoods (p. 7).

Hickerson (1966) theorized that the inability of affluent-oriented teachers to understand or cope with the behavior of lower-class children often resulted in a "clash of value commitments that, more than any other factor, drives our Negro, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Indian, and economically deprived Caucasian children out of the school and into the streets (p. 10)."

Self-concept. Research has shown that a person's self-concept is learned and develops largely as a result of how others think of that person. According to social psychological theories of personality, the self-concept develops as a result of the demands of the culture and the individual's interaction with them from the standpoint of his social role. Through his experiences in relation to the social institutions of the family, the peer group, the community, his ethnic group and social class, and the school he attends, the child develops a concept of himself expressed in varying degrees of worthiness.

There are indications that personal identity is rooted in cultural

group identification. Erikson (1968) wrote:

> For the growing child must derive a vitalizing sense of reality from the awareness that his individual way of mastering experience, his ego synthesis, is a successful variant of a group identity and is in accord with its space-time and life plan (p. 49).

From her study of 400 Black and white preschool children, Porter (1971) concluded that a poor group identity may negatively influence other dimensions of self-concept for Black children.

Although many studies (Brookover, Patterson, and Thomas, 1962; Wattenberg and Clifford, 1964; Clark, 1965; Coleman, 1966) point to a positive correlation between self-concept of ability and actual school achievement, there is not general agreement on which comes first: success in school or a positive self-concept. Gay's findings (cited in Bower, 1970) indicated that self-concept was a greater motivational factor in achievement than intelligence. The Wattenberg and Clifford study (1964) found that even as early as kindergarten, self-concept phenomena were antecedent to and predictive of reading accomplishment. On the other hand, the rationale of the Bereiter and Engelmann program (1966) was that with success in learning the basic academic skills, the child would enhance his feelings about himself.

Pollock (1972) stated: "The evidence suggests that. . . there is a continuous interaction between the self and academic achievement and that each influences the other (p. 21)."

Ethnicity and Standardized Tests. Standard IQ and school achievement tests have been accused of being inherently "culture-bound" and therefore prejudiced against minority group children. Critiquing Eysenck's theories, Leggett (1973) stated:

> We are not surprised to find that measures of correlation often demonstrate the existence in the United States of a

> statistical relationship between race and intelligence, for Blacks are oppressed, in part by the process of IQ testing. In the real world, IQ testers use class and racially biased tests to channel Blacks (p. 81).

Leggett asserted that rather than being a measure of inherited intelligence, IQ tests measure the very thing which they predict: achievement. "Such a measure is invalid, scientifically unjustifiable. Yet the measures help to determine the life chances of Black five-year olds (p. 81)."

Billingsley (1968) attributed the poor showing of Black children on IQ and achievement tests not to the cultural deprivation of the Black family but to the tests themselves. He wrote:

> All the major institutions of society should abandon the single standard of excellence based on white European cultural norms. In general, white people, culture-bound by their own European heritage, decide which values are to be honored and rewarded. They design tests to measure these values; they standardize these tests on other white people like themselves; then they administer them to Negroes without regard to cultural diversity and basic life conditions. Through interpretation of these tests, they make the major decisions affecting the lives of Negro people. Little wonder that on every single major kind of standardized test designed by white people, Negro people, whatever their social class status, do not generally do as well as whites (p. 157).

Cole et al (1971) hypothesized that since "cognitive skills are closely related to the activities that engage those skills, we have to be able to specify the kinds of tasks that people in different cultures routinely encounter." In their conclusion, they stated: "Until future research uncovers the natural situations for the display of memory skills, we must conclude that the skills necessary for effective short-term recall differ among cultures (p. 230)." Similar conclusions were reached concerning the use, in experimental situations, of arbitrary labels to designate categories or the use of hypothetical reasoning to solve a verbal puzzle.

It is the conclusion of this writer that correlations between ethnicity and early academic achievement are not determined by genetic characteristics, but are the result of the school system's lack of recognition and positive building upon the cultural group values and learning behaviors of young children.

ETHNIC-ORIENTED CURRICULA FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The underlying assumptions supporting the inclusion of ethnic values in early educational programs are that the United States is a polycultural society and that all young children express their individuality in terms of the language and cultural patterns originally learned in their homes and immediate surroundings. Passow (1963) suggested that educators "adjust school programs, materials, teaching methods, and organization to differences in children's learning styles and cultural expectations, rather than treating all differences as handicaps and deficiencies (p. 336)."

The 1970 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) national conference reported that curriculum materials often fail by their omissions, distortions, or lack of sensitivity to present a true picture of America (Dunfee, 1970). The conference found instructional materials often reinforcing a pattern of racist or separatist attitudes rather than reflecting a pluralistic society and its common aspirations. At that conference, the following conclusion was reached:

> Education must help the child have a good self-image in terms of his own culture. Our system has failed many pupils. They have no hopes for the future; they are born losers. They have no pride in themselves because they have had no opportunity to learn about themselves and their culture. . . When we address ourselves to multi-ethnic education, we are taking a first step toward improving the learner's self-image. When his learning is relevant to his life and needs and reinforces his cultural heritage, he becomes a real person (p. 3).

Cazden and John (cited in Williams, 1970) argued for a system of coordinate education in which the languages and cultural patterns found in the child's home community are maintained and valued alongside the introduction of forms of behavior required in the broader society. Cazden (1968) recommended:

> . . .preschool teachers concentrate on enlarging the child's linguistic repertoire and not do anything about altering his nonstandard form beyond the provision of models of standard English. With young children, language for social mobility is far less important than language for learning, and the danger that correction will extinguish verbal behavior in general outweighs any possible gains (p. 139).

Rejecting both the existing Anglo-American monocultural assimilationist approach and the minority operated monocultural anti-assimilationist viewpoint, Forbes (1969) chose the middle ground by suggesting "a multicultural or cross-cultural strategy combined with other procedures designed to create a school relevant to the needs, and responsive to the wishes, of a given community (p. 3)." He further contended that majority group pupils were being short-changed by exposure to a curriculum which had no deep roots in the soil of their region and in America.

In a discussion of the results of his study of ethnicity and measures of educability among three groups of first graders in the Southwest, Garber (1968) concluded, "One major implication is that different educational prescriptions need to be made for the Navajo, Pueblo, and rural Spanish-American groups studied (p. 105)."

Itzkoff (1970) reported on the suppression of the home and community culture of Mexican-Americans and American Indians and the imposition of English and other accompanying external values as having "traumatized the children, made them hateful and sullen, and sterilized all possibilities of the growth of a free intelligence (p. 145)." He recommended that a

child be taught by educated adults of his own cultural background and in the language in which his self-identification has been made.

The idea of transmitting and enlarging upon the diverse ethnic backgrounds of American children is certainly not a new one. Native-Americans and immigrants have brought ethnic-oriented curricula into parochial schools, settlement houses, Sunday schools, and community centers for hundreds of years. While the chief objective of many of these educational programs was felt to be that of "acculturation", the need to preserve and develop traditional beliefs and customs have also played a considerable role. In some instances, teaching their young about their historical and cultural roots has served as an instrument for the cultural group's very survival in the face of assimilationist and racist attitudes.

The following material presents rationales for culturally-oriented early educational programs employed by three ethnic groups which have relatively recently (and with much creativity) undertaken this exciting educational challenge.

Mexican-American

Simply translating instructional materials and methods into Spanish (even if it is the appropriate variant of the Spanish language) does not guarantee equality of educational opportunity for Mexican-American children. At the conclusion of her study of teachers' understanding of the behavior of Mexican-American children, Sebastian (1972) recommended that teachers in Southern California receive preservice and inservice education that would emphasize ethnic and socioeconomic factors to be considered in teaching children who are not typical of the Anglo middle class.

DeOrtega et al (1972) reported that research had shown:

> Chicanos begin school with a competitive level almost as high as that of Anglos. This small disparity is compensated by the fact that Chicanos perform better than Anglos in cooperative tasks, a fact that should be explored as a teaching aid. . . The real problem is that our schools refuse to build on the life experiences Chicanos bring to school.
> (L.A. Times, May 20, 1972)

Three major goals set by the National Education Task Force De La Raza (Hamilton, 1973) were: 1) To change the attitudes of Anglo-Americans in schools and communities toward the motivations and values of Mexican-Americans; 2) To change attitudes on the part of Chicanos themselves, and to make them aware of educational resources; and 3) To identify Chicanos for leadership roles in education. The task force also recommended increased use of the Spanish language along with English for instructional purposes and teaching more meaningfully the history of the Spanish and Mexican presence in North America.

Native-American

In 1760, a spokesman for the Onondagas Indians said to the English colonizers (Margolis, N.Y. Times, July 15, 1973): "Brothers, we thank you for educating our children in your schools, but we have observed that for a long time after our children return home they are not good for anything."

About one-third of Native-American children are still attending the boarding schools which were created by the Federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) about one hundred years ago. The purpose of these boarding schools was to remove Indian children from the influences of their parents and tribes, teach them English, and train them for menial work in white society (Margolis, 1973). Presently, the BIA is officially committed to phasing out these schools since they have failed either to

assimilate the children or to educate them.

Erikson (1968) offered the following analysis of the roots of motivational conflicts of Sioux Indian children:

> The conquered tribe has never ceased to behave as if guided by a life plan consisting of passive resistance to a present which fails to reintegrate the identity remnants of the economic past; and of dreams of restoration in which the future would lead back into the past, time would again become ahistoric, hunting grounds unlimited, and the buffalo supply inexhaustible - a restoration which would permit again the boundlessly centrifugal life of hunting nomads. Their federal educators, on the other hand, preach values with centripetal and localized goals: homestead, fireplace, bank account - all of which receive their meaning from a life plan in which the past is overcome and in which the full measure of fulfillment in the present is sacrificed to an ever-higher standard of living in the future. . . No wonder that Indian children, forced to live by both these plans, often seem blocked in their expectations and paralyzed in their ambitions (p. 48).

Pfeitler (cited in Dunfee, 1970) maintained that lack of consideration for the language and culture of the Indian has resulted in serious damage to the children's self-concept, aspiration, and motivation. Pfeitler described the educational strategy being developed at Rough Rock Demonstration School which is located on the Navajo Reservation. This school operates on a completely bilingual and multi-cultural approach. It has developed a non-graded system in which both English and Navajo languages begin at age four. Curriculum materials are being developed locally, particularly traditional stories, biographies, history, and other important information dealing with the people and the locale.

The Black Curriculum

Developing curricular experiences which are meaningful for Black-American children has engaged the creative energies of educators and parents in many regions of the United States. The Cardozo Model Schools Division of the Washington, D.C. Public Schools designed a series of "awareness workshops" to help teachers deal with their own feelings as

they related to race and class. Covington (cited in Dunfee, 1970) described the following approach being used in schools with a heavy Black population:

> Young pupils learn to read by reading books they write themselves. In kindergarten through the third grade, classroom teachers are discarding the usual basal readers in favor of a writing and reading program closely related to the pupils' own interests and concerns. Very young children are writing about brine shrimp, janitors, the principal's shoes, and all sorts of things (p. 11).

The Springfield Avenue Community School was one of the models selected as "promising programs" in childhood education that were presented at the 1970 White House Conference on Children. It is located in a Black ghetto area of Newark, New Jersey. Parents were taught to become politically effective in educational matters and were heavily involved in every aspect of the school. The project was described in these terms (Model Programs, 1970):

> A distinctive feature of this program is the emphasis on education within the Black life-style. The first communication with the child is in his own dialect; the transition to standard English is made later, with "speaking to be understood" as a goal. The aim is not to replace the life-style dialect, but to enable the child to use whichever one is suitable in a given situation. For example, the learning design for 5- to 6-year-olds includes: "Uses complex sentences rich in 'life-style' modifiers.". . . Textbooks prepared by the parents in the life-style language are bound by the city library. The textbooks also include family anecdotes, stories of the past of the Black people, and stories from the ghetto as well as the rural environment in which many of the parents grew up (p. 5).

In Watts, Los Angeles, the Mafundi Preschool (Hovey, 1974) has attempted to implement its objectives of Black awareness and pride through its interaction within a culturally-oriented community center; the hiring of qualified local residents reflecting their ideals; the use of instructional materials referring to the "Black experience," and the celebration of valued heroes and holidays.

The Black Curriculum Development Project at the University of Illinois has recently published a teaching guide for use in early childhood education (Spodek, 1972). There are four teaching units including: (1) Africa and Its Children - "to help American children appreciate the bases for the differences between the life styles of Africans and their own"; (2) Language Experiences-Black Media - "an attempt to make the Black experience visible - to communicate Black culture and history so that young children are made aware of the contributions made by Black Americans to society"; (3) Afro-American Arts - "to focus upon several forms of Black art - poetry, music, dance and graphic art. . . an understanding that while some artists may express an 'ethnic' character in their work, each is still a unique individual artist"; and (4) Social Studies - "covers several facets of the Black experience - history, culture, current events, family life, community helpers and important Black people."

The thrust of the Black Child Development Institute (BCDI) is: "Control the institutions that control Black children's minds." Their program policy states in part (BCDI brochure, 1973): "The Black community now realizes that early childhood education is imperative in providing Black youngsters educational, racial, and cultural awareness." BCDI's Technical Assistance Project was designed to help develop models that will enhance the Black child's sense of racial awareness and ethnic pride by meeting the distinctive needs of Black children, their families and their communities. Strong emphasis is placed upon the necessity for direct parental involvement and control at every level of decision making concerning the education of young Black children (Moore, 1973).

IMPLICATIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

It is possible that the three ethnic groups discussed here, in their struggle for dignity and equal opportunity in a land where they have been oppressed for centuries, may very well be pioneering in the search for an American identity which truly reflects its cultural diversity. Many other ethnic groups, including those which find themsleves in the all-inclusive category of "white middle-class", continue to shatter the melting pot theory by their perpetuation of unique cultural group characteristics. This can take the form of visible community celebrations such as St. Patrick's Day, Chanukah, and the Chinese New Year or be expressed by more covertly negative mechanisms such as denial of one's background and the justification of racist attitudes.

The issues raised in this article appear to generate the following implications for the field of early childhood education: (1) Teacher training for early childhood education should include studies in cultural anthropology, sociology, and the history of minority groups in the United States, in addition to child development, curriculum, and methods classes. (2) The child entering preschool or kindergarten brings the images, symbols, sensori-motor experiences, language, learning style, and cultural traditions developed through interactions in his home and immediate community. Curricula that relate to the young child's class and ethnic background may provide a meaningful match of new learning experiences. Early educational programs should, therefore, present cognitive content in appropriate cultural forms reflecting the diverse cultural heritages brought to school each day by American children. (3) The concept of preschool compensatory education is outmoded and

should be replaced by a system of early childhood education available to all children and reflecting their unique backgrounds and needs.

Research is needed to identify the specific ethnic values that have served both in an historical and contemporary way to engender positive group identity. It is also necessary to discover effective methods of transmitting these values to young children in an early educational setting. Finally, a question is posed concerning the impact on the interpersonal relationships within the family that may result from the preschool child's participation in an ethnic-oriented learning environment.

Perhaps the bicentennial may be most appropriately celebrated through multi-cultural expressions creatively integrating the unique and common experiences of the many peoples who are Americans.

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Postscript

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The Early Childhood Education Clearinghouse (ERIC/ECE) distributes a quarterly newsletter ($2.00 - 4 issues) which reports on new programs and publications, and RIE documents of special interest. For a complete list of ERIC/ECE publications, or if you would like to subscribe to the Newsletter write: Publications Office/IREC, College of Education, University of Illinois, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Illinois 61801. All orders must be accompanied by check or money order, payable to the University of Illinois. Sorry, we cannot bill.

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