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BLACK ORGANIZATIONS' DEMANDS FOR THE INCLUSION OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: THE DYNAMICS OF THE MOVEMENT FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL, IN THE EARLY 1990s.

presented by

Silvani dos Santos Valentim

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in EDUCATION

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Sandra Hollingsworth
Major professor

Date AUGUST 7, 1995



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FOR

**BLACK ORGANIZATIONS' DEMANDS FOR THE INCLUSION
OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL
CURRICULUM: THE DYNAMICS OF THE MOVEMENT
FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL,
IN THE EARLY 1990s.**

By

Silvani dos Santos Valentim

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Curriculum and Teaching

1995

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ABSTRACT

BLACK ORGANIZATIONS' DEMANDS FOR THE INCLUSION OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM: THE DYNAMICS OF THE MOVEMENT FOR CURRICULUM CHANGE IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL, IN THE EARLY 1990s.

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This study will be useful both for those interested in curriculum reform and in the civil rights of minority groups. Data include interviews with leaders of the Black community involved in the debates for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte in the early 1990s; analysis of the main local newspaper in 1990; analysis of two documents written by the State and Municipal Boards of Education regarding literacy in Minas Gerais and Belo Horizonte. The experience of school curriculum reform and implementation in the United States since the 1950s, with the struggles for school desegregation and the Civil Rights movement, as well as beginning experiences of multiculturalism in schools in the late 1960s will provide a theoretical and political framework. It seems that the lessons learned by the Black leaders from the first round of curriculum reform in the early 1990s led them to reconsider more structural and concrete changes seen in current educational projects in Belo Horizonte. Whether or not this leads to fuller and more equitable participation by Afro-Brazilians in the educational scene in Brazil remains to be seen.

For Deocacina dos Santos Valentim,
minha mãe,
from whom I learned the most
significant lessons.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The process of writing this work was not an isolated one. I shared with friends and professors, with my family and interviewees, the necessity of describing and reflecting upon racial inequalities, both in Brazil and the United States. Our hope is that this academic work, also written to fulfill an academic requirement, might be a source of information about racial and social inequalities, and perhaps a tool for consciousness-raising.

My especial thanks to Dr. Sandra Hollingsworth (Sam), my advisor and friend, from whom I have received very strong intellectual guidance and personal support since the beginning of my Masters program. Her feminist approaches and commitment to justice in education created an environment that gave me the necessary strength to overcome language barriers and other difficulties that could jeopardize the importance and necessity of writing this thesis.

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I wish to thank Dr. Lauren Young for sharing with me her knowledge and lived experience as an African-American professor, and for serving on my committee. Our conversations always gave me new insights and important information on racial issues in the United States. As one of her students, I discussed the necessity of being skeptical about educational policies that do not take into account the social, racial, cultural, and political context of educational settings, especially inner-city schools.

I am particularly thankful to Dr. John Schwille (Jack), the Assistant Dean of International Studies in Education, who honored me with his presence on my committee, for sharing with me his wisdom and for being interested in what I had to say. Prof. Jack's contribution and questions regarding the framework of my research, especially the methodology section, was fundamental in the process of bringing this thesis to existence.

With Margo K. Kelly I shared love and received the tenderness and political support that enhanced my spirit. When staying with her in Washington, DC, important bibliography and information were gathered. I can not express how thankful I am to her.

From Ford Foundation/Laspau I received the scholarship which made financially possible the accomplishment of having a Masters degree from such a distinguished educational institution as the school of Education at Michigan State University.

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INTRODUCTION

Thousands of Black children and adolescents go to school in order to accomplish the civil right of becoming educated. The process of humiliation and exclusion that these children and adolescents are submitted to during their schooling process would make anybody concerned. Black organizations critically evaluate this process and came up with the conclusion: It is definitely not, as usually affirmed, a problem of Blacks. It constitutes a serious problem of the Brazilian society.¹

The school curriculum has been identified as one area in which the dominant culture and unequal social relations have been able to reproduce themselves in contemporary capitalist societies. Through oppressive and hegemonic ideologies, Apple (1990) asserts, the school curriculum reproduces and legitimates social and racial inequalities. By the same token however, those relations of domination are also seen as having counter-movements that challenge the mechanisms created and used to perpetuate inequalities of race, class, and gender in education. The social dynamics of such counter-movements in a city called Belo Horizonte, Brazil, constitute the empirical base for this study. Within the movement for curriculum reform and racial justice in the Brazilian society, as well in

¹ Annals of the conference Educação e Discriminação dos Negros. Instituto de Recursos Humanos João Pinheiro. Belo Horizonte. Junho 27-30, 1987.

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the United States, there are similar arguments for including issues of concern to African-descent people in the public school curriculum. These arguments suggest that production of knowledge in school can be reconfigured toward less traumatic learning experiences for Black children and other minorities in any multiracial society.

This study to achieve such inclusive goals constitutes an attempt to summarize the movement for curriculum reform in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in the early 1990s. It looks at the experiences, opinions and struggles of a significant sector of the Brazilian society that has been destitute of its civil rights as a result of economic oppression and institutionalized racism. At the same time, this study is part of a wider body of research which describes how social inequalities are experienced in the Brazilian society. For example, research on neighborhood associations and the fight for working class members access to public schools (Moullin, 1991) has raised questions about social inequalities across classes to the Brazilian government since the 1960s. The main contribution of this study will be the treatment of race as a fundamental category for understanding Brazilian educational inequities. Unfortunately, race is treated as an epiphenomenon in much Brazilian educational research. This study will bring issues of race to the center by asking: (1) How Black leaders for civil rights in Brazil suggested revising the school curriculum? (2) During the curriculum reform movement, were relations established between microlevel Black leaders and the Municipal Board of Education (the macrolevel educational office in charge of curriculum discussions and alterations at the local level)? (3) What previous knowledge did Black leaders have about school reorganization

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and curriculum implementation strategies? (4) What demands for inclusion of Black issues were central to the school curriculum alteration platform? (5) Were knowledge and assumptions about multiculturalism and Afrocentricism built into the curriculum reform proposal?

These questions emerge from previous inquiries on education and the social sciences in Brazil, which provide a way of understanding how to combat racial and social inequalities faced by non-Whites and the poor. Prior educational and sociological research studies of contemporary Brazilian society have asked questions about the racial dynamics that pervade classroom relations, families, and school curriculum. These questions include:

- Why are Whites twice as successful in school as African-Brazilians, even when African-Brazilians have social backgrounds similar to those of Whites? (Hasenbalg & Silva, 1990).
- Do Black and White families in multiracial societies envision schools differently, even if they come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds? (Rama, 1989; Rosenberg, 1991a).
- Why do African-Brazilian families tend to enroll their children in school later than White families, even when both racial groups have a parallel social background? (Barbosa, 1983; Rosenberg, 1991b).
- Do African-Brazilian families tend to live in neighborhoods with precarious resources and services such as education even when their social and economic backgrounds would allow them to live in better conditions? (Rosenberg, 1991; Rosenberg & Pinto 1988).
- How do African-Brazilian children and adolescents in many situations manage to succeed as street merchants and caretakers of their families when they have to deal with complex mathematical concepts, if they have

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dropped out because of their schooling failure? Where do they get their education? (Carraher et al., 1991). For an excellent assessment of this question in the USA, see Delpit (1992).

- Which cultures, knowledge, and values are found in the core curriculum of inner-city schools in Brazil? Are there high numbers of dropouts? (Gonçalves, 1986; Silva, 1993; Valentim, 1989).

Apple (1990) suggests that to understand such questions, we must examine social movements for curriculum reform and try to ascertain why "progressive social movements which aim at certain kinds of school reforms such as community participation and control of institutions are often less successful than their proponents would like them to be"(p. 65). In other words we must ask questions leading to the understanding of the roots of social and racial inequalities in contemporary societies and how reform proponents implement actions for social and racial equity within these societies.

This study, a description of and reflection upon a movement for curriculum reform in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in the early 1990s, constitutes an attempt to learn from the experience of those Black men and women community leaders who struggled to transform public schools and recreate the meaning of schooling. In the process of refusing to be seen as politically powerless and consumers of extraneous knowledge (the knowledge considered superior and predominant in the school curriculum) they *took racial justice in their own hands*. Those African-Brazilian leaders made sense of that process for school-curriculum change by bringing the lived experiences of the Black community to the "busy" agenda of school administrators.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the dynamics present in Black organizations' demands for the inclusion of African-Brazilian issues in the school curriculum in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in the 1990s. This study will highlight the opinions and lived experiences of a group of African-Brazilian leaders, all of them educators (meaning holding a teaching certificate or/and because of their involvement in consciousness raising projects about education), in their struggle to overcome educational inequities resulting from Brazilian educational policies. This study will be useful both for those interested in curriculum reform and in the civil rights of minority groups.

Several resources will inform this study. Data include interviews with leaders of the Black community involved in the debates for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte in the early 1990; analyses of the main local newspaper in 1990; assessment of the official curriculum and programs of Belo Horizonte Municipal Board of Education in the 1990s, and the curriculum and programs presently in place; analysis of two documents written by the State and Municipal Boards of Education regarding literacy in Minas Gerais and Belo Horizonte. A significant theme is the extent to which African-Brazilian issues are included in the school curriculum. The experience of school curriculum reform and implementation in the United States since the 1950s, with the struggles for school desegregation and the Civil Rights movement, as well as beginning experiences of multiculturalism in schools during the 1960s will provide a theoretical and political framework. The intent of this

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Belo Horizonte, the capital of the State of Minas Gerais, was chosen as the setting for this research because of its national and regional importance in the articulation of initiatives for educational reform. An important organization of Black leaders discussing and demanding school curriculum change started in Belo Horizonte. Following the mobilization of Blacks in São Paulo and in other states during the 1980s, the National Conference on Education and Discrimination Against Blacks organized in Belo Horizonte in 1987 was a catalyst for the movement for curriculum reform in the 1990s.

By the end of the dictatorship period in Brazil (1964-1978), Blacks were ready to take a stand against racial inequities. This study will attempt to reveal how in the early 1990s in Belo Horizonte, the Black community struggled to bring about racial justice in the public educational system. This study will also attempt to understand educational and social policies at the micro-level and how these micro-level experiences influenced or failed to influence local and governmental educational decisions.

The contribution from this narrative to educational theory rests in the purpose, motives, and historical context that placed together those leaders of the Black community, as a group, demanding curriculum change in a specific city and historical time. The main ambition of this

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study is to bring forward their beliefs and their struggle to overcome racial and social injustice in Brazil.

CHAPTER I

**CHANGING SCHOOL CURRICULUM TO ADDRESS RACIAL
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1. Background

In terms of basic public instruction in Brazil there is one point of agreement: it is considered an troubled educational system. The educational system in Brazil ranks among the top of the most problematic educational systems in developing countries.

World Bank reports (from 1990 to 1994), the Human Development Index (from the same period) published by the United Nations, and documents published by the UNESCO and UNICEF on basic education and literacy, clearly indicate the incompetence of the Brazilian government in the field of education. Freitag (1994) says "Brazil is highlighted in 1990, according to UNESCO, as a nation with one of the highest levels of illiteracy in the contemporary world, 18.7%. In Latin America, Brazil would only present a better result if compared with Haiti (47%), Guatemala (45%), El Salvador (27%), Honduras (27%), and Bolivia (22%)" (p. 122).

It is important to note, however, that in Brazil the level of illiteracy is decreasing: 40% in 1960; 34% in 1970; 25% in 1980; 18.7% in 1990; 14.2% (estimation to the year 2000). However, if one takes 4 years of completed schooling as the average period to consider somebody as basically able to write and read, instead of 19% of illiterates according to Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), that number jumps to 43.5% in 1987. The incongruity in the percentage of illiterates for the same years is due to the different conceptions of literacy. The IBGE considers as literate those able to write and read a simple letter.

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For educators and specialists in literacy and oral language, literate are those who have completed at least 4 years of schooling and are able to produce written work based on elementary skills such as spelling.

Klein and Ribeiro (1991) analyzed the Educational Census of the Ministry of Education and determined that the lack of promotion from one grade to another, rather than entrance into the basic school system, was the central problem regarding literacy. Problems endogenous to the public school system in Brazil, according to these authors, deserve careful attention and intervention in order to improve educational outcomes.

Common explanations for why the public educational system in Brazil is so poor are endless. There are those who blame the inertia of boards of education in supervising the school organization, in order to ensure equity in the distribution of services. There are those who would argue that the main problem rests in the school organizational system, seen as performing roles of selection and socialization which are incapable of going beyond limits imposed by unequal structures in society. Others would blame the state itself, because of its incompetence in responding to the demands of local citizens. Other concerns abound: the inadequacy of the curriculum; a weak teacher preparation program; the lack of interest in education in general because of the economic costs of such endeavors; the irresponsibility and limitations of parents and other caregivers in providing the necessary home environment for school learners to continue the learning process started in school; the absence of bridges between schools and families. Further, institutional racism is alive and active in the school system permeating instructional materials, the

school curriculum, and instructor practices in the classroom. Finally, teachers lack preparation to deal with children and adolescents from racial and cultural backgrounds that are quite different from the racial and cultural backgrounds found in the mainstream society.

In a system that is riddled with inadequacies and problems, the circumstances for Black youth are much worse. In some cases the arguments against the Brazilian educational system and its pedagogic practice overlap. The educational outcomes for Blacks prove that Blacks are disadvantaged, even when the income of both groups is parallel. According to Becker (1990) -- a leading researcher on literacy in Brazil -- the Brazilian school system has failed Blacks and working class children in terms of teaching them how to read and write. The prevailing system denotes a lack of commitment of the government. A significant number of Black leaders, Black scholars and researchers on education (African-Brazilian or not) believe that on the top of the incompetence and lack of interest in teaching Black children and others from the working class, there is an eurocentric standpoint and stereotypes from White supremacists which aim to hold Black children back in public schools.

These contemporary educational problems have their roots in the Brazilian educational history, from the Colonial period to the establishment of Republican ideals in the early twentieth century. There was rampant genocide of indigenous people. The Portuguese colonizers of Brazil paid little or no attention to the education of the "settlers" from non-noble families. The Africans brought in as slaves were prohibited any kind of literacy. This situation is in contrast to the experience of European

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countries and nations like the United States, colonized by British Empire. In those countries, the Protestant religion is believed to have played a fundamental role in establishing literacy among Whites, even from non-noble families. On the other hand, many believed that Blacks had no soul, intelligence, or religion. Worshipers needed to be able to read the Bible (Haguet, 1990). Brazil, colonized by Roman Catholics, had a different relation with "sacred words": somebody would read and interpret the bible to those who needed salvation. This meant there was no necessity for systematic education for Whites of non-noble ascendance. Printing was completely prohibited in Brazil until the first decade of the nineteenth century when the Portuguese Crown moved to Rio de Janeiro, fleeing from the French army.

Looking from contemporary perspectives, it seems quite difficult to understand such a religious influence in the acculturation and domination of the so called "new world." The result in the Brazilian case was a late and precarious organization of the public education system. According to Freitag:

The first educational policy promoted by the Brazilian state started in the twentieth century, one century after the independence of Brazil from Portugal in 1822. Meanwhile countries of Spanish colonization had universities created by the Spanish Crown and Vatican, half a century after the Columbus discovery [sic] of the Americans. (1994, p. 126)

Most of today's 150 million Brazilians are descendants of native Brazilians, Africans, and a minority of Asians, Middle Eastern, Portuguese and other Europeans. In the last 100 years, waves of

immigrants came from Italy, Spain, Germany, Lebanon, Syria, and Japan. These latter groups, who received incentives from the Brazilian government interested in "whitening" the population, came to work in the southern coffee plantations, in the factories in the industrial center of São Paulo, in small farms around this same city, and in the southern states: Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. The Middle Eastern immigrants set up small shops, and some became major merchants. What is observed in Brazil today is that those cultural groups who share a common whiteness of skin color (with the exception of some Middle Easterners and Japanese) have been economically and socially successful, compared to African-Brazilians who arrived about 400 years before them. In addition to their social and economic status, those cultural groups sharing a similar whiteness were elevated to models of beauty, intelligence, and the "better" culture, as if it were possible to talk in terms of "better" cultures.

For Black people in Brazil, access to education, jobs, and housing is a fundamental right of being a citizen. Yet citizenship has always been problematic in Brazilian discourses. At the end of the 19th century when Brazil became a Republic (November 15, 1889), the liberal discourse of equality of opportunities left out former slaves. The end of the slavery period (May 13, 1888) and the Proclamation of Republic came almost at the same time. However the abysmal inequalities to which former slaves and their descendants were subject, as occurred to other Black peoples in

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By the middle of the 20th century, after the Second World War, Blacks were promoted to "second class citizens." By the dawn of the 1970s, Blacks believed that their children might find better jobs if they had better education in a country that was rapidly becoming modern and industrialized. The educational reform of 1971 and 1982 (laws 5692/71 and 7044/82) changed the length and content of school curriculum, emphasizing its professional/vocational orientation. Since 1971, the number of years for the basic period of schooling shifted from 9 to 8. Also the Admission Exam, usually taken in the fifth grade, was suppressed. These changes were implemented because Black and working class families were better able (because of economic growth) to send their children to school. Enrollments were growing fast. However, quantity and quality were seen as two divorced issues. What Blacks and working class families had hoped in terms of educational opportunities did not come completely true since the occupational structure, social mobility mechanisms, school organization, and institutional racism kept their children falling behind in school and in the workplace.

In the context of this educational history it is important to bring forward an aspect that has been overlooked by many educational

¹According to Harris (1994, April) "historically the term Diaspora has been applied most frequently to the Jewish dispersion, in recent years it has become common in studies of African, Chinese, Indian, and a host of other communities outside their homeland.... In Africa the basic problems stems from decisions made by Europeans at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, which essentially set the boundaries of most African States."

researchers, namely, the issue of racial inequalities in Brazil and its different facets. There is a mainstream belief in Brazil that race and skin color do not make difference, fulfilling the French liberal presuppositions grounded in liberty, equality, and fraternity. This mainstream belief has created and reinforced racial inequalities all over Brazil. Skidmore (1990, p. 2) points to the discourse of some racial democrats such as Vianna Moog who affirmed that "the high-test, most significant and most edifying aspect of our culture is racial brotherhood." Senator Petrônio Portela affirmed in 1977: "In Brazil, access to society depends upon individual effort, intellectual ability, and merit We have all inherited common attributes, and what we are building -- socially, economically and politically -- proves the correctness of our rejection of the myths of racial superiority." Those racial democrats would blame the economic and social disadvantages in Brazilian society on the past. However, the unequal educational opportunities for Blacks in Brazil has its roots in occupational structures, social mobility mechanisms, and institutional racism. The hierarchy of social benefits which characterizes Brazil social history is rooted in colonial experiences of domination that are still alive in modern forms of neo-colonialism.

Progressive Brazilian educators, sociologists, anthropologists and other scholars in the social sciences and education became conscious of the need to address racial inequalities within Brazilian society as a fundamental vehicle for understanding the Brazilian racial dynamics. The first publications critical of claims for racial democracy were developed in 1950 sponsored by UNESCO. São Paulo (Southeast) and Bahia (Northeast), constituted the main geographical base for these anti-racial

democracy studies. Gilberto Freyre, one of the most arduous defenders of racial democracy and Portuguese colonialism in Brazil and in Africa, was put under severe scrutiny. His classic book Casa Grande e Senzala (The Master and the Slaves) was seen as portraying a fake harmony between Whites and Blacks in Brazil. After World War II the interest in Brazilian racial relations increased and other sociological studies critiquing the ideology of racial democracy were presented. Thales de Azevedo, Roger Bastide, Florestan Fernandes, Octavio Ianni, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (the current president of Brazil), and their collaborators were the most important researchers addressing issues of "whitening ideology" in Brazil in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Their work had just one crucial limitation: the treatment of race as a epiphenomenon. They did not see race as a significant category by itself. They believed the equalization of social inequalities would bring racial justice. In Florestan Fernandes' two classic volumes: Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes (published in 1973) race remained a dilemma that might be solved only with the advancement of social and economic relations within Brazilian society. Fernandes and his colleagues had created the new paradigm for the understanding of racial inequality in Brazil. However, according to Winant:

their tendency to see the persistence of racial inequality as a manifestation of supposedly more fundamental class antagonism (reductionism) resulted in an inability to see race as theoretically flexible, as opposed to an a priori, category. In writing about racial dynamics the revisionists tended to ignore the changing sociohistorical meaning of race in Brazil (1994, p. 135).

In 1979, the sociologist Carlos Hasenbalg published Discriminação e Desigualdades Raciais no Brasil Contemporâneo. He deepened and advanced Florestan Fernandes' accounts of racial relations in Brazil. One important contribution of Hansenbalg's approach was his analysis of the forms and manifestations of the whitening ideology and racial democracy. Based on qualitative and quantitative data, he showed a range of racist practices and assumptions which condemned African descendants in Brazil to disadvantages in terms of housing, health, jobs, and education (Hansenbalg, 1979). The last factor, education, became the focus for a series of investigations on educational inequalities in Brazil. Equally important has been the contribution of Nelson do Valle Silva. He presented statistical evidence based on economic data that substantiate racial inequality in education (Silva, 1985). Both authors, Silva and Hasenbalg, seem convinced of the necessity in disrupting the racial order in Brazil. This differs from the generation of researchers on racial inequalities in Brazil publishing in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, who did not take race as a fundamental category itself to the understanding of the Brazilian society. The big challenge was, therefore, how to develop a strategy for disruption.

1.1. Proposals for Curriculum Change in Brazil

It has been affirmed by Rama (1989), Hasenbalg and Silva (1990), Rosemberg (1991), and Klein and Ribeiro (1991), that one important way of intervening in racial inequalities in education is to target the endogenous problems manifested in school: the school curriculum was the target of this work.

In discussing the issue of curriculum, as well its importance to the improvement of school outcomes and the build up of racial justice in education in Brazil, it is important to analyze how racial justice in education has been approached by professionals in the Brazilian school system, researchers on education, and Black organizations.

After the end of the dictatorship period in Brazil (1964-1978), democratization and reorganization of social movements became a reality all over Brazil and spawned a number of Black organizations. Black organizations constituted the beginning of demands for a better school curriculum. Educational researchers, experts, and professionals, whether they belonged to the Black movement or not, participated in the transformation of those demands into proposals for the evaluation and modification of the curricular texts and schoolbooks. Texts in use were seen as filled with sexism and racism -- particularly in the ways they depicted Blacks, women, and native Brazilians. (See Silva, 1988). The existing school curriculum was seen as reinforcing racial discrimination in Brazilian society.

Several key events and initiatives led to the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte. In the middle 1980s, the Carlos Chagas Foundation investigated the conditions of the African-Brazilian community living in the state of São Paulo. In 1985, the "First National Meeting about the Reality of Blacks and Education" was held in Porto Alegre (South of Brazil). In 1986, the African-Brazilian Community Participation and Development Council based in São Paulo, together with the Carlos Chagas Foundation, organized a national conference to discuss

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the issue of "Black People and Education." The sixth and seventh meetings of the "Northern and Northeastern African-Brazilians" was held in Aracajú in 1986, and Recife 1988, respectively. These meetings discussed the issue of discrimination and education. In 1987, the School of Education of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, and the João Pinheiro Human Resources Institute, organized a national conference to discuss "Education and Discrimination against Blacks" Also, in Belo Horizonte, a project called "Racism in Schools" was conducted by a group of researchers. Finally, in 1990, the "Commission for the Elimination of Racism in the Municipal Schools of Belo Horizonte" was created. Later this commission came to be called "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Municipal Schools in Belo Horizonte."

Proposals for curriculum change in elementary and secondary schools included the teaching of Black history and culture within the context of an African-Brazilian culture. The curriculum would not only include the contours of the African-Brazilian culture but be written in such a way to allow African-Brazilian students to develop self-esteem and self-identity. A further change in teacher education was to shift from the transmission of knowledge to production of knowledge in classroom. The inclusion of this perspective in teacher preparation programs would enable a fostering of cultural and racial respect in the classroom. Minority students would be empowered through the development of self-esteem arising knowledge of their social, cultural and racial backgrounds.

An anti-racist curriculum was seen by those involved in racial justice in education as having these characteristics:

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- 1- Eliminate low teacher expectations of students from racial "minority" backgrounds.
- 2- Avoid ignoring students and begin taking students' experiences seriously in classrooms
- 3- Eliminate the perception of cultural deprivation. Cultural deprivation arguments have been used to suggest that children from racial "minority" backgrounds have intellectual limitations due to familial problems and/or the cultural environment.

The production of knowledge through education would recognize the richness and contradictions of culture, race, gender and religion. This would be a change from the practice of emphasizing only the transmission of school subjects, based on the belief that all children must receive the same "superior body of formal knowledge."

A common view emerged from all of these events, initiatives, and process described above: Brazil is essentially a multiethnic and multiracial society, marked by a racial dynamic considered adverse for the fostering of Black children's identity. Winant, in discussing the fact of Blackness in Brazil asserts:

Perhaps nowhere else in the world it is more difficult to achieve a clear understanding of who one is according to the prevailing system of social categorization. Perhaps in no other country it is as arduous to assess the significance of race in everyday life, to take race into account in one's negotiation of survival, not to mentions in one's quest for happiness or prosperity. In no other country is the salience of race so uncertain, so disguised in its

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quotidian manifestation, so explicitly denied and implicitly upheld (1994, p. 154).

Brazil has the largest Black population outside of Africa. Only Nigeria in West Africa, with its approximately 120 million people, exceeds the Brazilian Black population. Brazil, the giant of South America, with its 150 million inhabitants in which Blacks constitute approximately 60% of the population, has earned the attention of OAS (Organization of the American States), UNICEF (United Nations Children Found), and other international organizations.

Racial discrimination in the United States since the 1950s has brought about the urgent necessity of curriculum change in school settings. Since the 1980s, educational debates on class, race, and gender (not just "curriculum reform") were seen as more precise ways of understanding and combating inequalities in education. In Brazil as well as in Latin America, however, race has had less attention in an understanding of contemporary social inequalities. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) report of 1994, shows that Whites earn more than twice as much as Blacks, and women's pay is 57 % less than the wage received by men. Fourteen percent of children aged 10 and 13 are working (there is no breakdown by color), although in one of Brazil's poor northern states, that figure reaches nearly 30 percent. Sixteen percent of Brazilian workers either never went to school or dropped out before completing the first grade. The Brazilian monthly minimum wage in March 1995 was estimated in \$70.00 (seventy dollars). This minimum wage constituted approximately 10% of the total income necessary to handle the basic necessities of a family with 3 members.

The category of race plays an important role in this discussion due to the fact that non-Whites are disadvantaged from the time they enter school. Table 1, translated from Hasenbalg and Silva (1990, p.8), illustrates this pattern. Among seven-year-olds (the obligatory age for starting the first grade in the public school system), there is a high proportion of children who have never officially been to school: around 40% of Whites and 55% of Blacks and *pardos*.³ From this particular age to the end of the obligatory period of schooling (fourteen year olds), what one can observe is the rapid absorption of Whites into schools. It reaches around 95% by the age of eleven. Among Blacks and *Pardos*, the percentage of those who have never gone to school after age 11, is about three times larger than for Whites.

³ Pardo is used in the Census to categorize those who consider themselves neither whites, nor Blacks. In telling the Census Taker their color in 1980, they ranged from classifying themselves from "chocolate to the "color of the night" or the "color of the sin". The Census of 1980 ended up with more than one hundred different colors used by non-Whites. Under this category "pardo", the Census organized everybody who would be considered, or considered themselves, neither Whites, nor Blacks. It is important to say that for the Black movement, Pardos are considered Blacks. This is why the category "African- Brazilian" has been preferred rather than Blacks.

TABLE 1:

**THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO NEVER WENT TO
SCHOOL (7- 24 YEARS OLD), ACCORDING TO AGE AND COLOR
BRAZIL, 1992**

AGE	COLOR		
	WHITES	BLACKS	PARDOS*
7	39,3	54,8	55,7
8	14,8	35,7	33,8
9	9,5	24,3	23,6
10	6,8	20,7	20,3
11	5,4	14,5	14,9
12	6,0	17,9	16,2
13	4,8	15,1	14,0
14	5,0	15,5	13,9
15 a 19	4,9	15,3	14,9
20 a 24	4,7	14,5	13,6

SOURCE: BRAZIL NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SAMPLE SURVEY (1992)

Fewer Blacks enroll in the first grade at the obligatory age of seven than Whites, even when students' social and economic backgrounds are comparable. A great number of Blacks will not complete the obligatory schooling period (8 years) (see Rosenberg, 1991; Hasenbalg & Silva, 1990). According to these authors, even among students who stay in school for 8 years or more, there often is a lack of advancement. Many are retained in the same grade for two, three, or more years. Black children tend to leave school with fewer grade levels completed compared to White children.

In Brazil, the roots of this educational configuration appear to come from the Whites' desire for maintaining power at the expense of the larger population. The government's discourse speaks in behalf of social change, but its actions in fact have excluded major sectors of the society.

In contemporary discourses on inequality, discrimination has been historically disguised, because in my view it is ideologically necessary for those in power to show that poorer social classes failed because they did not make enough personal effort to go beyond the limitations of gender, race and social origin. Kozol (1991) says that those discourses and policies are something that "resembles equity but never reaches it. They are close enough to equity to silence criticism, by approximating justice, but far enough from equity to guarantee the benefits enjoyed by privilege" (p.175).

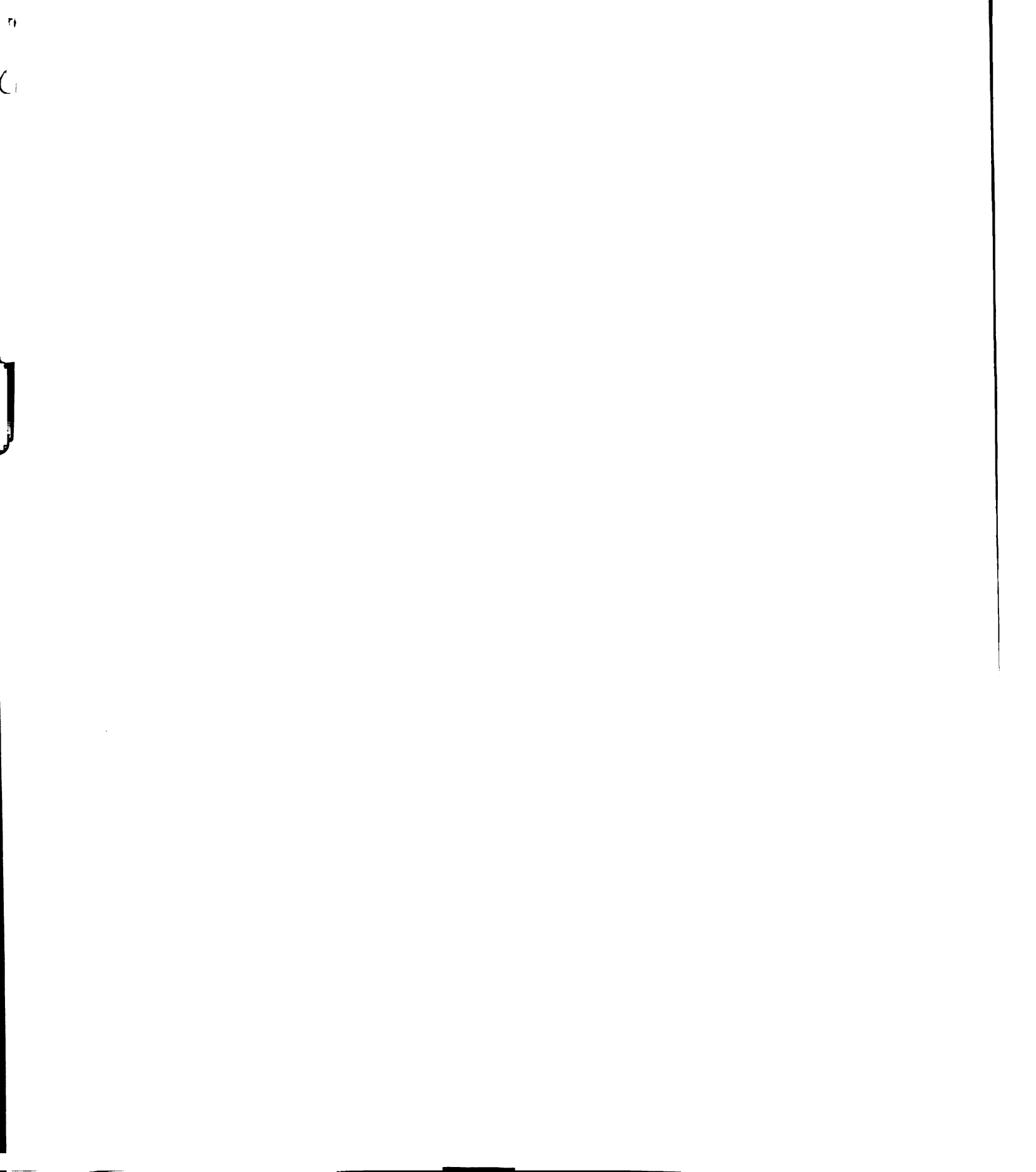
It is important to note that the process of curriculum reform in Brazil has a double face in which one side appears "official." The Ministry of Education, the Federal Council of Education, Municipal and State Boards of Education in the 27 United States of Brazil (including the Federal District, Brasilia, -- the capital of Brazil), school administrators and school commissions are charged with democratically implementing educational laws and curriculum adaptations in local contexts. Usually this process is done with the advice of professors from prestigious federal universities such as the Federal University of Minas Gerais. The second side of curriculum reform, however, is that important segments of the Brazilian society (such as African-Brazilian groups) do not identify with the concept of education and resultant decisions that come from the official sectors.

To give a clear example of this problem, we need only look at results following the State of Minas Gerais Congress of Education in

1982. The conception of knowledge present in the project did not match the expectations of minority' sectors and their allies.

The school should provide to everybody who has access to school, without discrimination, the *universal knowledge*, namely, the knowledge historically accumulated, necessary to the education of its citizens. All instruction presented by the state must have the best quality, independent of social class pertinence... In this sense, this universal characteristic is not a pure extension of the educational opportunities, but requires the acceptance of all. Respecting their values, answering to their necessities, allowing the development by them of their cultural and linguistic local universe, *articulating their universe with the universal knowledge*. [italics mine] (Cunha, 1991, p. 174)

The key problem is that the concept of "universal knowledge" is denounced by African-Brazilians and other sectors of the Brazilian society because it is seen as excluding their culture, values, and history. It is also denounced by other sectors of the Brazilian society such as working class, women, and other non-White groups. Even when there is specific attention to social inequalities, issues for African-Brazilians are overlooked. For example, one intention of 1987 curricular reformers was to "change the eurocentric emphasis to an approach that would privilege Brazil and Latin America" (Cunha, 1991, p. 207). The problem is that Europe colonized Brazil and other countries in Latin America, and the hegemonic vision in those countries was and is still Eurocentric. This curricular proposal ended up privileging European frameworks and the ideology of official groups that had and still have their backs to Latin America and their eyes turned toward Europe and its supposed "superior civilized history."



The urgent necessity of addressing racial inequalities and curriculum in Brazil can be justified and demanded as a simple matter of racial justice. It gets complicated and challenging when one comes to realize that racial justice is not easily achievable, especially in societies like Brazil where profound social inequalities tend to create deeper racial injustices and vice-versa. According to Wignaraja

The UNDP's Human Development Report of 1990 characterizes Brazil as a high GNP-per-capita country with modest human development and little equity... Brazil represents the cruder type of capitalism transformation, which has resulted in a massive polarization of the people and a very deep debt crisis, having been incorporated into a global system without any safeguards in terms of the equity of internal structural changes. (1993, p. 14)

Clearly a case has been made for the need for curriculum reform in Brazil. This study will look at one such reform movement in some depth, through interviews with leaders of the Black community in Belo Horizonte, an analysis of Belo Horizonte's main newspaper and documents about education published by the Municipal Board of Education, and my own personal reflections as an Afro-Brazilian. Before discussing the methodology used to carry out this project, it seems worthwhile to locate the Brazilian educational "problem" in the context of the United States' experience. The idea is to give readers some background to understand better some assumptions regarding school curriculum that we might expect Black leaders in Belo Horizonte to hold, given that many educational ideas originating in Europe and North America are introduced to Brazil where they remain implanted.

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1.2. The United States of America Context

The demographic social fabric of the United States makes it the most diverse society in the world. The US population has changed from approximately 90% European 200 years ago to approximately 50% European, nowadays. People of African descent represent approximately 20%, and people of Central and South American and Caribbean descent also represent approximately 20%. Peoples of Asian origin have grown to approximately 8% (Gordon, 1992).

In the United States there is a strong debate and a huge number of publications regarding the representation and assessment of different cultural groups in the school curriculum, and how these multiple representations can contribute to the development of intellectual competence and racial justice in education, and in society. However, what has been observed is that the democratization of school opportunities, and the assessment of different cultures through the school curriculum have not resulted in equal opportunity for students to accomplish their goals, or in the celebrating of multiple ethnic heritage, or in learning from the collective experiences of different groups. Instead, “there has been a subtle but systematic insistence on the examination and celebration of a particular and single American heritage, namely, European” (Gordon 1992, p. 235).

It is Eisner (1985) who points to the fact that “the analysis of society as a basis for the formulation of curriculum content and goals is not as modern as one might believe”(p.78). In the United States, this issue

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goes back to the school survey movement of 1910, whose methods were described in 1928. What gives new nuances to the discussion of curriculum change is, indeed, the changing social and historical context, as well as the role played by the agents involved. The shifting in the question: "what knowledge is of most worth" to "whose knowledge is of most worth" as posed by Apple (1990, p. vii), gives us an important tool - perhaps the main tool -- for analyzing the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte in the early 1990s. It seems that those involved in that movement, even though not experts in curriculum, understood the problem. It is in the curriculum that the fostering of students' knowledge takes place and where the problem of who controls knowledge is posed. Apple asserts that:

as Gramsci argued, the control of the knowledge preserving and producing sectors of a society is a critical factor in enhancing the ideological dominance of one group of people or one class over less powerful groups of peoples or classes. In this regard, the role of the school in selecting, preserving, and passing on conceptions of competence, ideological norms and values (and often only certain social groups' 'knowledge') -- all of which are embedded within both the overt and the hidden curricula in schools -- is of no small moment. (1990, p. 57)

In this sense the notion of knowledge as a social construction is enhanced by a better understanding of where this knowledge comes from, whom it benefits, and why. It is fundamental to have a sense of different approaches to school curriculum in order to better understand the Brazilian educational context in which the movement for curriculum change took place. According to Eisner (1985, p. 62), there are five

concepts of curriculum, interlocked and all important to the understanding of the purpose and content of the school curriculum, namely:

- (1) development of cognitive processes. In this view, the major functions of the school are (a) to help children learn how to learn and (b) to provide them with the opportunities to use and strengthen the variety of intellectual faculties that they possess....
- (2) Academic rationalism one of the oldest and most basic orientations to curriculum goals and content. This orientation argues that the major function of the school is to foster the intellectual growth of the student in those subject matters most worthy of study....
- (3) A third orientation to curriculum is one that emphasizes the primacy of personal meaning and the school's responsibility to develop programs that make such meaning possible. The curriculum is to emerge out of the sympathetic interaction of teachers and students within a process called teacher-pupil planning....
- (4) Social adaptation and social reconstruction is one that derives its aims and contents from an analysis of the society the school is designed to serve....
- (5) Curriculum as technology conceives curriculum planning as being essentially a technical undertaking, a question of relating means to ends once the ends have been formulated.

This lengthy quotation gives us a good idea about varying concepts of school curriculum. What remains to be understood is how discussions of multiculturalism, multiethnicity and Afrocentrism challenge and are challenged by those notions of curriculum.

The objective of this study -- an analysis of the dynamics present in Black organizations' demands for the inclusion of African Brazilian issues in school curriculum -- requires an examination of conceptualizations of multiculturalism, multiethnicity and Afrocentrism along with their contradictions, value, and critiques. The following paragraphs also

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provide background on the history and social context of the struggle for civil rights of African descent people in the United States.

1.3. Multicultural Approaches

In the United States, the assessment, development and application of concepts such as Afrocentrism and multiculturalism have generated enormous debates throughout the country. Mass media and educational institutions have started a strong debate on the social and educational implications of the multiculturalism and Afrocentrism approach to US society. As a result, many critiques have arisen against their underlying assumptions and theoretical viewpoints.

The theory and practice of multiculturalism in education emerged in the United States in the late 1960s. The historical context that created the concept of multiculturalism deserves some attention. According to McCarthy (1991, p. 38) "Multiculturalism is, therefore, a product of a particular historical conjecture of relations among the state, contending racial minorities and majority groups, and policy intellectuals in the United States, at a time when the discourse over school had become increasingly racialized." Multiculturalism is a political and educational project that carries, according to McCarthy (1991), contradictory and problematic solutions to racial inequality in education.

Multicultural approaches have antecedents in the Civil Rights' Movement. In 1954, in one of the most important decisions of that period, the US Supreme Court decision number 347/483 ended officially the

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regime of segregated schools. Specially this was an important Civil Rights victory for Blacks. Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, in addition to overturning Plessy v. Ferguson of 1896 that established the separate but equal doctrine, was the starting point for a series of initiatives demanding structural changes in the educational system.

Whites, especially in the South, decided to block the Supreme Court's decision of 1954. Many White organized groups, were determined to resist any change in racial and social relations in the United States. The desegregation of schools was a very slow process. The opposition to the desegregation of public school was strong. Especially in the South, White and Black students were racially separated by classes or/and Black students were not allowed in extracurricular activities. In some schools, Black staffs were assigned to inferior positions and Whites with less preparation were assigned to superior positions (Franklin & Moss Jr., 1988).

In despite of that, Blacks and other racial groups also in the struggle for civil rights: Whites, Latinos, Caribbeans, and Asians, held the belief that the school desegregation would be able to bring racial justice, especially in education. Their dream did not come true. Blacks witnessed the assassination of their leaders, from Malcom X (1965) to Martin Luther King Jr. (1968), as well numerous other Civil Right organizers. White supremacist groups and individuals kept in place their effort to block the Civil Rights movement. White mothers organized demonstrations against school desegregation, and White construction

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workers were radically opposed to the employment of Black journeymen and apprentices. Black leaders in the US must have felt what one Black leader in Belo Horizonte recently said: *Nós estamos por nossa conta [we are on our own]*. Some Blacks in the US radicalized their organizations and adopted nationalist ideals. As Franklin and Moss Jr. describe:

Even before his death Martin Luther King had been criticized by militant, action-oriented blacks who insisted that whites would not respond to black demands on the basis of Christian charity, good will, or even peaceful demonstrations. Some also felt that whites would never concede complete equality to blacks. In 1967 the Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey, called for the 'partitioning of the United States into two separate independent nations, one to be a homeland for white and the other to be a homeland for black Americans'. meanwhile, a group of young California militants led by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale organized the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense; and Eldridge Cleaver, its most articulate spokesman, declared that the choice before the country was 'total liberty for black people or total destruction of America'. (1988, p. 459)

It was the time when Blacks came to understand that Whites were not about giving away their White supremacist assumptions, racist practices, and White privilege. Educational policy makers and liberal intellectuals had to shift from an assimilationist approach in which Blacks and other minorities were relegated to second-class citizenship (McCarthy, 1991), to a discourse based on plurality and cultural diversity.

There is contemporary conceptual and political disagreement, in the United States, regarding multiculturalism. There are a number of scholars who see multiculturalism, as well as multiethnicity, as aiming to

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"explode" racial identity. Those arguing against multiculturalism judge this as evading Black racial consciousness and the non-identification with Africa in pursuit of a raceless society. Multiculturalism as a paradigm sometimes fails to recognize that the existence of racism relates to the possession and exercise of political and economic control and authority. It also is less often seen as related to forms of resistance to the power of dominant social groups.

One interesting finding is that the leaders interviewed did not seem to have a set of established ideas on multiculturalism and Afrocentrism, nor access to literature about such issues. All of them saw those ideas as concepts being put in practice in the United States. This does not imply ignorance, but suggests that these leaders developed their ideas about racial justice in education from a different perspective. For instance, an interviewee asserted:

Multiculturalism leads me to the notion of globalization of economy. It probably works in countries that have a fragmented racial identity. Because you dilute the authentic cultural expression of peoples. It does not mean that all cultures do not have their pluralities. It does not mean that culture does not have pluralities that are in the essence of culture. If for instance, I hold the assumption that Africa is my reference and matrix, although I have never been to Africa, I carry with me the heritage and ancestrality as I'm able to see it. Multiculturalism affirms and neglects my presence in the world. (Severino)

This Black leader is calling attention to the possible contradictions that discourses on pluralism can bring, and how they can be used to hide conflicts, racism and inequalities. The implications of multiculturalism

and Afrocentrism for the Brazilian educational arena; therefore, deserve further discussion.

The word "multiculturalism," according to Wurzel (1988), has two meanings. One simply refers to the fact that human existence is inherently and universally multicultural, even though historically, humankind hasn't recognized this given fact. The second definition is based upon a perspective which assumes that people act within the context of multicultural society and that the key to multiculturalism is awareness. Wurzel defines multiculturalism in education not only as an instructional product but as

a continuous process involving (1) reflection, learning and the development of cultural self-awareness, (2) the acceptance of conflict for its educational potential, (3) the willingness to learn about one's own cultural reality from interaction with others, (4) the improvement of communication with people from other cultures, and (5) the recognition of the universality of multiculturalism. (p. 3)

According to La Belle and Ward (1993), multiethnic and multiracial societies should make efforts to ensure equity and justice for individuals whose minority backgrounds, physical features, economic status, and goals differ from dominant groups. The authors approach multiculturalism as a tool for understanding the world order that goes toward more globalization in economics and politics.

For the Chicago Cultural Studies Group (1992)

Multiculturalism has produced if anything an even greater rush for utopian thinking than 'cultural studies'. For its adherents, multiculturalism increasingly stands for a desire to rethink

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canons in the humanities - to rethink both their boundaries and their function. It also stands for a desire to find the cultural and political norms appropriate to more heterogeneous societies within and across nations, including norms for the production and transmission of knowledge. Multiculturalism as a social movement gets critical purchase because it intrinsically challenges established norms, and can link together identity struggles with a common rhetoric of difference and resistance. (p. 531)

In his most recent book, Introduction to Multicultural Education, Banks (1994) reaffirms the aims of multicultural education: (1) to help students understand their home and community cultures, and at the same time helping students to get free from their cultural boundaries; (2) create and maintain a civic community that works for common good, helping students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they will need to participate in civic action to make society more equitable and just; (3) and understand multicultural education is as an education for freedom. Those three main objectives of multicultural education might be considered too apolitical. Issues of social class hierarchy, and race as a social construction seem not to be the target of multicultural education, as presented by Banks. Educational changes for this author can be better articulated within the concept of multiethnicity.

Multiethnic education is concerned with modifying the total educational environment so that it is more reflective of the ethnic diversity within American society. This includes not only the study of ethnic cultures and experiences, but making institutional changes within the school setting so that students from diverse ethnic groups have equal educational opportunities. (Banks, 1979, p. 23)

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Little doubt remains that almost all contemporary societies are multiethnic (J. Banks, 1979). There is no less doubt that they will continue to be in the future. That observation, however, is only a starting point for analysis, because the strength of ethnic attachment can also widely diversify societies. On the one hand, modernization, with its double-sided sword, diminishes attachment to culture and ancestry. On the other hand, culturally and ancestrally defined groups persist; they may even be intensified by forces released by modernization. Some consider ethnic/cultural and racial identities the most powerful and deep form of manifesting the sense of belonging to a nation (Anderson, 1991; Trouillot, 1990). The United States, since the 1950s, has witnessed significant movements for curriculum reform based on racial and ethnic compositions of its population. For example, according to Harris (1992): "Africentrism proposes that people of African descent or cultural orientation center their view and evaluation of the world within their historical and ontological framework" (p.306). It is important to notice that Afrocentrism does not imply what ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism imply: one race, nation, or culture as superior.

Africentrism or Afrocentrism is the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history. It is our [African's people] history, our mythology, our creative motif, and our ethos exemplifying our collective. Africentrism is only superficially related to color; it is more accurately a philosophical outlook determined by history." (Asante, 1988, cited in Harris, 1992, p.305)

Within the discussion of Africentrism, according to Banks (1992)

The Africentric conception emerged from the field of Black psychology... Two major elements of this context were the

ascendancy, to an unprecedented status of attention, of the political and economic interests of the African Diaspora; and the unprecedented demise of what one Black philosopher [Cornel West], has described as the dead, impotent rhetoric of declining and decaying civilization -- that is, postmodern thought in the west. (p. 263)

In discussing race and curriculum in the United States, McCarthy (1991) provides a critical overview of approaches to school curriculum from their ideological and political standpoints. What follows are three contemporary approaches for implementing multicultural education in the United States' schools, as categorized by McCarthy (1991), namely, cultural understanding, cultural competence, and cultural emancipation.

According to McCarthy, *cultural understanding* in multicultural education emphasizes the acceptance of cultural differences in the classroom and in the school curriculum. It is expected that educational programs, based on the cultural understanding approach, will contribute toward the elimination of prejudice. It is important to understand that the emphasis on cultural understanding goes beyond the development of communication skills and respect for ethnic differences. It also emphasizes the possibility of eliminating stereotypes related to race and gender.

The cultural understanding model aims for the improvement of communication among the diverse ethnic groups present in the school system. It is based upon the notion of relativism in which ethnic groups are supposed to have some common interests among them "a formal parity with each other," according to McCarthy. School curriculum based

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on this model would have individuals noticing that they are different but the same (since we are all human beings). American school critics have raised concerns about attitudinal changes through cultural understanding programs. According to McCarthy:

Writers such as Pettigrew (1974), Garcia (1974) and Gibson (1984) point to tendency of proponents of cultural understanding models to overemphasize the difference among ethnic groups, neglecting the differences within any one group. They also draw attention to the unintended effect of stereotyping which results from multicultural approaches that treat ethnic groups as 'monolithic entities possessing uniform, discernible traits' For instance Garcia contends that advocates of cultural understanding models tend to discuss Chicano culture as if it were a set of values and customs possessed by all who are categorized as Chicanos or Mexican Americans ... This fallacy serves to create the new stereotype which is found in the completion of the statement, Mexican children are(1991, p. 46)

The cultural understanding standpoint tends to emphasize the promotion of racial harmony and a tolerance for social and ethnic differences. There is a "prejudiceless goal" in the cultural understanding approach, as it is found in Banks (1979) contributions to the understanding of the goals of multiculturalism. But, the great issue is how to go beyond racial harmony and tolerance, and become able to challenge institutional racism.

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Cultural competence is based on bilingual / bicultural skills and pluralist values. The language and identity of different ethnic groups who live in the United States are the main focus of multiculturalism as a cultural competence. Bicultural and bilingual programs within the cultural competence framework represent a direct challenge to the prominence of Anglo and other European values in the school curriculum. McCarthy (1991) calls attention to the fact that "attempts to teach minority students how to cross over the language and culture of mainstream America also commit these students to a trajectory that leads toward incorporation and assimilation" (p. 50). Some educators have built a different model to implement multicultural education. In searching for educational policies and pedagogic practices capable of boosting racial justice in education, models of cultural emancipation and social reconstruction were brought forward.

The cultural emancipation model has particular significance to this study. In this approach, ethnicity and racial issues are at the center. Minority under-achievement in the classroom is not seen not as a cultural deficit, but related to the suppression of minority cultures in the school curriculum. Models of cultural emancipation and social reconstruction hold some basic assumptions in terms of the way concepts of race are created by school dynamics.

- a) There is a fundamental mismatch between the school curriculum and the life experience and cultural backgrounds of American minority youth...
- b) This mismatch exists because schools privilege white middle-class values while simultaneously suppressing the culture of minority youth ...
- c) Thus, schools play a critical role in the production of differential educational

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opportunities and life chances for minority and majority youth.
 d) Educators should help to redress this pattern of inequality by embarking upon multicultural curricular reform that would provide equality of opportunity for academic success for minority students. (MacCarthy, 1991, p. 52)

The cultural emancipation approach to multicultural education would suggest curriculum reform based on structural changes for social and economic changes in society. Educators involved in the cultural emancipation approach believe that cultural and social change can occur in education if there is a shift in the school curriculum. If Blacks, Latinos and other minorities students can have their history, culture and social values addressed as dependent variables to their schooling process, and not as extraneous beliefs that just appear in the school curriculum as an appendage, society will change. This approach, though, for McCarthy has not gone far enough.

As Troyna and Williams (1986) have pointed out, attempts at the reorganization of the school curriculum to include more historically and culturally sensitive materials on minorities have not significantly affected the unequal relations that exist between blacks and whites in school and in society (...) By focusing on sensitivity training and on individual difference, multicultural proponents typically skirt the very problem which multicultural education seeks to address: WHITE RACISM. (1991, p. 54)

Those authors and many others, have called attention to the societal limits of multicultural education, as well its ability and power to promote significant change in minority students' schooling.

The United States is a good example of a social formation where minority ethnic (social and cultural characteristics) and racial (inherited

traces) groups have been excluded from the mainstream society. They do not fit the patterns created by this society. The "others" or the "minorities" are current terms used to name those people of color. These "extraneous" people in its majority are from the working class. According to Zeichner, in the United States

students of color comprise about 30 percent of public school students, are the majority in 25 of the nation's 50 largest school districts, and are the majority in some states like New Mexico, Texas, and California. In the 20 largest school districts, students of color comprise over 70 percent of the total school enrollment. (1993, p. 3)

In this scenario, most teachers are White, female, and monolingual who would prefer to teach in White middle class neighborhoods, if given a choice. This configuration will not soon change since minorities are less represented in the educational field, and graduate schools admit low percentages of minorities into their programs. Frierson Jr. (1990, p. 12) asserts that "since 1975, the number and percentage of Black recipients of doctorates in education have declined, decreasing from 9.2% in 1975 to only 7.0% in 1986; 691 African Americans received a doctorate in education in 1976, as compared with only 421 in 1986." This lack of representation of African-Americans is noticed also in important forums of discussion as in the American Educational Research Association in which among its 15,888 members, it is estimated that about 570 (less than 4%) are African American. It seems that the task professors have on their hands is their own preparation as well as teachers, to be able to interact with students who are culturally and racially different from them.

Meanwhile, we are left with some haunting questions: (1) If we change (expand) the curriculum in order to include the standpoint of "minorities," is there a guarantee that this curriculum will not still carry different knowledge and expectations for children belonging to different social classes? (2) Is it possible to take for granted that the school commitment to social justice would bring about racial justice? (3) Should equity in education assume that schools must consider themselves to be the redeemer of the poor? (4) How much does teacher education confront gender, class and race issues? (5) Are families' abilities to interact with school being included in the movement for curriculum change? (6) Can schools overcome demographic, economic, social and political realities simply by expanding the curriculum?

These questions will be added to my initial ones in analyzing the data. This study: **BLACK ORGANIZATIONS' DEMANDS FOR THE INCLUSION OF AFRICAN-DESCENT ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN BELO HORIZONTE, BRAZIL IN THE EARLY 1990s**, strives to reveal grass-roots organizations' attempts to implement changes in the municipal school's curriculum, to address racial inequities. It will speak to the creation of Black organizations' protests against a fake and folkloric racial democracy that has for centuries eroded any possibility of racial justice. Though I am not able to generalize to other groups and countries, perhaps the experiences of the Black leaders in Belo Horizonte will be useful to other educational researchers and all those interested in the development of curricula for social and racial justice. The methodology used to carry on this study will be described in the following section.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

2. Method.

As I begin this section on method, it is important to review the focus of this study. My specific interest is less on the results of the curriculum movement in Brazil and more on the process. I want to bring to light the process of organization, and what it meant to those actors involved in that historical moment I have called *when Black folks try to take racial justice in their own hands*.

To select an appropriate method for this study, I completed an independent study on the methodological approaches to the study of racial inequalities in education in the United States. I reviewed ERIC (Educational Research Data Base Information Center) at the Michigan State University Library, where 133 titles and abstracts were found under the combination "Racial and Research Methodology", 61 using quantitative approaches and 72 using qualitative ones. The descriptors were: cultural differences, racism, racial inequality, gender, multiculturalism, social class, ethnicity, diversity, race and ethnicity of investigators, affirmative action, cross cultural-studies, ethnocentrism, racial-bias, sex-bias, statistical-bias, feminism, stereotypes, cultural pluralism, anti-Semitism, cultural differences, racism, and racial inequality. My review revealed that as the number of minority researchers increased, the number of studies attending to racism and prejudice has also risen. This does not mean that the number of African Americans researchers has substantially increased. What is noticeable is the increase of researchers from other minority groups: women, Latinos, Caribbeans, Asians, and homosexuals. I also discovered there is great diversity in the

defining the word "racism." This diversity has led to the development of new theories or reinterpretations of those theories. Thus, there was a greater sophistication of both theoretical development and empirical investigations of those theories. Many qualitative studies focus on prejudice and discrimination, how prejudice is learned, class prejudice, racism and self-esteem, the impact of social contact among diverse groups, multiculturalism, the nature of social experiences, and the role of schools.

From reviewing studies on racism, as well studying meta-theory approaches that, according to Worsley (1984, p. 4), are "set against and lodged in history, focused on the theories and categories that have been used by others, both by actors in the world of everyday life and by specialists in theorizing, to make sense of what is happening to them", I determined that I could best achieve the purpose of my study (1) through a triangulated qualitative approach which includes both structured and open-ended interviews; (2) a document analysis of both historic and enacted documents; and (3) my own experiences as an Afro-Brazilian educator in Belo Horizonte. To collect the data (1) I used structured interviews with Black leaders in Belo Horizonte, followed by open-ended conversation; (2) I reviewed relevant documents; (3) I recalled and presented my personal experiences. It made possible some understanding of how these nine leaders of the Black community organized and evaluated the movement for curriculum change in 1990, and what they envisioned in terms of school curriculum for the future.

2.1. Doing Qualitative Research

Most qualitative research aims to capture participants' experiences as accurately as possible, understanding how participants think and develop the perspectives that they hold. In other words, qualitative research strives to give insight to the meaning people give to their experiences. This assumption is very important because the lived experiences of leaders of the Black community involved in the demand for school curriculum reform was an important feature of this study. The research was conducted from the middle of January of 1995 to until the end of March of the same year. Visiting schools to see if any change could be observed in the school curriculum would be an interesting follow up; however it was not accomplished because of the length of time designated to this study and goals of this master's thesis inquiry. Most of the time was employed in the process of doing, transcribing, and analyzing the interviews. The researcher's familiarity with Belo Horizonte (see section 2.4), facilitated mobilization and contacts with the interviewees.

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1982), there are five key points that should be observed in doing qualitative research: (1) The researcher is the key instrument. This assumption constitutes an acknowledgment that the research design, data collection, and analysis can be influenced by the researcher. The qualitative researcher should be aware of this fact and prepared to account for personal assumptions and biases in order to understand an event from the participants' points of view. While researchers can sometimes delegate the analysis of their data, qualitative

researchers cannot, because interpretation is the essence of qualitative analysis. (2) Qualitative research is descriptive. In qualitative research, numbers are used primarily to support narrative descriptions of events and behaviors. The understandings that have been generated from a specific study should be reported in quotations and descriptions of behavior. (3) the qualitative researcher is concerned with process. Focusing on the process can generate an understanding of how the outcomes occurs.(4) Data are analyzed inductively. Theory is developed and adjusted as the data are collected. The qualitative researcher strives to understand the process of interpretation by which new definitions become part of a human group's set of stable meanings. (5) Meaning is of essential concern. The qualitative researcher is interested in understanding how participants think and develop their perspectives.

2.2. Open-ended Interviews

Some authors describe interviewing as the most important data collection technique in qualitative studies. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 92), "structured means you have specified questions you know you want to ask; open means you are prepared to follow unexpected leads that arise in the course of your interviewing."

From a phenomenological standpoint, the way to understand the demands of Black leaders in Belo Horizonte was to try to uncover their lived experience of education. The main focus was less centered in how they organized their political platform and more concerned with the

nature or essence of their personal experience in organizing the movement. As Van Manen asserts:

phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings Phenomenology differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meanings specific to particular cultures (ethnography), to certain social groups (sociology), to historical periods (history), to mental types (psychology), or to an individual's person life history (biography). Rather, phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, or life lifeworld Phenomenology research is a search for the fullness of living, for the ways a woman possibly can experience the world as a woman, for what it is to be a woman. (1990, p. 4;5)

Open to alternative constructions of reality and to the many possible explanations of this same reality, phenomenology intends to grasp the meaning of everyday experience. Practice within phenomenological framework is an antecedent for theory. Theory comes later as result of lived experience. "Theory does not control praxis, the theory of any science of education comes always later. Theory can only make room for itself once praxis has settled"(Van Manen 1990, p. 15). Lived experience is assumed as socially constructed, and more complex than the written outcomes of a report or description. The experiences of nine leaders from different groups constituted the major focus for this analysis.

In order to understand how these leaders of Black organizations conducted and evaluated the movement for curriculum change in 1990, and what they envisioned in terms of school curriculum and racial justice for the future, the following questions were used as framework and guideline to organize the interviews:

(1) How did Black leaders for civil rights in Brazil suggest revising the school curriculum? (2) During the curriculum reform movement, were relations established between leaders and the Municipal Board of Education (the educational office in charge of curriculum discussions and alterations at the local level)? (3) What previous knowledge did Black leaders have about school reorganization and curriculum implementation strategies? (4) What demands for inclusion of Black issues were central to the school curriculum alteration platform? (5) Were knowledge and assumptions about multiculturalism and Afrocentricism built into the curriculum reform proposal? These were the main points embedded into a total of twenty specific structured questions which emerged as the second level. A third layer of questions emerged from further open conversation. They enriched and added new information to the earlier questions. The first two levels of questions -- the big idea, and the 20 structured questions constituted the main tool. The open conversation was also an important instrument to get information about the processes that brought together a group of leaders of the Black community demanding school curriculum change.

Most of the interviews took place in various Black organization's conference rooms. Two of them took place in the interviewee's house at their request. The structured questions were ordered according to a logical sequence. Part I: profile of interview, her/his personal experience and opinions about schooling, Afro-Brazilians issues, and curriculum (questions 1 to 4). Part II: what motivated and mobilized the Black leaders to organize the Municipal Commission Against Racism (questions 5 to 8). Part III: the internal process of discussion and preparation of the

platform for school curriculum change in Belo Horizonte (questions 9 to 13). Part IV: evaluation of the process (questions 14 to 20). Most of the time, however, questions were not asked in exactly this sequence. Also, some interviewees spent more time on one question than on another. For instance those who had children spent more time on question number 1 than those who had none. The structured questions as well the ones added as the interviews unfolded (level 3) can be found in appendix A of this paper.

The interviews were conducted with representatives of three different Black organizations in Belo Horizonte. Information about these Black organizations is given in chapter IV. The interviewees were those who coordinated the process for curriculum change, wrote documents, and attended meetings with the Municipal Board of Education. Each organization was allowed two representatives to the joint Commission initially called "Commission Against Racism in Belo Horizonte' Public Schools," and later "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Belo Horizonte' Municipal Schools." During the interviews it was evident that all these representatives were educators. The coordinator of each organization was also interviewed in order to provide important information on the internal processes in his/her organization.

In order to select and contact the leaders, I gained access to the first document written by this commission, which provided the names and phone numbers of the members of "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Belo Horizonte' Municipal Schools." After reading the document I called and made appointments with those who were available,

expecting that she/he would be interested. Before the interview sessions, I mailed a translated abstract of my master's thesis proposal, as well as a consent form approved by the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at Michigan State University. These two texts gave to them a better idea of my objectives and intentions.

The interviews took an average of approximately 2 hours and 30 min. Beforehand interviewees were told about the requirements for the interview and the possible necessity of a follow up of approximately 1 hr. The estimate of time for the first interview came from a pilot interview protocol with two Afro-Brazilian volunteers (one male, one female) also interested in issues of education and racial relations within the Brazilian society. In the interval between the first and second interviews, I conducted research into the daily newspaper "Estado de Minas" and analyzed data from the first session. This was an important step because the information from both sources, newspapers and interviews enriched each other. For instance, I found no information in the newspapers that school children in Belo Horizonte were sent to specific schools and/or to specific classroom because of their race.

In conducting the interviews, issues of intersubjectivity were present. The path chosen in doing the interviews was that in which researcher and researched met and developed a relationship marked by the intention of going beyond data collection. Indeed, the intention was to interpret a social experience, striving to understand the complexity of feelings, social values, and beliefs. According to Van Manen:

In the human sciences, objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive categories. Both find their meaning and significance in the oriented (i.e., personal) relation that the researcher establishes with the "object" of his or her inquiry. Thus, objectivity means that the researchers remains true to the object. The researcher becomes in a sense a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object. He or she wants to show it, describe it, interpret it while remaining faithful to it -- aware that one is easily misled, side-tracked, or enchanted by extraneous elements. Subjectivity means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and its greatest depth. Subjectivity means that we are strong in our orientation to the object of study in a unique and personal way -- while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected preconceptions. (1990, p. 20)

None contacted refused to be interviewed. It was quite the opposite. All of them showed interest in talking about the process of organizing the demands for curriculum change and in evaluating the outcomes of the that process. They seemed to be happy because I (an Afro-Brazilian female and educator) was also interested in understanding and theorizing about their experiences. Due to the lack of research on racial issues in Brazil, they hoped to make an important contribution to the understanding of racial relations in Brazil and the diffusion of this same understanding overseas. Earlier, as an undergraduate majoring in Pedagogy at the School of Education of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, as well as a member of the Interdisciplinary Group of African Brazilian Studies at this same university, I got to know their proposal for curriculum change. My previous knowledge helped establish the rapport necessary for the construction of a trustful relation during the interviews.

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 94) "Rapport is a distance-reducing, anxiety-quieting, trust-building mechanism that primarily serves the interest of the researcher ... Rapport encourage informants to talk about their own culture." Although not sufficient for the success of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, rapport is seen as an important foundation. Rapport should not be confused with friendship as Glesne and Peshkin also underscored:

friendship means mutual linking and affection and imply a sense of intimacy and mutual bonding. We trust our friends; even more, we like them and will do things for them that we would not do for others ... A relationship characterized by rapport is marked by confidence and trust, but not necessarily by liking; friendship invariably is. (1992, p. 94)

The interviews were recorded after asking if the interviewees would feel comfortable with the procedure. The first interviewee told me she would not like to have the interview recorded. Her request was promptly respected. I tried to be as natural as I could, taking handwritten notes during the whole interview, while at the same time, trying to focus on the respondent's talk. It was very difficult to focus on the interviewee's talk because I was writing. I did my best, trying to capture all the words. By the end of the interview I read to the interviewee what I had written to make sure I had gotten all the information as verbatim as possible. At the second session the respondent allowed me to make a recording. Because the earlier session was the first time in her life she had been interviewed, she had not felt comfortable.

The other interviewees did not have any problems with tape recording. A microcassette tape recorder and a separate external microphone were used. An earphone allowed me to listen to the interviews when riding in a bus or doing another activity. The microcassette auto stop and light blinking mechanisms avoided the risk of keep going with the interview when the tape was already full or due to power failure the microcassette was not working. Even with an AC adapter to plug in the electrical outlet, extra batteries and cassettes were always at hand to avoid any unexpected happenings. Even when recording the interviews, key words and phrases were written to underscore the necessity of asking a question again, or to highlight an important point for the open-ended conversation.

Because interviews were conducted with leaders of the Black community and the interviewer was an Afro-Brazilian involved in Black people's affairs at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, it was necessary to pay attention to respondents' assumptions that the interviewer knew in advance what they would say. The term "naïve" characterizes in qualitative research the fact that even when the researcher is familiar with the subject, her or his role is to be a learner in the process of conducting interviews and observations. According to Glesne and Peskin:

it entails a frame of mind by which you set aside your assumptions (pretensions, in some cases) that you know what your respondents mean when they tell you something, rather than seek explanations about what they mean. Often the hazard is that your research is on a topic about which you may know a great deal through study and personal experience. What you know is

the basis for assumptions that preclude you from seeking explanations and that shut down your depth-probe inclinations (which derive from the conviction that you cannot really know what is in the mind of others). (1992, p. 80)

In conducting the interviews the necessity of being naïve was very important. It opened space to say: please, could you tell me more about this subject? Astuteness and discernment were very important elements as well, because my own lived experience as a community organizer, popular educator and member of the interdisciplinary group of African-Brazilian Studies could interfere in the process of listening to what those nine leaders of the Black community and educators had to say. I had to be very conscious of my role as interviewer and to distance my nonresearch self from the interview moment in order to better apprehend and feel what the respondents were communicating.

In order to organize and analyze the interview data, after it was transcribed and translated I had to search in each interview for its main ideas (level one). After finding the main ideas different themes emerged (level 2) as following: schools in the past, schools today, and their function; school curriculum; private v. public schools; culturalism; memory and history; cultural symbols; conscientization; racial and cultural differences; discrimination; classroom evaluation; internalized racism; poverty and competence; blaming Black children for their failure; racial democracy; objective and goals of the commission against racism in public schools; the movement for curriculum change as a vehicle for consciousness; what makes school change; racial issues; Afro-Brazilian culture; institutionalized racism; quota for Blacks in public school like in

the US; teacher education; disagreement in the commission; lack of academic work on Blacks; pedagogical and methodological aspects of schools; class v. race; white male; education v. schooling; technology; Afro-Brazilian culture; Diaspora; sustained movement; different personal reasons for involvement; multiculturalism; alternative project outside of schools; cultural resistance; plural schools project; kids learn to be racist; and Black movement v. the state; evaluation of the process.

After the categorization was completed for the first interview the themes started repeating themselves since the questions were basically the same with variations in terms of what emphasis the interviewees could add for which was really important to their organizations.

The following questions that have been formulated in the arena of educational and sociological research helped me to make sense of what I was learning from the interviewees, as well as give me insight to organize the 40 themes presented above.

- Why are Whites twice as successful in school as African-Brazilians, even when African-Brazilians have social backgrounds similar to those of Whites?
- Do Black and White families in multiracial societies envision schools differently, even if they come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds?
- Why do African-Brazilian families tend to enroll their children in school later than White families, even when both racial groups have a parallel social background?
- Do African-Brazilian families tend to live in neighborhoods with precarious resources and services such as education even when their

socioeconomic-economic backgrounds would allow them to live in better conditions?

- How do African-Brazilian children and adolescents in many situations manage to succeed as street merchants and caretakers of their families when they have to deal with complex mathematical concepts, if they have dropped out because of their schooling failure? Where do they get their education?
- Which cultures, knowledge, and values are found in the core curriculum of inner-city schools in Brazil? Are there high numbers of drop outs?

Word processing played a very important role in doing the categorization. (1) Similar responses were organized in the same file. For instance all that was said about "public v. public schools" was allocated to one file. This means that the first step of categorization had 40 different files. (2) Then, it was time to reorganize those files, again, breaking them into more specific themes which were helpful to the understanding of the *big ideas* cited on page 48 and questions mentioned in the last paragraph. What was not considered so significant was saved in another file under the name "leftover." There were still 40 files, although with much less information. (3) The 40 files were copied and pasted in a new file saved under the title "synthesis." this new file was printed in order to get a better visualization of the whole text. Then, the crossing categorization, or a search for comprehensive patterns started. It was handwriting work. For instance, what was said about "private v. public schools" could be placed in the discussion "of schools in the past, schools today, and their functions," or vice versa. (4) That interpretative analysis generated the themes that are discussed in chapter IV: the role of

education in multiracial societies with developing economy, race and culture in the school curriculum, the necessity of teacher education improvement, and the necessity of school reconstruction and racial justice in education.

2.3. Document Analysis

In order to triangulate the data collected through interviews, three types of written documents were analyzed: (1) Belo Horizonte's main daily newspaper (Estado de Minas) in 1990, from January to March; (2) the official curriculum used by the Municipal Board of Education--Belo Horizonte in the early 1990s; and (3) documents written by the Municipal and State Boards of Education, teachers' unions, and Black organizations regarding their evaluation of the educational scenario in Belo Horizonte in the early 1990s. These historical documents corroborate and extend information from the interviews. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p. 52) "Documents corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy. Beyond corroboration, they may raise questions about your hunches and thereby shape new directions for observations and interviews."

Located in the Public Archives of Minas Gerais, the newspapers from January to March of 1990 were stored in microfilms. All the information considered important was copied. This research on the newspapers took about 25 hours of work. To localize the documents and the official curriculum was not a difficult task. Secretaries and

receptionists in the State and Municipal Boards of Education were very helpful.

2.4. Personal Reflection.

The third point of the data analysis is my own personal experience as an African-Brazilian educator, and one who has worked on issues of equity in Brazil. Mine is a political and feminist standpoint which states that my own lived experiences have as much to do with the interpretation of the data as other, more distant, theories and methodologies. "Feminist research involves weaving the stories of both the researcher and her respondents" (Cotterill & Letherby, 1993, p. 68).

My professional involvement with popular education started in 1987 (I used to be involved in grass roots and Black organizations before 1987, but not as a professional activity). Being an educator in community-based elementary school in Belo Horizonte's inner city projects allowed me to get together with women and men for whom education was a valued tool to change oppressive societal conditions. For me the most important aspect of popular or community-based education was the possibility of building an alternative project constructed with the effort of the group, or to debate alternative school pedagogical methods in weekly meetings with the parents and community.

It is important to say that community-based schools in Brazil can be considered a branch of popular education. Popular education involves many aspects and activities; for example, dance, theater, music, debates

and community-based experiences of education. It means essentially that these kinds of experience developed according to political and cultural experiences of people who are considered subjects of their history. The radicalism of popular education is embedded in its own micro experiences, proof that the educational, economic and social reality of Brazil is capable of change. In these experiences women and men go beyond externally created structures in order to create others. Based on Paulo Freire's epistemology and pedagogical principles and method, knowledge is seen as an active process that is made and remade within changing historical conditions. Using people's own experience the teacher will be the facilitator in the process of learning how to read and write. According to Freire's epistemology this process of educating and become educated should be based on reflection and action, theory and practice - called *praxis*. This process of communication as praxis is assumed to be the conscientization of the participants. According to Freire (1972) conscientization is the process leading toward a state of critical consciousness, the process in which students (participants) are not seen as passive recipients but as subjects of their knowledge, based on their own experience. People are able to see their situations for what they are and in such ways that moves to change adverse conditions are made.

A native of Rio de Janeiro, I spent 8 years in Belo Horizonte. During this period besides being involved with projects of popular education and Black activities, I worked as a prospective teacher in public schools (teaching elementary and secondary graders) while I was finishing my Bachelor's degree in education. During my undergraduate program I received a government grant to start to conduct educational

research at the Teacher Training Special Program in the School of Education. In 1991, I was one of the organizers of the Interdisciplinary Group of African-Brazilian Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. In 1992 I worked for a non-Governmental Organization helping to develop educational projects for Black and working class women with low incomes.

My own lived experience is an important feature in the analysis of the data from interviews and documents. The interest in doing this work is intrinsically related to what I have experienced as an Afro-Brazilian--Latin American--working class origin--woman. The length of time dedicated to this study was relatively short. However, my work was made less difficult because of the previous background in racial issues, and the strong motivation to describe and analyze the dynamics of the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte in the early 1990s. The "continuous interaction between how we understand the world and who we are as people....[demonstrates] how the reconstruction of knowledge is inseparable from the reconstruction of ourselves." (Jaggar, cited in Hollingsworth et. al., 1994, p. 7)

CHAPTER III

THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT IN BELO HORIZONTE IN THE EARLY 1990s : THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR ALL CHILDREN

3. The Debate in the Newspaper

During January, February and March of 1990, the major newspaper of Belo Horizonte, "Estado de Minas," presented important articles concerning the condition of education in the State of Minas Gerais (MG). There was an official program: "Literacy Program 1990/2000 or "Literacy Program to Eradicate Illiteracy in MG," and the "First Congress Political-Pedagogic" organized by progressive sector of the Municipal Board of Education. Research reports using quantitative data illustrated what educational policy makers, statisticians, and teachers predicted for schooling in MG at the beginning of a new decade. As stated in one of the articles: "There is a risk that Minas Gerais will reach the year 2000 with a school system certainly as decadent as it was in the end of the nineteenth century" (Estado de Minas, January 28,1990). The debate in the newspaper showed an optimistic Municipal Board of Education. They believed it was possible to meet the needs of those already enrolled in the public system, and also, to take care of those leaving the private system.

Here are the key issues detailed in the articles:

- quality of private schools and their relations with the government;
- teachers' unions, and parents' organizations denouncing the educational situation in Minas Gerais; and
- board of education positions and decisions to improve the public school system in Minas Gerais.

In general, however, educational perspectives for the 1990s were very pessimistic. The Brazilian economy described in that period was

what the newspaper called a "chaotic prospect." For working class families meeting basic necessities as food and housing were seen as priority, and education had gone to the bottom of the list. The government elected in November of 1989 was not eager for structural changes in society and in education.

The new decade showed the educational scenario in Minas Gerais, as well as all over the country, to be in a precarious condition: professionals in education received low wages; there was a lack of opportunity to enroll in public schools; costs were high to send children to private schools. Those unhappy news articles appeared only on the second day of 1990. The new year was likely to be one where public education was not even a concern, and much less a priority.

3.1. The Quality of Private Schools and their Relations with the Government

The Brazilian high inflation of 1990, the election of a new president, and the creation of a project to invest in literacy in Minas Gerais, all brought to the forefront the issue of private schools in educating the population in the capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte which in 1990 had approximately 2.3 million inhabitants. It is the fourth largest city in the country. A large number of students attended private schools in Belo Horizonte. That is, private schools were seen as an important part of the Brazilian educational system.

The president of Learning and Teaching Institutions of Minas Gerais, evaluated the educational scene in Belo Horizonte and affirmed that "inflation is not a crucial issue." He believed that education should not be treated superficially -- for instance limited to discussions of the price of monthly fees. It is clear that he placed himself in defense of the schools' owners. He wanted the government out of negotiations between parents and private schools. According to him the government should be concerned with the maintenance of public schools. Private schools' administrators suggested that those not able to pay the monthly fee should look to public schools for their children.

This issue exposed the educational situation in Minas Gerais not only to persons concerned with public vs. private school issues, but to the evaluation of professors and specialists in educational policies, as well as researchers on literacy. Progressive educators argued that it was necessary to find ways to effectively advance and improve educational outcomes in Minas Gerais. They saw as fundamental the recuperation of public schools, based upon the improvement of their quality as institutions for teaching and learning. The recuperation of public schools was also an issue of access and equity in which school curriculum improvement was seen as depending upon. Without structural changes in both educational systems, but especially in public schools -- where the majority of families from the working class look to enroll their children -- progressive educators and leaders of the Black community believed it would be difficult to bring about structural change in the school curriculum.

Research questioning the competence of both private and public schools also occupied space in the newspapers. One following the daily debate would notice a highlighted title: "Private instruction is not better." This was the conclusion of a study conducted by a group of professors and students from Federal University of Minas Gerais. The research, started in 1986, was sponsored by the Board of Education of Minas Gerais. The main purpose was to detect the reasons for the failure of the secondary schools in this state.

Besides what the researchers called *um quadro de degradação* (a degrading scenario), they verified that secondary schools had 67.2% of the teaching faculty who during an average period of ten years had never received any kind of staff development. The concern expressed in the newspaper was that society was changing rapidly, and those teachers were not being prepared to face those changes. On the other hand, teachers were asked to work twice or three times as much because of the Brazilian economic depression.

The researchers also showed that private school is not synonymous with "good school." In Minas Gerais, only a handful of private and public schools would have been described as being of good quality. In general, degradation is present in both systems. There are no material and pedagogic resources, no organization in the administrative area, no teacher specialization, little interaction between teachers and students. The researchers pointed to private schools as the main entity responsible for the educational chaos in Minas Gerais. According to their investigation, the private system had unofficially assumed great part in the

responsibility of preparing students at the secondary school level, after the educational reform of 1971(Law 5692/71). Instead of having more public schools to try to contain the growing demand of the population for schooling, during the military regime (1964-1978), there was a continued transfer of resources from the government to *empresários da educação* (entrepreneurs interested in investing in education). This issue goes back to the development of urban-industrial capitalism in the Brazilian society in the 1930s, when education was directly linked to the necessities of the economic development. In 1961, law 4.024 set the national basis for education in Brazil, and the issue of private v. public schools was the reason for a strong debate in which the role of both educational systems was defined. In 1961, the Association of Catholic Educators (AEC) mobilized two thousand private schools for the defense of the "liberty of teaching." Based on a humanist-liberal concept of education the private system was recognized as being in the public interest by the Brazilian government, and consequently public revenues were sent to private schools. The Brazilian dictatorship period was the apiece of the problem because the private system was used as a vehicle for the maintenance of the military regime (Fonseca, 1992).

The researchers found that, from 1972 and 1984, instead of more public schools being constructed and improved, there was a boom in networks of private schools. Minas Gerais had the largest network of private schools. Companies and business people invested in such schools to avoid taxes. Those investments, however, did not bring a significant improvement in education.

3.2. Teachers Unions and Parents' Organizations Denounce the Educational Situation in the State

After private schools raised their monthly tuition payment so sharply that parents started looking for opportunities in public schools, the Parents and Students Association of Minas Gerais countered that: "There is not a worthy public school system with enrollment opportunity for everybody. If one day public schools could improve their quality and access, private schools could also be an option. Private schools could, then, charge as much as they wanted" (Estado de Minas, January 2, 1990).

Soon after, the Union of Professionals in Education of Minas Gerais, well known for their progressive positions, also spoke out against the optimism of the Municipal Board of Education. Their main argument was that the commission designated to solve the problem of enrollments in Belo Horizonte had come out with unworkable ideas. According to the vice-president of the Union of Professionals in Education of Minas Gerais:

This is a set of impractical ideas: sending students to one school sometimes 2 kilometers away from their home; transforming classrooms without rebuilding them properly; overpopulating the classrooms or creating more school schedules by extending the number of turns. Those suggestions only degrade and make worse the conditions of public instruction in Belo Horizonte. (Estado de Minas, January 17, 1990)

The suggestions presented by the Municipal Board of Education in the newspaper were seen as incapable of solving the problem of 4,347

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children whose parents could not find room in any public school. In addition, 33,247 children who were enrolled in the 376 schools of the state and municipality would have to be placed in buildings without a sufficient infrastructure: buildings were dilapidated, some buildings had no light, water, or appropriate sewer. What made things worse was the diminishing number of hours in the classroom, teachers overloaded with students and work, and teacher pay at such a low wage that it was necessary to have 2 or 3 jobs.

Even if taken as optimistic actions, the suggestions described in the document showed the inertia of the state and municipality in providing for democratic access to schools. Regarding private schools, the newspaper published on the same day this news: even if students from the public system were able to pay, there was no room in the private system. For families leaving the private system there was no room in the public schools. According to the President of the Federation and Confederation of Private Schools, the economic crisis had also reached that sector and many schools had to be closed down. Grants for students from families with low incomes were unavailable. The State Board of Education could not come up with a solution. Their conclusions were cold and direct: "There is no short or long term solution for students who could not get enrolled in the 249 state schools in the municipality of Belo Horizonte" (Estado de Minas Gerais, January 17, 1990). The situation in other cities at that point might have been better or worse. The state did not have the figures and numbers for cities in the interior of the state.

The whole state of Minas Gerais had 2.2 million children and adolescents from 6 to 19 years old, out of school, according to the newspaper. That number represented almost the total number of inhabitants of Belo Horizonte, 2.3 million. At the elementary school level the state had to build 700 schools in order to fulfill the demand of 1.1 million children and adolescents who were in the age for compulsory schooling (7 -14 years old). The compulsory period of schooling in Brazil (elementary education) has been from 1st to 8th grade. Recently in cities as São Paulo one year of pre-school has been added. In Brazil there is a lower number of public secondary schools compared to public elementary schools. One reason has to do with the compulsory aspect of elementary education. The second reason is that the demand for secondary school tends to be lower because of the unsuccessful school experience in teaching elementary graders. A third reason is the lack of political desire of local and federal governments.

On January 21, 1990, the newspaper published: "Only 154 among 1,000 students who enter the state schools in Minas Gerais will graduate from this elementary schooling period, 88 [a little bit more than 5 percent] students are able to go through all grades without any failure." The state schools had 81.13% of students flunking out in this basic period of schooling because of achievement, with 40.53% repeaters in first grade.

Data on students' achievement were also found in the Centro de Documentação e Informações Educacionais (CEDINE) and Pesquisa Nacional de Amostra Por Domicílios (PNADs) [National Household Sample Survey], branches of the State Board of Education, and the

Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. According to these institutions, the population of Minas Gerais grew approximately 4% from 1987-1990. In contrast, the public system decreased its enrollment. Curiously, a close analysis of CEDINE's data from 1990 will show that even though the private system was assisting only 14.3 percent of the population in Minas Gerais (10% only in Belo Horizonte), this system had more buildings than state and municipal schools together -- 127 owned by the municipality; 249 by the state; but 400 were owned by the private system. This confirmed the results of the research on secondary schools in Minas Gerais coordinated by Mafra and Cavalcanti (1992), which showed that since 1971, private schools had taken advantage of the Brazilian dictatorship period, and the educational reform of 1971 (Law 5692/71) because the private system was used as a vehicle for the maintenance of the military regime.

3.3. The Role of the State in Education

The educational debate in the newspaper continued until April of 1990. Some other important aspects need to be highlighted for a better understanding of the context that brought forward the movement of Blacks in Belo Horizonte for school curriculum change. Governmental policies, and especially social policies in education, should be understood from the perspectives of public versus private sectors, or the struggle between democracy, capitalism and market economics.

Educational policies, according to Barretto (1994), should be looked upon and regarded as public policy. That places educational

policies among other governmental actions. That also qualifies the different ways the state distributes resources and services: how fairly resources are shared, how the state copes with demands for public service --such as education -- and how the state handles the interests of hegemonic groups.

The definition of "the state" varies greatly. The best way to understand its meaning is to ground its definition in the role the state plays in a particular society. According to Trouillot:

in Gramsci's view, the state encapsulates 'political society' and represents the moment of force and coercion, while 'civil society' is the complex network of educational and ideological institutions in which leadership is more important than force. Most of the institutions that exert direct domination are controlled by the state, whereas civil society encompasses the bodies and sodalities usually termed 'internal and private. Between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society'. Political and civil society do not exist out there, but there actions or things, especially institutions, that can be said to belong to one or another. Civil and political society can have the same content. Political society is the polity (the polis) -- that is the society at large, perceived as an arena where power, the common good, and conflicting interests are always at stake. It is the wider arena wherein the nexus of coercive institutions (the state in the strictest sense) reproduces itself. Thus Gramsci comments that 'in actual reality civil society and state are one and the same'. (1990, p. 19)

In the 1960s, most of the Latin America governments faced the limitations of economic and political models adopted by them. Those governments were running out of arguments and political discourses for

the inefficiency of the economic model adopted. Under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, those societies reorganized their states on an economic model, based on private accumulation, and needed the state to guarantee their benefits (through force and coercion). In order to equalize capital to the unit of production it was advantageous to this leadership to resist popular demands, to depress salaries, and disinvest in public housing, education, and health projects. On top of that they found it necessary to install military regimes, and a bureaucratic state. Education fell to the bottom.

This was not unlike a similar scenario in the United States. Labaree (1988), asserts that: "the American public high school is the product of a continuing struggle between politics and markets. Or more precisely, between democracy and capitalism High school was founded to produce citizens for the new republic but quickly became a vehicle for individual status attainment." (p. 2)

Yet Brazil, as most Latin American countries, was also different. The organization of the public school system in western societies has varied across historical time and social contexts, but all school initiatives had the intention of generating citizens for their new-born republics. All of them somehow had their discourse based on the French liberal presuppositions: fraternity, liberty, and equality. What happened in societies like Brazil was that those presuppositions were barely reached even by a minority, and "individual status attainment" constituted a privilege for so few people that it generated a perverse and chaotic educational system, incapable of at least preparing citizens to fulfill the

necessities of the market system. In the United States, according to Labaree (1988, p. 3): "Republicanism contributed with a concern for developing a community of public-spirited citizens, while Protestantism contributed with a focus on moral education. But at the same time capitalism provided a concern for utility (practical education) and meritocracy (the market-based belief in the competitive distribution of rewards based on individual achievement)." Thus, over time it seems like public high schools in the United States lost the republican and religious standpoints that encouraged common-school reform.

The merit principle promoted an intense individual competition over scarce societal rewards. Although perfectly suited to the entrepreneurial demands of market capitalism, this competition was anathema to the development of civic virtue in the new republic and also to the internalization of community morals. It reduced political equality to equality of opportunity and public morals to the sum of private interests."(Labaree 1988, p. 23)

Somehow those standpoints were also lost in Brazil. A distinction that should be made here is that the creation and administration of secondary schools were transferred in great proportion to the hands of the private sector. More than needing the market in educational system to mediate the relationship between high school and middle class, the middle and upper-middle classes, representing groups of interests, take over the state and civil society. Especially by the 1960s, as already said in early paragraphs, the state, through ideology and military coercion, guaranteed the absoluteness and supremacy of market interests in education. Brazil constitutes a vivid and contemporary case in which "the credentials market", is found in the foundation of the interdependency of the school system and the proprietary middle class. This interdependency has

contributed a great deal to the dismal situation of the educational system in Brazil.

3.4. Board of Education Positions and Decisions to Improve the Public School System in Minas Gerais

A document written by 9 school principals and other 29 policy makers and statisticians from the State Board of Education was distributed to the population through the January 28 edition of the 1990 newspaper. In this document the State Board of Education placed the responsibility for the failure of public schools on the federal and state of Minas Gerais governments. Based on data from the Centro de Documentação e Informações Educacionais (CEDINE), they pointed to a dropout rate that reached 80% in elementary school, and a 40% rate of repeaters in the first grade. That document recommended a literacy program for the decade 1990/2000.

According to information presented in the document, State of Minas Gerais' schools had structural problems ranging from lack of desks (the system had a deficit of 700,000 desks), to physical conditions, administrative procedures, and teacher qualifications. Teaching methods were considered archaic. All suggestions to improve schools coming from progressive sectors of the State Board of Education were ignored by the government because of bureaucracy and an absence of political desire. Again, the crucial elements that ensured the failure of the public

educational system were teacher preparation, teacher salaries, the conditions of school buildings and the lack of pedagogical resources.

Besides bad physical and personnel conditions, many public schools in Minas Gerais assisting poor families had abhorrent school schedules. Four school sessions for different groups of children rotating in the same building were divided as follows: from 7:00 am to 11:00 am; 11:00 am to 3:00 p.m.; 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.; 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.. Observe that the last session was shortened one hour. Teachers had to face an inhuman schedule and children were not given sufficient opportunity to learn, especially in the evening sessions. This was one important reason, the document reported, for literacy failure in public schools.

To try to overcome those realities, a long-term project was created. It was required by the Constitution of Minas Gerais, following a Federal regulation which required the creation of a national plan to "eradicate" illiteracy in Brazil. In 1990 the number of illiterates in Brazil was 36 million; in Minas Gerais 3.2 million. "Literacy Program 1990/2000" was born. It contained five axes to eradicate illiteracy in Minas Gerais - Brazil from 1990-2000.

**FIVE AXES OF THE PROGRAM TO ERADICATE
ILLITERACY IN MINAS GERAIS-BRAZIL**

DECADE 1990/2000

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEACHERS- To expand and strengthen Teacher Preparation Centers: special schedule and full payment for teachers, either involved in undergraduate, staff development, or graduate studies, when it is necessary to be absent from his/her classroom; special preparation for adults and kindergarten teachers. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TECHNICAL SUPPORT- To implement technical and scientific sectors, binding them to universities, in order to produce school texts and videos, to evaluate curriculum proposals, school books, studies, seminars, to prepare courses on technology; to give technical assistance to librarians; to support meetings and pedagogic visits; to support projects of curriculum enrichment. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STUDENTS- School autonomy regarding local funding; to get the community involved in the production of food, in school cooks' training, and in the creation of new recipes; new health policy for students' access to physicians and dentists. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INFRA-STRUCTURE- To simplify school norms; to limit the numbers of students in classroom; to extend school sessions, and gradually change the school time from 4 to 8 hours; to amplify the school' s space to attend to personnel and students' necessities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION- To decentralize school planning, and teams within school and in the community; to strengthen parents' and students' associations. |

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Those were the guidelines expressed in the document and presented in the newspaper Estado de Minas Gerais, January 28, 1990. That year was really an important and strategic moment for change. Brazil had elected a new president, Mr. Collor de Mello (however two years later Mr. Mello was overthrown by popular impeachment because of misuse of public money). In Belo Horizonte the First Political-Pedagogic Congress organized by the city hall in April of 1990, was attended by 1,500 representatives of teachers, parents, and students of the 127 municipal schools. They deliberated upon educational strategies organized in a document of 20 pages. Following Literacy Program 1990/2000, the new congress aimed to set out long-term procedures for the improvement of public schools in Belo Horizonte. The municipal schools had already gone through previous processes in which regional and local meetings had created basic guidelines for public school democratization, school organization, quality of schooling, and fair judgment of teachers performance.

One of the biggest tensions occurred in the criteria for enrollment in the municipal public schools. Some representatives recommended enrollment based on intellectual selection, but for the majority it was to be based on sectorialization. Children would be enrolled in the closest public school to their neighborhood, independent of test scores. Some educators and parents saw the idea of test scores as a simple matter of school segregation. Tests had led to the creation of islands of privileges in the same public educational system. It was known that high test score schools get better equipment, teachers, and personnel.

The Congress Political-Pedagogic listed the following points to combat the creation of islands of privilege in the same public educational system, and other educational problems.

FIRST POLITICAL - PEDAGOGIC CONGRESS.

BELO HORIZONTE, CITY HALL- 1990.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- * The school will define its internal regime, budget, and political project in agreement with the school community, through assemblies and direct election of school principals.**
- * Power will be on the hands of those in the school committee, which will be composed of 50% of school personnel, and 50% students and parents. They will have normative, consultative, and deliberative power.**
- * Community forums will define curriculum and programs in each school.**
- *The criterion for enrollment will be based on sections of the city, without tests. This ends the reserve of 25% of enrollments for city hall employees.**
- * Schools will have authorization to create adult learning programs.**
- * Schools will not initiate the school year without enough material and human resources. Delay in the release of school funding will be paid with interest.**
- * Schools will elaborate budget plans. They will administer funds and supervise application through the creation of a deliberative council, elected by schools.**
- * Municipal schools will not assume responsibilities that belong to the state.**
- * Students will have the right to health assistance and lunch, complemented with school own vegetable gardens.**
- * Schools will decide on personnel necessities. A minimum number of professionals will be designed to each school.**
- * Except in cases of emergency, teachers should not teach in more than one school session.**
- * Salaries should be defined by the assembly of teachers in their union organizations.**
- * Constructing and increasing school buildings will be according to the pedagogic model adopted in each school. This construction should guarantee space for a library, laboratories, and a workshop room.**
- * Members of the school and municipal government will verify the implementation of decisions approved by law in Belo Horizonte city.**

In comparing both documents it becomes clear that the first one, Literacy Program 1990/2000, has a very technical characteristic, and the second one, First Political-Pedagogic Congress, has a more political profile. In many aspects they represent the same concerns, for instance schools and teachers' autonomy, extending the permanence of children in school, having a good infra-structure able to fulfill students and personnel necessities, students having food at school, etc. The second project was severely criticized and generated much more conflict. One of the main reasons is that, First Congress Political-Pedagogic represented a historical moment in which public schools were challenged in their most core aspects: as institutions organized as places to share and produce knowledge. Both projects represented a concept of education and school curriculum modern and advanced to that political context because of the structural reform they were demanding. Their recommendations were extremely necessary, and if put in practice both projects would be the start point for structural change in the educational system in Belo Horizonte.

Thus, Belo Horizonte began a crucial battle against poor education. in 1990. However, the major issues missing in that process concerned race and culture. Black leaders, the majority of them educators (as the interviews will show in the following chapter), came to realize that African-Brazilian issues played a determinant role in the process of critiquing school conditions, and the production of knowledge in schools. When Black leaders entered the picture, Belo Horizonte started a third chapter in that process. Nothing on the Black Movement was found in the newspaper during 1990. That should not surprise anyone. The

newspaper was interested in covering what the mainstream society, for one reason or another, was interested in knowing. Belo Horizonte, as well most of the cities in Brazil, does not have a press coordinated by, owned by, or directly interested in African-Brazilian issues. But as an interviewee said, they found out that Black children were receiving the heaviest burden in the educational "chaos" reported in the newspaper and addressed in official reform documents. In the newspapers there is no indication that Blacks and Whites were receiving differential treatment. However, those Black educators and leaders of the Black community had enough empirical, statistic, and theoretical bases to act on their own understanding of the "reported" reality.

In the next chapter, interviews with leaders of the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte, and analysis of documents written by them, will provide another way of approaching that same political moment. Through the lenses of African-Brazilians new elements will appear to shape our understanding of the educational situation in Belo Horizonte.

CHAPTER IV

**BELO HORIZONTE CITY AND THE BLACK
ORGANIZATIONS' DEMANDS FOR SCHOOL CURRICULUM
CHANGE
IN THE 1990s**

4. Race and Education in Belo Horizonte

After the end of the dictatorship period in Brazil (1964-1978), social movements for democratization spawned a number of Black organizations. These Black organizations developed demands for better school curricula through organized meetings, conferences and projects. Many educational researchers, experts, and professionals, whether they belonged to the Black movement or not, participated in transforming those demands into proposals aiming to end racial discrimination in schools. Texts in use were filled with sexist and racist discourses in their depiction of Blacks, women, and native Brazilians. In contrast to report in the newspapers, the Black organizations in Belo Horizonte found the existing school curriculum characterized by reinforcing racial discrimination in Brazilian society. Several important meetings led to the formatting of a commission constituted of leaders of the three main Black organizations in Belo Horizonte. This commission organized the platform for curriculum change presented to the Belo Horizonte Municipal Board of Education, in 1990. It is important to underscore that this platform organized in Belo Horizonte in early 1990s is part of a broader movement for racial justice in schools and in the Brazilian society.

In the middle 1980s, the Carlos Chagas Foundation investigated the conditions of the African-Brazilian community living in the state of São Paulo. In 1985, the "First National Meeting about the Reality of Blacks and Education" was held in Porto Alegre. In 1986, the African-Brazilian Community Participation and Development Council, together with the Carlos Chagas Foundation, organized a national conference to discuss the

issue of "Black People and Education." The sixth and seventh meetings of the "Northern and Northeastern African-Brazilians", was held in Aracajú in 1986, and Recife 1988, respectively. These meetings discussed the issue of discrimination and education. In 1987, the School of Education of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, and the João Pinheiro Human Resources Institute, organized a national conference to discuss "Education and Discrimination against Blacks." Also, in Belo Horizonte, a project called "Racism in Schools" was conducted by a group of researchers sponsored by the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Finally, in 1990, the Commission for the Elimination of Racism in the Municipal Schools of Belo Horizonte was created. Later this commission came to be called Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Municipal Schools in Belo Horizonte.

Two important aspect that emerge from all those events are issues of identity and Black culture. The fostering of Black children's identity was seen as interwoven with the valorization of Afro-Brazilian's historical roots, the eradication of racial stereotypes in instructional materials, teacher's performance in classroom, and relationships between students and school personnel (Pinto, 1993a). According to this same author from those events also emerged the necessity for:

the introduction of African studies in elementary and high schools; the creation of groups of study in Municipal and State Boards of Education about Black culture and Afro religious manifestations within the Brazilian society; the creation of centers of Black culture in schools; the inclusion of the 20th of November (considered by the Black movement a national day for Black consciousness and struggle, this is the date in which

Zumbi of Palmares, a Black leader of the seventeenth century, was assassinated after the destruction of the runaway slave community of which he was the leader) in the school calendar; the revision of Brazilian history by historians committed with Black issues; the revision of the literature written by Afro-Brazilians. (p. 36)

In Belo Horizonte, the process of organizing the platform for curriculum change, and a research project called "Racism in Schools" provided much information on the state of education with respect to race. For example, one important discovery of the "Racism in Schools" project involved unfair selection criteria. According to the data found in this project, children were selected for a particular school and/or program based on their social class. Some schools had only children from the middle class. Others were designed to teach those from the working class. When a school received a population that was heterogeneous, the homogenization occurred either through class schedule or tracking students according to their social class and race. One of the members of the commission confirmed this report:

At the very beginning of the 1990s it came to my knowledge that a huge number of Black children in Belo Horizonte at the municipal public schools were being treated badly. We had class starting at 9:00 p.m. attended by children only 9, 10, and 11 years old. It was not because those children were working or something like that. The reason was that suddenly the municipal public schools had a "boom" because the price of keeping children in private schools increased so sharply that low middle class families (the majority White), could not afford to pay. Black children were sent to dirty and crowded classrooms, hot and without fresh air. The Municipal secretary scheduled 4 school sessions. The first session during the morning was mainly reserved for only White kids. (Maria)

In the newspapers there was no indication that this kind of extreme marginalization occurred. What was reported was that those schools located in the periphery of Belo Horizonte or interior of the State of Minas Gerais received fewer benefits. Resources were allocated according to administrators' relations with political parties and politicians. There was a clear social class-based bifurcation between high school-goers and non-high school goers. In that bifurcation it was not evident that race was also a critical variable in distinguishing between the two groups. Later that difference also appears between vocational and academic preparation.

The results of these meetings and project in Belo Horizonte was that Black organizations had information enough to challenge the State and Municipal government on discriminatory educational practices. Casa Dandara was the precursor of the Anti Projeto de Criação da Comissão Pela eliminação do Racismo nas Escolas Municipais (the preliminary document which gave birth to the Commission Against Racism in Belo Horizonte Public Schools), although several organizations were also involved. This document was the guideline in the process of demanding school curriculum changes in Belo Horizonte. What follows is a brief description of the origins, goals, and constituency of the three organizations involved in the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte: Associação Nacional Casa Dandara (National Association House of Dandara), Agentes de Pastoral Negros, or APNs (Black Pastoral Agents), and Movimento Negro Unificado, or MNU (Black Unified Movement).

4.1. The Movement for Curriculum Change In Belo Horizonte: the Participating Groups

- **Associação Nacional Casa Dandara**

In August of 1990, Casa Dandara (one of the Black organizations leading the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte), presented to the Municipal Board of Education a plan for eliminating racism in the municipal schools of Belo Horizonte¹. They charged that schools were "reproducers of racist ideologies." Schools were accused of failing in their mission to educate and prepare students for citizenship. Statistics showed dismal school outcomes in terms of teaching and learning for working class and Black students in Belo Horizonte.

For general objectives, the activists of Casa Dandara asked that racial issues in school be brought in line with the municipal law of Belo Horizonte. They also underscored the necessity of developing a new pedagogical projects to take African-Brazilian students' backgrounds into account in order to combat systematically racist practices in school. The specific objectives were (1) to review the curriculum and instructional materials; (2) to update the preparation of teachers and other professionals in education; and (3) to discuss the implementation of instruments able to transform social relations in school.

¹Associação Nacional Casa Dandara (1990). Ante-projeto de criação da Comissão Pela eliminação do Racismo nas Escolas Municipais (Comissão Anti-racismo). Belo Horizonte.

According to the document presented to the municipal board of education, the idea of creating an organization such as Casa Dandara started in 1986. According to Casa Dandara members, after reading Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes, by Florestan Fernandes -- cited earlier as a classic reference for understanding of racial relations in Brazil -- they came to realize once again that it was necessary to create organizations with a strong structure to intervene in the discrimination against Blacks. Blacks held an absolute majority in terms of incarceration (prisons and mental hospitals), homelessness, sickness, illiteracy, and police violence.

Casa Dandara's members advocated what they called a "modern way of doing politics." The most common understanding of politics had been to eliminate beauty, passion, pleasure, and amusement. In order to attract Blacks living in poor conditions, they saw the need to create spaces for social assistance and cultural activities. Thus in 1990, Casa Dandara had the following projects/activities:

- Days for study: Lectures on cultural, historical, and conjectural subjects.
- Poster/calendar: poster with Black models informing both dates and important figures on the history of Blacks in Brazil and in the world;
- Children of Dandara: socio-cultural and pedagogical work with children from low income families;
- Research: research into interracial marriage in Brazil; and
- Project Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Belo Horizonte's public schools: work with the Municipal Board of Education.

- **Agentes de Pastoral Negros (APNs)**

This organization is religious in nature. The Agentes de Pastoral Negros started within the Catholic church structure in 1983². Though the origins of this organization go back to 1978, when secular priests, members of religious orders, and seminarists decided to organize a meeting to discuss the reality of Blacks within the Catholic Church. Their main motivation involved Black people in religious life: liturgy, ecumenism, catechisms, sacerdotal preparation, religious formation, and spirituality.

This group began with a national profile since the Catholic Church has followers, welfare institutions, schools, hospitals, and social centers with a variety of activities all over the country. In reading the document that traces the history of the APNs since its foundation up to until 1993, some concerns (they do not call it a political platform) emerged and can be synthesized in the following way:

- To organize groups of study and action in different states;
- To contact other existent groups: religious, political, cultural, and possibly to join them;
- To motivate Black leadership in the community and in pastoral action;
- To contact African peoples living in Brazil for integration and cultural exchange;
- To lead Blacks to accept their identity;

²Agentes de Pastoral Negros: origem, história e organização (1993).

- To unify Blacks in actions for the liberation of their brothers, independent of their religious and political ideologies;
- To unify the struggle of Blacks with the struggle of women, indigenous peoples, workers, and peasants ; and
- To avoid separatist actions. They want to join side-by-side with other groups who also wanted the emancipation of oppressed people.

The Agentes of Pastoral Negros identify themselves as those who are engaged, from a religious standpoint, in grass roots work with the Black community. Their members claim that their faith in God, a liberator God, motivates them to build solidarity and to suffer with those who are hungry, discriminated against, and racially segregated. They use the term Quilombo³ to identify their national headquarters.

- **Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)**

The Movimento Negro Unificado emerged in 1978. It was an organization autonomous from religious beliefs, political parties, labor unions, and culturalist⁴ perspectives. Originally called Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial (Black Unified Movement

³Quilombo was a political and social organization of runaway slaves. The most well known and important was located in the State of Alagoas (Northeast Brazil), and was called Quilombo de Palmares. From 1601 to 1694, Quilombo de Palmares constituted one of the most strong and sophisticated organizations of Afro-Brazilians in the Brazilian history. That society, ruled by Blacks, held approximately twenty thousand runaways slaves. In 1694, Palmares was defeated by mercenaries sponsored by the Portuguese Crown. In order to destroy Palmares it was required more military effort than that used in the battle against Dutch settlers in the Northeastern region of Brazil.

⁴ Classified as culturalists are those Black activities or initiatives which bring culture as the basic differentiator of Blacks and others without also conceiving culture as a political instrument for empowerment and consciousness raising. See "Movimento Negro Unificado: 1978-1988. 10 anos de luta contra a racismo (1988).

Against Racial Discrimination), this Black organization aims to combat discrimination through political struggle in Brazil.

The creation of this organization represented a wealth of experience of Black activists who had fought against the military regime, and made attempts, even during the dictatorship period, to create spaces for Black consciousness raising and organizing. In 1978, this Black organization made its politics public to the Brazilian society. The torture and murder of a Black taxi driver by the police in São Paulo was the "fuse", at a strategic political moment, to organize a public demonstration. In Downtown São Paulo, during a public demonstration in front of the municipal theater on July 7, 1978, Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial (MNUCDR) was created. One of the most important protests in the contemporary history of Afro-Brazilians, the original idea was to have a unified national movement of Blacks. That idea did not come true because of a divergence that split the movement, and at the same time promoted the creation of other Black organizations. The manifesto read on the steps of the municipal theater in downtown São Paulo contains that unifying purpose, and at the same time synthesizes the political agenda of the Movimento Negro Unificado:

Today we are in the street in a campaign of denouncement! A campaign against racial discrimination, against police repression, underemployment and marginalization. We are in the street to denounce the very poor quality of life of the Black community.... This movement must have as its basic principle work to permanently denounce all acts of racial discrimination, the constant organization of the Community in order to confront whatever type of racism.... For this reason we propose the creation of CENTERS OF STRUGGLE OF THE UNIFIED BLACK

MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION in the neighborhoods, towns, prisons, lands of Candomble, our lands of Umbanda, in the workplace, in the samba schools, the churches, everywhere black people live: CENTER OF STRUGGLE that will promote debate, information, consciousness raising and organizing of the black community.... We invite the democratic sectors of society that support us, to create the necessary conditions for a truthful racial democracy. (Hanchard 1994, p. 125)

4.2. The Movement for Curriculum Change in Belo Horizonte: Tensions Among the Groups

As demonstrated above, Casa Dandara was the only Black organization in the movement for curriculum change that did not have a national structure, with bases in different states. This organization started in Belo Horizonte addressing issues concerning the city's social and racial context. These facts, perhaps, can explain Casa Dandara's first move toward the starting of the Movement for curriculum change. However, MNU and APN felt somehow betrayed, isolated, disrespected in the process of writing documents and in discussions with the board of education. The lack of solidarity among those Afro-Brazilian activists is expressed by the majority of interviews when evaluating the weaknesses and negative points in the process of writing the platform for curriculum and having meetings with the Municipal Board of Education. As an interviewee asserted:

What happened in Belo Horizonte during the 1990s was that Casa Dandara felt isolated and needed other supporters. That movement for curriculum change ended up being a experience of Casa Dandara. It was not a movement belonging to all of us Black militants. (Severino)

By the same token Casa Dandara's president also complained about lack of solidarity:

One negative aspect is our fragile capacity to organize strong Black political organizations. Our incapacity in building coalitions among us (Black organizations) without disrespecting each other.... Our lack of mobilization and organization. (Raimunda)

A representative of Agentes de Pastoral Negros had a more holistic view of the problem. She believed that personal and political difficulties complicated the structural situations that were eroding the process of writing the platform for curriculum change.

I believe we had no political basis to fight with the State. On the top of that, we did not reach a consensus regarding the process of writing the platform for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte. First of all, we should become more conscious of what has happened before. When we got together to write the proposal, we did not have a history of what had happened in 1986, 1987 because it was not valued by those who were struggling for racial justice in education in 1990, 1991. We must have political force in order to be listened by the State. We need a movement of social groups, and we have to be more conscious of our history. (Clementina)

Hanchard (1994), in discussing the issue of racial politics and the Black movement in Brazil, presents a very interesting way of approaching and theorizing about the way solidarity is built among Black activists. His analysis is based on the notion of *resemblance*. In conceptualizing racial consciousness, Hanchard identifies three forms of solidarity and ethnic identification: faint, mixture of faint and strong, and strong resemblance. The former is characterized as a form of solidarity that is more intuitive, and based on the sense of belonging to a common history and origin. Less

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complex than the other two forms of solidarity, faint resemblance is a more emotional and personal form of solidarity, and the first step toward strong actions of solidarity and political action. "What distinguishes the strong resemblance from weak ones is an ability to override particular differences within a social collectivity for concrete political goals, however temporal. Political differences are temporarily repressed, fissures de-emphasized, in favor of unification" (Hanchard 1994, p. 81). That movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte oscillated between strong and faint resemblance. What brought those leaders together was a common sense of the urgent necessity of making schools a better place for Afro-Brazilian and working class children.

Leaders of Black organizations in Belo Horizonte were able to overcome some differences, but they did not go far enough to build up a coalition among them, with other non-governmental organizations, and consequently with the municipal and state boards of education. Some of them realized that

We have presented a demand for curriculum change without a resonance in the Black community. It was one of our weaknesses. We, Black leaders, should make stronger our capacity to deepen our resonance in the Black community. (Conceição)

and also that

One has to have more than thoughts to write down a proposal. It is necessary to define interlocutors we trust, and that have the competence to lead the project. We should had called the organized sectors of society to discuss the process (neighborhood associations, women's organizations, other

Black organizations , ecological movements, and so on...).
(Sebastião)

Each member, as noticed during the interviews, represented a different vision of the Commission "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Belo Horizonte' Municipal Schools," and talked mostly about personal experiences with education and curriculum, not from a common ground that might have been expected to come from that process. This fact does not diminish the richness of the very important issues they raised during the interviews, though it might help to make sense of the context. The following are the key points presented to the Municipal Board. The data gathered through the interviews revealed that even in the face of many limitations, the Commission on "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in the Municipal School" made important contributions to the Municipal Board of Education in Belo Horizonte.

These key points address what the Commission "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Belo Horizonte' Municipal Schools" judged as the most urgent and necessary changes in the educational system. Strategically these constituted their objectives.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION FOR "CITIZENSHIP AND AFRO-BRAZILIAN CULTURE IN BELO HORIZONTE' MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS"

- * To contribute in the creation of a new school. To combat all kinds of racism and discrimination that have impeded the exercise of citizenship.**
- * To combat in the school system the reproduction of stereotypes and negative images associated with Blacks and/or their color.**
- * To approach in the school system and community the issue of race, in order to promote consciousness-raising around this issue.**
- * To build up a new pedagogical project avoiding ethnocentric assumptions. This new pedagogical project must respect the multi-racial and plural aspects of the Brazilian society, and recognize Black people's participation in the civilizing process of the Brazilian nation.**
- * To program and conduct training and courses for teachers, educational administrators, and specialists.**
- * To revise critically the content of school books in all disciplines, suggesting possible alterations, or their replacement.**
- * To promote events and debates about instructional materials, in order to review and if necessary to modify values and concepts regarding the image of Blacks in the Brazilian society.**
- * To help in the publication of instructional materials about African history and the cultural heritage of African Brazilians, according to the necessities of teachers.**
- * To promote debates between the Municipal Board of Education and Black organizations in order to foster common strategies to combat racism in schools.**

4.2.1. Who were the Interviewees?

A total of 9 interviewees (1 White male and 8 Afro-Brazilians, 6 women and 3 men) constituted the participants/respondents in the interviews. To conduct the interviews, it was not necessary to make a special selection among Black organization leaders. These nine had been previously chosen within their organizations to be the representatives for public discussions of issues of curriculum change and racial justice in education. Each organization had two representatives in the Commission. The coordinator of each organization was also interviewed in order to get a better sense of the objectives of each organization.

Throughout this paper those who have been called leaders of the Black community will be identified by pseudonyms. What follows is a brief description of the roles played by each of them in the process of writing the platform for curriculum change. The order of presentation herein will follow the sequence in which the interviews were conducted.

- 1) Maria (female) is 27 years old. She was the representative of Casa Dandara. She had no children but was an elementary teacher in the Municipal Public system. She became interested in race and school curriculum when she started teaching under the constructivist method in a kindergarten her mother used to run. Her role in the process was to bring to the Commission concrete situations she was facing in schools, or was aware of. During the process of writing the platform and having meetings with the Municipal Board of Education, she seemed to be very helpful

because educational policy makers were looking for concrete cases of discrimination against Black and adolescent children in public schools.

- 2) João (White male) was 39 years old, an informal member of Casa Dandara and a researcher in this same organization. He had 2 White children, one of whom was in school. His interest in the school curriculum started when he began his work on the staff of Casa Dandara. He is a teacher of elementary and secondary schools, and was finishing a Master's program in history. His belief in the importance of curriculum change was influenced by his presence in the Black movement and discussions regarding school content. He believed there were few professionals in the educational field committed to racial justice in education. After fighting against the military regime he came to understand that the main problem in Brazilian society was a racial matter. To solve Brazilian social problems, therefore, racial inequalities had to be addressed. His main contribution came through the process of writing the platform for curriculum change.

- 3) Sebastião (male) was 38 years old. A representative of MNU, he had two children in school who were facing dramatic consequences of racist attitudes. He was a psychologist working for a governmental agency which prepared educators. He began a serious interest in race and curriculum while coordinating a project with poor and Black children in inner-cities. He claims that he educated himself in the Black movement even though he had gone to college. Because of his professional experience he could contribute a great deal to the discussions between the Commission and the Municipal Board of Education.

- 4) Sebastiana (female) was 31 years old and Coordinator of APNs in Belo Horizonte. She had no children in school. She worked as a secretary for the APNs. After joining the Black movement, issues of education and curriculum became important elements to her. As a coordinator of the APNs she had helped to organize activities on race and education, and had been involved in alternative projects of education in the Black community. For example, she helped organize, as an informal educator, literacy and cultural programs for Black children during weekends. During the discussions of the Commission she was interested in understanding how the project could be more effective. She wanted to continue the discussion even without the support of the Municipal Board of Education. According to her, APNs originated the idea of building a pedagogical center for Black children.

- 5) Severino (male) was 39 years old and the coordinator of the MNU in Belo Horizonte. He had no children in school. He worked for the Municipal Secretariat of Culture. According to him, MNU always took education as an important element to work upon in order to minimize the sequels racism leaves in people's lives. Public schools were not seen as good and appropriate places for Black children--especially children in the period of emotional formation. He calls himself a militant of the Black movement interested in build a political project for Blacks in the Brazilian society.

- 6) Clementina (female) was 28 years old. A representative of APNs, she had no children and worked as an educational supervisor. She started being interested in racial issues and curriculum after completing

her teacher preparation course, and started teaching in public school. She believed the school curriculum was not appropriate to teach Black and working class children. As an educational supervisor her role in the Commission was very important because she had experience with educational administration.

- 7) Raimunda (female) was 48 years old. She had a daughter in school who was having a difficult experience because of racism. As a coordinator of Casa Dandara and a Black organizer, she believed Black leaders had to become aware of what was going on in the Black community, addressing important issues for this same community. Developing such awareness was the main reason that Casa Dandara became the precursor of the Commission for Curriculum Change. She believed that microlevel actions could disrupt the structure of society. Her presence in the Commission was important in the dialogue with the Municipal Board of Education because of her political experience as a Black leader and community organizer.

- 8) Conceição (female) was 30 years old. She was the representative of APNs. As a teacher of elementary school students she started connecting racism and children falling behind in school when she joined that Black organization. According to her, race is approached in school in a very folkloric way. In the Commission she was interested in combating how racism operates in schools especially through instructional materials. In the APNs she was also involved in alternative projects of education with Black children in the Catholic Church during the weekends.

- 9) Catarina (female), at 26 years old, was the representative of the MNU. A teacher of elementary grades she believed that to combat racism in school more than just a commission was necessary. It would be necessary to create informal groups to continue discussions about racism in each public school in Belo Horizonte. Also an activist in the teachers' union, her main contribution was in making the work of the Commission known to other progressive sectors of Belo Horizonte civil society.

The following sections discuss the themes that emerged from the process of creating the platform for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte, as captured through the interviews. They include discussion of (1) the role of education in multiracial societies with developing economies, (2) race and culture in the school curriculum, (3) the necessity of teacher education improvement, and (4) the necessity of school reconstruction and racial justice in education.

4.3. The Role of Education in Multiracial Societies with Developing Economies

Regarding racial issues, we are doing poorly in both educational systems. The private school is a lost case in this century. In the public schools, because of their characteristics - they are a sector of the Brazilian state --, we can see more possibilities of introducing racial issues. (Raimunda)

We faced a problem regarding the number of children that could be enrolled in the public educational system. In this case I would say that it is not only Blacks that faced and are still facing problems. Whites from the working class also got in

trouble. The public educational system as a whole needs revision. (Sebastião)

As already pointed out in an earlier chapter, the educational system in Belo Horizonte was in chaos. There were islands of excellence in which the middle and upper-middle classes, connected or not to different Christian denominations, could guarantee to their offspring and new generations a very good education. To the majority of the population what was left is something that is also called "school", but is far away from what a school should be.

The school curriculum in societies like Brazil is characterized by hierarchically framed bodies of knowledge. Students are organized in a tracking system that functions according to the specific kind of school to which children are assigned. The kind of school students attend during the 8 years of basic schooling will determine the continuation of their school journey, and what kind of secondary school they will get. In Brazil, there are four main branches of secondary school preparation (what in the US is called high school): academic, scientific, technical, and professional/vocational. These institutions differ in characteristics based on their nature (public or private), as well as on their geographical and social contexts:

There are academic schools that prepare students to compete for entrance in prestigious fields to prestigious universities or colleges. It is worthwhile to mention here that in Brazil, unlike in the United States, all federal and state universities are totally maintained with public revenues.

With the exception of the Catholic University in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, public universities are also the most prestigious ones.

Then there are secondary schools that offer technical instruction, preparing students from the working class and middle class to become skilled workers in industry and in the business arena. These students come from White and Afro-Brazilian racial backgrounds. The preparation here tends to be better than that received in the vocational/professional schools (see below).

Some secondary schools give scientific and technological preparation. Usually, only those students who had a very good basic preparation in elementary school can get in. These are typically middle and upper-middle class students.

Finally, there are those secondary schools which are known as vocational/professional. These are the secondary schools in which some students are prepared to teach children from 1st to 4th grades (in Portuguese these programs are called *Curso Normal*), while other students learn basic elements of chemistry, book keeping, secretarial, and nursing skills. After a year of basic studies, the students enrolled in these programs must choose one course of specialization. This constitutes one of the most ambiguous areas of secondary school study. Usually after three or four years attending those schools, these supposedly well prepared workers, have a hard time finding a job. They end up performing tasks in the work place that have nothing to do with what they

originally were prepared for. They hold a secondary school diploma that has a very low practical value in the work place.

The majority of students who are allocated to the last category are Blacks and working-class students. A majority of women who go to these schools become teachers of elementary grades (1st to 4th). In contrast the academic secondary schools have a majority of Whites and Japanese (it is worthwhile to mention that Brazil has one of the largest number of Japanese people outside Japan) primarily from the middle and upper-middle classes. Blacks hardly ever attend academic or scientific secondary schools.

This brief description of the educational system in Brazil can give to the reader a better idea of the educational context in which Black leaders were demanding school curriculum reform. They were very conscious of the structural problems surrounding their curriculum change platform, and how structural problems could jeopardize the success of their endeavor. For those Black leaders, the public schools were their main target because of the concentration of Blacks in that system, especially in the basic 8-year period of schooling, and because of the function of public schools as an occupational determinant.

We find only a handful of Blacks holding important positions in the government and private initiatives. The cultural contributions of Blacks are enormous, but there is a lack of Blacks in the scientific field. Racism works to exclude Afro-Brazilians. The society sees us as inferior. There is an expectancy regarding our people that nothing is going to work. The educational chances that were given to us excluded us. There is a significant number of Blacks that have been

prevented from getting any benefit. It is a lost generation. There is no way of repairing the disadvantages for Blacks in a short period of time. (Sebastião)

The interviewees captured in a very precise way what has been discussed in different sectors of the Brazilian society. In the Brazilian Congress, democratic Federal Deputies and educators, such as Florestan Fernandes, have denounced educational injustices that for decades have plagued Brazilian society. More than creating a dual system, the interests of private groups and the negligence of the government have generated in the Brazilian society an educational chaos in which the democratic-republican goal of education for all citizens has been lost in the transformation of schooling into merchandise (Fernandes, 1989).

The challenge for these Black leaders was to define the role of education in multiracial societies when educational inequalities were so strong.

The role of education in multiracial societies, or more precisely in Brazil, can be better determined through understanding the standpoint⁵ of the racial groups that constitute the school population. Herein the notion of understanding has an anthropological meaning. As Singer (1993) asserts in the syllabus of his course: "understanding should be seen as far more than tolerance, appreciation, or even respect." Based on this notion of understanding, the discussion of the role of education receives a new

⁵ Standpoint differs from the idea of perspective. Standpoint is something lived or achieved. Knowledge and consciousness within the idea of standpoint are socially constructed, and emerge in the place one is located. This discussion can be found in Patricia Hill Collins' book Black Feminist Thought (1993).

dimension. In order to grasp the meaning of education in multiracial societies, the standpoints of those socially located based on their race (inherited traits), ethnicity (social and cultural characteristics)⁶, social class, and gender -- in our case Blacks/Afro-Brazilians, men and women from the working class -- should be skeptically and closely analyzed. The whole idea is that in the culture or lived experience (Apple, 1988) of those excluded of the mainstream society one can find ways of overcoming social and racial inequalities.

What makes possible the overcoming of racial and social inequalities experienced by those oppressed by unequal structures is the recognition that those excluded from the mainstream society embody their own culture as well as the culture of those holding political power, controlling the media, the schools, etc..... (remember that in almost all multiracial societies Whites are still holding political, educational, religious, and economic power). This dynamic oppressor/oppressed consciousness makes the struggle less difficult to those marginalized groups excluded from the mainstream society. In contrast, those privileged in the mainstream society can only see their own culture and values. A good example of this contrast can be found in the school curriculum: those from the working class and non-White must know both the school culture that mainly reflects the mainstream values, as well as their own cultures as racial, ethnic, and social groups.

⁶ Race as a social construction, as expressed by Howard Winant in his book *Racial conditions* (1994), is used to refer to a group of people with common ancestry and genetically transmitted physical characteristics. Ethnicity refers to groups of people sharing the same sense of peoplehood because of cultural backgrounds as religion, ancestry, national origin or language.

Not only the school content must change; also respect toward differences should be enforced, but not as a deviation. It must be a commitment of the school with an issue that should be worked out in the community --family, neighborhood association, churches, etc.... The school should use the principle of difference. (Sebastiana)

It is necessary to start understanding the real children we have. We must recognize that children are not equal. We need a positive discriminatory education. It is necessary this discrimination, the understanding of differences in order to build the equality. (Sebastião)

Through the points presented in the remarks above it is possible to advance the notion and practice of equality in education. Based on the opinions and experience of these Black leaders, it is possible to learn how, on a daily basis, multiracial relations and democratic perspectives in education can be enhanced. According to this view, the role of education in multiracial societies has to be established in resonance with the different cultural groups that make up a society. Yet, schools must inevitably be open to social and cultural manifestations that occur outside of the school arena. Students on a daily basis bring to school those cultural manifestations, in different forms, and yet constantly those expressions are overlooked, neglected, or appropriated in a folkloric and pejorative way.

Schools should be more than just a place to learn how to read and write. The school should take care of students in a more integrative way. (Catarina)

Differences seem to be hidden and pulsating at the same time. The neglecting of other races is not explicit. If you ask the

teachers and/or school administrators how racial discrimination against Blacks manifests itself in school, the answer probably is that there is no discrimination against Blacks. That it does not exist. (João)

The role of schools was visualized, by those interviewed, in a very holistic way. Schools should take an integrative approach that recognizes and embraces individual and social differences, race and ethnic backgrounds. Racism and sexism must be strongly combated. Neglecting of this core aspect in teaching and learning leads to simply token educational initiatives, disguised in great battles and crusades against illiteracy, very expensive programs to improve student performance, and educational amendments that do not reflect contemporary educational needs.

The internal dynamics of schools in multiracial societies are not easy to understand and handle. Different actors are involved, and their interests tend to move in opposite directions. It seems as if it is possible to unify these interests in movements for social change if the actors involved use the strategy suggested by McCarthy:

Radical educators must struggle *with* and not *for* the socially disadvantaged; minority men must engage with the problem of minority women, and working-class organizations must struggle with the problems of racism and sexism. Racial inequality in education cannot be separated from this broad range of issues. It must be remembered that inequality in education for black youth has historically been associated with inequality of opportunity and unequal futures in virtually all other spheres of social, economic and political life. (1990, p. 122)

This kind of political alliance presented above has been strategically used by progressive educators, and community organizers in search for social and racial justice in society and in education. Another important aspect in discussing equity in education in multiracial societies is to underscore what has been already pointed out by McCarthy and Crichlow (1993). For earlier neo-marxist authors, racial inequalities constitute merely a contradiction that would be overcome with the defeat of the capitalist system. Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) have written a classic example. Even more recent neo-marxist authors still believe in class divisions and their contradictions as the best explanation for racial antagonisms.

In discussing race and culture in the school curriculum, the interviewees also presented aspects of their experience as Afro-Brazilians, leaders of the Black Movement, and educators (in the broad sense). Together they constitute an excellent standpoint for understanding practices and theories that produce racism in the Brazilian society.

4.4. Race and Culture in the School Curriculum

The experience of my daughter has been dramatic. One of the factors is the racism. She was attending an elite school in Belo Horizonte, but she had no strategies to handle the situation. She used to be very shy. She would not open her mouth. She was called nicknames that denigrated her race. The school blamed her. They suggested me take her to a psychologist. The society tells us that we Blacks have less opportunity because we are poor. This was not the case of my daughter. She had to drop out because of racism. (Raimunda)

The excerpt above can lead to different interpretations of the way racism works in Brazilian society. Looking closely at the experience of this Afro-Brazilian girl attending an elitist school in Belo Horizonte, three different manifestations of racism are present: (1) this female student suffered hostile prejudice (other children calling her by nicknames that denigrated her race), and stereotypes were used against her by those who did not belong to her race. (2) Those acts of racial discrimination, also called popular racism, became more sophisticated, they were potential forms of psychological racism, impeding the full development of her capacities. She started feeling intimidated. Her learning process was affected (*She had no strategies to handle the situation. She used to be very shy. She would not open her mouth*). Her school "failure" was blamed on her. It was her problem and she should see a psychologist. In handling this case of racism, that elitist private school showed its own institutional racism. (3) Structural or institutional racism is pointed out by Sleeter (1993, p. 158) "not as a misperception but as a structural arrangement among racial groups." Institutional racism manifests in the way the curriculum is organized and patterns of racial relation are established in the school policy. The case of this Afro-Brazilian girl is not an isolated one. (4) Another important aspect deserving attention in this scenario is the fact that this Black student is female. The dynamics of gender construction in Brazilian society, or in any society, places a radical difference in the way racism oppresses women and girls racially identified as Blacks. Moreover, there is in Brazil a small, but significant literature on this issue.

Almost all black children with a problem in school are blamed for their own failure. There is the expectation that we (Afro-

Brazilians) do not constitute a good investment. Everything regarding us won't work well. They say it is incapacity of learning, psychological problems, etc. I worked with pedagogic reinforcement and had a contract with state schools. All children that had problems in that school were sent to us under the label: incapable of learning. They were in their majority Blacks. (Clementina)

The unsuccessful experience of Blacks should be analyzed in an attempt to go beyond any simplistic idea of a conspiracy against Afro-Brazilians students, or the temptation to associate Black students' failure with the cultural deprivation and social disadvantage theories of the 1960s and 1970s. Weis (1989) in discussing race, class, and schooling in the United States, presented a very insightful way of approaching the reasons for the low outcomes of African-Americans. Weis argues that people tend to relate to school according to their own social and cultural backgrounds. The influence of social class in the shaping of school experience is seen as an increasing factor among African-Americans. According to her, in the United States, there is a distinct separation between those African-Americans from the middle-class and those from a depressed underclass. The basis for this argument is that the same racial group can be allocated to different classes, yet different racial groups even belonging to the same social class are treated dissimilarly, because of their race. In Brazil, the last argument can be one of the possible explanations for the overwhelming failure of Blacks, even when considering the poverty level of many non-Blacks. As an interviewee said:

We faced a problem regarding the number of children that could be enrolled in the public system. In this case I would say that it is not only Blacks that faced and are facing problems. Whites from the working class also get in trouble. The public educational system as a whole needs revision. (João)

If both White and Black students from the working class, in the excerpt above, are seen as facing the same plight, what is the reason Blacks get in trouble in a more dramatic way? As already stated in earlier paragraph, Blacks tend to represent a higher dropout rate, lower promotion, and irregular school performances, when statistically and qualitatively compared with their White peers. An explanation for this discrepancy can be found in the interviewees' discussion about race and culture in the school curriculum. The devaluation of the racial background and culture of Afro-Brazilians, and the way Afro-Brazilians see themselves were considered by a member of the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte as a reasonable explanation for failure in school.

Emphasizing cultural relations could become a real potential for a better school system. It would also create better personal relations between those who are different. The model of schooling we have now does not lead to the construction of this relation in school. There is a technical vision of schooling in Brazil. We have seen that a lot of educational projects fail to take into account culture. We could include the cultural manifestation present in school and bring other cultural manifestations from the Black community. (Conceição)

The assumption presented above claiming that there is a technical vision of schooling in Brazil seems quite accurate. On the one hand

despite the educational problems described herein, the Brazilian educational leaders have sought to improve the outcomes of schools, even if their attempts are mainly directed to those schools which are "islands of excellence." Team teaching, computer technology, programmed instruction, diagnostic testing, the whole language method, the constructivist approach, lengthened school terms, and ability grouping have been implemented in such schools. But, reforms have failed to address such fundamental categories as gender, race, social class, and cultural background.

We believed that after years of social exclusion of Blacks we should emphasize the issue of Blacks in Brazil, at the same time including the Japanese, European, native Brazilian (Brazilian Indian), and other cultures. We wanted to emphasize the Afro-Brazilian culture because of the quantitative and qualitative contribution of Blacks to Brazilian society. The Afro-Brazilian culture is devalued in the mass media and instructional materials. (João)

In order to build an integrative curriculum responsive to different racial groups that constitute a specific society, this same curriculum should be meaningful to those racial groups. That is the aspect missed in the Brazilian educational system. The reason for this void can be found in the social exclusion of Blacks (former slaves) and absolute privilege of Whites (the masters) in the Brazilian society, already pointed out in chapter II. As a Black leader asserted: *The European who founded the school system in Brazil did not recognize the contributions of other races. (Sebastiana)*

In Brazil the effects produced by educational policies that are not incarnate in the socio-cultural body of a given society, are the creation and maintenance of discourses based on a fake racial democracy, and in maintaining the status quo of unequal racial relations that strengthen themselves through instructional materials and pedagogic rituals considered noxious for the fostering of Black children cultural identity.

In discussing curriculum as a racial text, Pinar (1993) helps us remember that "we are what we know and at the same we are also what we do not know" (p. 61) The knowledge socially accumulated is marked by a fragmented notion we hold of history, culture and national identity. One of the interviewees presented in a very theoretical and powerful way how she handled the issue of cultural identity on her classroom:

There is a void in the curriculum based on the understanding of what is an educational process. When you say that the curriculum, the instructional materials, and the relations between teacher-students are discriminatory against Blacks, it is true, but we should go beyond this assumption. There is in society a net of representations that are expressed in the school system. To reach this net of representations and see how they work within the school system becomes the challenge. The inclusion of racial issues in the school curriculum demands the introduction of the discussion of what being pluralistic means.

I would like to explain by giving an exemple of how I worked out the topic "formation of Brazilian people" in my 4th grade classroom:

1st - We worked on the idea of who are Brazilians through three different vehicles: a composition; a dialogue with their families; a drawing.

Within this huge concept of what it actually means to be Brazilian, I decided to reach for understanding of some specific points.

The question was: is there such a thing as "Brazilians?" The understanding I had was that it constitutes a huge category.

We worked with pictures and magazines presenting political demonstrations, people walking down the street, etc.

2nd - Then, we discussed what constitutes differences among people.

First we worked with physical differences (traits, sizes etc.). After, we started working the notion of differences considered racial. Who we considered Whites, Blacks, Japanese, indigenous people.

We asked ourselves: are women all equal?

We discussed that women are White, Blacks, unemployed, employed.

*After this process we started discussing the content in the text.
(Catarina)*

This Black leader was well educated in racial issues and was teaching them to her students. However, that is not the case in most Brazilian classrooms. This report directs our attention to another theme

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which emerged from the interviews: the necessity of teacher education improvement in order to advance the understanding of issues of race and racial identity in all classrooms.

4.5. The Necessity of Improving Teacher Education

For those Black leaders interviewed, teacher education was the most strategic action schools could take to overcome racism in classroom. They believed it would be difficult to implement any kind of program against racism in public schools without working closely with the teachers. According to them a huge number of teachers were visibly racist. Teachers should be prepared to deal with issues of difference, and the community (family, neighborhood association) should also be involved in that process. *If we had in the municipal schools a group of teachers willing and prepared to deal with racism we would have the chance of implementing schools changes with less difficulty. (Maria)*

Sleeter (1993), in her essay How White Teachers Construct Race, pointed out to the dilemma present in the process of educating White teachers about their own racism. According to this author, "to 'solve' racism by educating teachers is to locate racism mainly in biased individual actions, which in turn are assumed to stem from ideas and assumptions in people's heads: prejudiced attitudes, stereotypes, and lack of information about people of color"(p. 157). Sleeter is calling attention to the fact that we should walk away from the assumption that it is possible to create significant changes in institutions just by addressing the individual portion of racist attitudes whites have. Yet, racist attitudes

work for the benefit of those who enjoy the privileges of their White race. Racism is not seen by this author as a "misperception but as a structural arrangement among racial groups." Through interviews with teachers during a two-year staff development project, Sleeter pointed out that there was a color-blind behavior regarding race. For teachers involved in that project their students were just "students." Those teachers had an interpretation of race that denied it. The same was reported by a Black leader in Belo Horizonte: *What White teachers usually say is that if they mention this subject [racism] they will be accused of racism, and black children in classroom would feel vulnerable. (Clementina)*

Another misleading aspect in Sleeter's project was the way White teachers approached their own racist practices, and the institutional racism it represented. They had learned to overlook the fact that race is a structuring element in the access to resources in the United States. Racial groups were seen as standing on the same ground of possibilities and opportunities. By the end of that project, unfortunately, only approximately 13% of the White teachers started making connections between racism and the structure of the educational system: "I'm seeing basically how our system is set up, the value system our whole society is set up on. And it makes me feel we are here because of a lot of suffering."

This discussion on educating White teachers in the United States is quite important to the Brazilian experience. Sleeter asserted that: the "teaching population in the US is becoming increasingly white, while the student population becomes increasingly racially diverse. The significance of teacher race is usually framed in terms of the degree to

which a White teaching force is appropriate for students of color"(p. 157). Although important, this challenging issue has to be handled in Brazil in a different way from that presented in Sleeter's article. The reason is based on what one of the interviewees in Belo Horizonte has affirmed:

With the process of proletarianization of the teaching profession, there was a boom of Black female teachers in the elementary schools. It is necessary to understand the representation students and teacher have of themselves, and how gender, class, and race are approached.(Catarina)

The excerpt above brings critical elements to the discussion of teacher education in Brazil. The absolute majority of those teaching children from 1st to 4th grade in the public school system in Belo Horizonte are Afro-Brazilian workers. Those in schools' administrative positions are in their majority non-Black females. Another interesting aspect is to grasp how racism is perpetuated at the institutional level crossing across gender and race relations.

How could a teaching force with a majority of Afro-Brazilians in a society also having a huge contingent of Afro-Brazilians lead such a harmful educational system for Black and adolescent children? The explanation could be found in a possible absence of Afro-Brazilian cultural and social influences in the Brazilian society. As two Black leaders asserted:

If we imagine 500 hundred years of oppression and our social and economic conditions, I believe we have done a lot. If we take the history of Black organizations in this country since 1930, the Black Movement with all difficulties (economic,

political, educational) has done a lot without having control of the school system and the media. (Severino)

Our hopefulness as Blacks in a country based on historical conditions, would end up in bloodshed or insanity is another important aspect. We Afro-Brazilians learned to dance and to workship the Orixas [deities in the Afro-Brazilian religion]. Minas Gerais has an unknown landmark (churches and houses) that was built by Blacks. It represents the knowledge we brought from Africa and have cultivated up to until now. We have also brought natural medicine, the use of herb, blessings ... This society has a debt with Blacks. (Raimunda)

The ideology of whitening in a racial democracy, and in internalized racism that could seem as an explanation for Black teachers failure in teaching Black children. In Brazil, there is a socio-historical process which has been consolidated with the publication of the classic book Casa Grande e Senzala (The Master and the Slaves) by Gilberto Freyre, as mentioned in chapter I, that led to the nonpoliticization of race through the following mechanisms: mainstream discourses on behalf of a racial democracy that according to White elites has made Brazil a more harmonious society than South Africa and the United States; educational institutions and mass media portraying Afro-Brazilians as exotic, less intelligent, and consequently incapable of assuming important responsibilities, whether as a family member or as a citizen; Afro-Brazilians having to neglect their racial heritage to be socially accepted. As one Black leader has emphasized, for the majority teaching 1st to 4th grades, especially in public elementary school, to be a teacher meant being a working class Black woman.

Teachers' working conditions have been described in earlier paragraphs. What was missing in the newspapers accounts and public documents for educational change in Belo Horizonte was the intersection of gender, race and class in the teaching profession.

Black teachers bring with themselves to their classrooms the ideology of whitening, racial democracy, and internalized racism. Those mechanisms are transmitted to children and experienced by both teacher and student through socialization and learning activities. The internalized racism teachers might have, as a consequence of the these three mechanisms working upon their lives, was seen by the interviews as a dilemma the Black movement was aware of, but they did not know how to address on a short-term basis.

In one of the schools I used to work, there were teachers that started the school year saying that they knew those students who would not be promoted. Those are children coming from families with very low income and/or Blacks. The roots of this problem are in the preparation of teachers and weak parental involvement. It is also in the way we think about schooling purpose. And the racism that exists in each of us. (Maria)

In order to implement structural school changes, it is fundamental to account for existing oppressive forces that shape the lives and the learning experience of children, as well as the pedagogic practice of teachers. Ladson-Billings (1990), Ladson-Billings and Henry (1990), King and Ladson-Billings (1988) have conducted important ethnographic studies on these issues. These authors claim that in order to enhance a form of liberatory pedagogy it is necessary to foster teachers' and

students' identities. It is necessary to understand the relation between knowledge, self, and culture.

In order to bring about significant changes in Belo Horizonte public schools, a "culturally relevant teaching" approach could be useful framework for the improvement of teaching and learning, and for the fostering of Black teacher identity. "Teachers are confronted with special dilemmas because culturally relevant teaching necessarily has a double agenda. It authenticates knowledge that may not be valued in the wider society, but it also seeks to make standard academic knowledge available to students who are often excluded from it by race, class, and gender" (Ladson-Billings & Henry, 1990, p. 82). Culture is embedded in teachers' ways of organizing classroom activities, in the criteria they use to choose school books, and in how teachers assess children.

Another important aspect is that culturally relevant teaching recognizes the Black diasporic experience as formative of the reality and experience of Blacks, an experience that is not merely linked to poverty and the legacy of slavery. A Black leader in Belo Horizonte has asserted:

They think we Afro-Brazilians have our navel buried in the slave shacks. The history has to recognize the universal contribution of Blacks. What should be done by now is the distinguishing of the Black culture and at the same time to make political decisions able to project our children for the future. We have to know the history, religion and culture of our ancestors, and at the same time be prepared to deal with the era of computers. Only belonging to the Afro-Brazilian religion is not enough. (Sebastião)

Ladson-Billings (1990) in discussing the purpose of education presents culturally relevant teaching as diametrically opposed to the assimilationist-utilitarian approach. The latter has the primary function of preparing students for an occupation in the work force. The former, as demonstrated herein, is concerned with students' consciousness raising in order to foster a process where students become subjects and agents of their knowledge (Freire, 1970). The challenge expressed by the Black leader in the excerpt above is how to enhance a schooling process in a way that is responsive to the demands of modern societies and at the same time recognizes

that any Black diasporic cultural matrix is not uniquely 'Black' or African, but an interpenetration of influences. However, those African cultural spaces can clarify and inform analyses of Black realities. Culture implies memory, not just remembrance but the serious goal to relate the individual with each and every experience in the past that it is possible to share with a given community. (Ladson-Billings, 1990, p. 83)

Culturally relevant pedagogy is thus a fundamental tool for any teacher concerned with the fostering of students' identity, especially those students whose culture has been ignored or treated as an inferior. If institutionalized, culturally relevant pedagogy could change school reform to school reconstruction. This change would make possible the identification and combating of institutional racism in school in its latent form and manifestations.

4.6. The Necessity of School Reconstruction

According to Greenman (1994), there are different ways of conceptualizing educational change. The United States is a good example where a set of different discourses on change has led to misleading assumptions around this concept. According to this author it has created the illusion that reconstruction in education is in place, when in fact it is merely educational reform within the same structure. The structure of the educational system remains unchanged. "Theoretically, restructuring addresses the deep structure of education; it challenges long held notions about what education is and how we carry it out.... If we are serious about creating significant educational change, we must work to lessening the gap between rhetoric of restructuring and the reality." (Greenman, 1994, p. 9; 24)

Through the interviews it was possible to capture that for those Black leaders, racial justice in education and school reconstruction were interdependent issues. They seemed to be aware that their initiatives were just the beginning of a long process in which their demand for the reconstruction of school curriculum, instructional materials, and teacher education, could be a good start.

We considered as a problem the way image and language were portraying Blacks, for example the lack of sensibility of professionals in education toward racial issues. The school does not recognize the racism that is still present in schools within our contemporary society. We discussed these problems in the Municipal Board of Education. (Raimunda)

Restructuring for those Black leaders implied a shift that would be based on grassroots change. That was an important challenge posed to the Board of Education. Because as Greenman asserts:

to create a kind of change demanded by a significant restructuring of education, we must make that 'extreme effort' to examine education critically in relation to the cultural context and the prevailing paradigm, and to become aware of emerging paradigms that may provide more appropriate principles for the envisioned change. (1994, p. 18)

In analyzing the interview data, salient aspects of the relation those Black leaders had with the Board of Education express their maturity and experience in terms of organizing the Black community. Their common platform, presented earlier, suggested changes in the public schools in such a way that some essential structural aspects of schooling should be transformed. When they presented their suggestions to the Municipal Board of Education, they had already changed the name of the combined groups' representatives from the "Commission for the Elimination of Racism in the Municipal Schools" to "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in the Municipal Schools."

It was clear to the precursors of the Movement that to implement all changes suggested by them would necessitate state and federal decisions, as well as alliance with other social movements, non-governmental organizations, unions, and political parties. However, the main point that led to difficulties in implementing the proposal was the fact that teachers, educational policy makers, and specialists in the Municipal Board of

Education somehow walked away from the proposal for curriculum change when it required a political position from them.

We faced a lot of problems with the regional coordinators in the Municipal Board of Education. Some of them walked away from the idea of changing curriculum. Other assumed that the problem was class and not race. On the other hand the proposal was quite advanced in that political context. That was the moment when we decided to change the name from Commission Against Racism to Culture and Citizenship in Belo Horizonte Public Schools, to emphasize the rights of Black students, more than specifically racial questions. We found that the staffs would "agree" and listen to our opinions, but they treated Afro-Brazilian issues in a very superficial way. It is not possible to help children to learn about difference when specialists, educators, and school administrators do not believe it is a crucial point for the democratization of the Brazilian society. (Raimunda)

Members of the Commission did not explain, from a pedagogical standpoint, how their suggestions could be implemented on daily basis in the school routine, which strategies would work better, etc. By the same token, the Municipal Board of Education did not show a disposition to embrace their political project. Therefore, the platform for curriculum change presented to the Municipal Board of Education was not implemented. According to specialists, educational policy makers, and teachers it was due to the lack of support of "superior departments." For those demanding curriculum change it was because of a lack of political desire on the part of Municipal Board of Education and its "superiors."

The data gathered through the interviews revealed that even facing many limitations the Commission on "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian

Culture in the Municipal School" made important contributions to the Municipal Board of Education. In the evaluation of one Black leader:

We had the knowledge, but it was difficult to put in practice our ideas for curriculum change. We in the Black Movement had very high dreams. We fought for curriculum change without understanding the structure and bureaucracy surrounding the school curriculum. To fight with institutions is more difficult than to change the curriculum in technical terms. (Clementina)

On the opinion of another:

The big lesson is to understand that the State is not going to be efficient in the implementation of our demands if we do not exercise a systematic demand upon the state. (Severino)

In the opinion of a teacher who was involved in the Movement for curriculum change:

I have the impression that the impact of our movement was not spread over schools much more because of isolated practices against racism, than based on the state commitment with the issue. I think we Blacks are not taken as an important issue in this country. (Conceição)

For one of them the most positive aspects was that:

Nowadays, teachers, professors, and technicians are incorporating a discourse produced by us, from the Black organizations. We have educated some White and Black folks. We are seeing changes occurring in Belo Horizonte, as for instance the changes which happened in the CAPE (Teacher Education Center), and the Plural Schools proposed by the Municipal Board of Education, that have their fruits in the process concatenated first by us, Black leaders (Sebastião)

Perhaps racial justice in education can only be promoted if there is a whole revision and restructuration in the school system. Perhaps the multicultural curriculum approach as experienced in the United States could boost the idea of school reconstruction and racial justice in education in Brazil.

In trying to discuss the two points posed above, it could be helpful to compare the objectives of the commission "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture" with both the main recommendations of the "First Political- Pedagogical congress of Belo Horizonte", and "Literacy 1990/2000." Looking closely one can come to the conclusion that both programs and the objectives of the Commission complement each other, and might be synthesized in one unified project. But, that was not the case. These different proposals were also presented in different moments and with distinct goals. That lack of coalition between the organizer of both educational congress, the Commission, and the Municipal Board of Education can be explained in the "stubborn" idea of liberal and radical educators in treating race as an epiphenomenon, and in the difficulty of identifying interconnecting social problems. In addition, issues of gender were suppressed in all of these proposals, even though many teachers were Afro-Brazilian females. The interviewees did not have an explicit understanding of multicultural issues, though they did have an advanced notion of curriculum. The Black leaders' view points of curriculum are presented in the following synthesis:

Curriculum is the summing up of experiences in school. It is what organizes the life of students, schools, and other actors that constitute the school. (Severino)

In terms of curriculum we had the objective of restating African history; reviewing instructional materials; elaborating new school books; to institutionalize the "20 de Novembro" as a national holiday to reflect and struggle against racist practices. (Maria)

Racism in school should be discussed in classrooms from an early age. It is necessary to present all cultures that built up Brazil without excluding any cultural group. It is necessary to value the difference, to teach about the different aspects of each culture. (João)

We must think changing the pedagogic rituals (the way children are organized in the playground, for instance), the way the school routine is done day after day. (Conceição)

The word curriculum brings in itself a conception of school. When you have to decide what is going to be taught or not, you are doing a selection. This is the reason the curriculum is much more than a list of disciplines. It is in fact the conception of education present in a specific society. (Catarina)

However, curriculum ideals were not enough. In order to create racial justice in education in the Brazilian society -- embracing the definitions of curriculum expressed above -- it would be necessary to bring forward structural changes in the educational system as expressed in the document elaborated by leaders of the Black community in the Commission "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in the Municipal Schools." These structural changes at least must be based on the triad: economic changes in society; the questioning of the status quo of race, sexual orientation, and gender privileges; and a shift in the state government power over civil society. According to this view, structural

changes can only take place when liberal ideas on schooling have been defeated, because in the liberal framework, education is seen as detached from the political and economic life of society. Another important aspect in the process of making structural changes in education is the issue of empowerment. This is polemic subject, indeed -- because of its different interpretations in which some tend to see empowerment as a act of giving power to individuals or groups, instead of creating possibilities for the acquisition of power --, but, useful to the objective of this study because it can be defined, in the domain of multiculturalist discussions in the United States, as "the process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live" (McLaren, cited in Sleeter, 1991, p. 3). This definition leads to the discussion of how the multiculturalist approach as experienced in the United States could also boost the idea of school reconstruction and racial justice in education in Brazil.

However, multiculturalism, or any other kind of "ism" aiming for racial justice in education has not found its proponents in the mainstream sectors of the Brazilian society. There have been localized and/or isolated initiatives implemented by Afro-Brazilian organizations, as the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte. But, a national coalition, involving and bringing together an organized "mass" of African Brazilians, sharing the same political ideals, is still to come in Brazil. The social history and the racial dynamics in Brazil are quite peculiar as

demonstrated in chapter I. Michael Hanchard in striving to understand the Brazilian racial dynamics has posed this question:

Why has there been no sustained Afro-Brazilian social movement in Brazil comparable to the civil rights movement in the United States or nationalist insurgencies in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of the New World during the post-World War II period? Even though there have been attempts great and small to coalesce a divergent array of people into a racially based movement for social change during this period, there has been no national movement within civil society against racial inequalities and subordinations in Brazil. (1994, p. 5)

The answer of this author to his own question is that racial democracy arrangements in Brazil have created structural mechanisms that work at the individual and social levels in a way that subordinates Afro-Brazilians and at the same time neglects that subordination, creating the conditions for the maintenance of a fake racial harmony. Even when there are actions and reactions against racial oppression there is what Hanchard calls "inability in mobilizing people on the basis of racial identity" (p. 6) with the specific purpose of overcoming their racial conditions.

On the other hand, Afro-Brazilian initiatives to improve their education have been one of the most effective movements if compared with trade unions, health care, neighborhood associations, and peasantry organizations addressing specially the issue of race. Since the 1930s, the educational conditions of Afro-Brazilians have been underscored in the newspaper. Pinto (1993) summarized newspaper articles from that period

denouncing adverse pedagogical conditions and discrimination against Afro-Brazilian children.

In the United States there have been significant discussions over time about what is a proper education for African-Americans. For example, this issue was a key point in the WEB Dubois and Boker T. Washington debates in early 20th century. By the same token, as already stated in chapter I, multiculturalism in the United States is socially and historically situated in the late 1960s in the confluence of different interests: "minority" groups struggling for racial justice, and liberal educators' attempts to lessen the burden of racial inequality in education (McCarthy, 1993).

For African-Brazilians, deprived of their civil rights due to the articulation and establishment of racist practices, multiculturalism is looked upon very cautiously. As an interviewee asserted:

Multiculturalism leads me to the notion of globalization of economy. It does not mean that culture, specially Black culture, does not carry plural meanings that is in the essence of culture. If for instance, I hold the assumption that Africa is my reference and matrix, although I have never been to Africa, I carry with me the heritage and ancestry as I'm able to see it. Multiculturalism probably works in countries that have a fragmented racial identity. Because you dilute the authentic cultural expression of peoples. The media has appropriated the culture of peoples although it does not deepen the discussion. All cultures have their plural meanings. Multiculturalism affirms and neglects my presence in the world. We Blacks are a real political and cultural potential within the Brazilian society. To combat this potential there is a process of importing culture

from other societies and at the same time a process of desempowering the culture of Blacks in Brazil. (Severino)

By the same token, there was hope for the future

Something that highlighted the process of discussing race and school curriculum issues in Belo Horizonte was that it kept going even if the Municipal Board of Education decided to close down the Commission. An important event that happened by the end of 1993 was the First Municipal Conference on Education. In this conference the space to talk about culture was unique and former members of the commission could speak up. There was the idea of creating a project called Plural Schools. In this conference Black leaders and scholars (Blacks or not) were invited to discuss issues of race and culture within Brazilian society. After this conference the CAPE (Centro de Aperfeiçoamento de professores [Teachers Improvement Center]) hired Black teachers to occupy strategic positions in terms of building the proposal for Plural schools which included a shift in the school curriculum. By the beginning of this year, 1995, there is the creation of a newspaper that will be the vehicle to divulge racial issues within public schools. (Maria)

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

In discussing this study it is important to bring to the foreground some main points that emerged in the process of understanding and describing demands for curriculum change within the Brazilian society. In the specific case studied herein, leaders of the Black community in Belo Horizonte made their demands for school curriculum change at a time in which the quality of private school and their relations with the government were questioned. Teacher's unions and parents' organizations also denounced the educational situation in Minas Gerais; and documents on the necessity of school improvement had also been presented by Boards of Education.

What brought about the "Commission for the Elimination of Racism in the Municipal Schools of Belo Horizonte", later called "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian Culture in Municipal Schools in Belo Horizonte" was a strong sense that it was the historical moment for action, with the leadership necessary to propose curricular reforms. In demanding school curriculum change, this leadership challenged the treatment of race as an epiphenomenon, underscoring the fact that in the Brazilian society, race, gender, and class share an unquestionable interlocking relationship. Racism must be considered, along with gender and class, to explain the economic exploitation and political oppression of non-White people.

Before I returned to Brazil to collect data for this study, I held the hypothesis that multicultural theory could have been important for curriculum reform in Brazil. Through conducting this study and analyzing the data, I learned that multiculturalism in its different versions is a concept to be considered, but possibly not a strategy to be

implemented in the Brazilian context. As a Black leader in Belo Horizonte skeptically asserted *"in multiculturalism you dilute the authentic cultural expression of peoples."* As mentioned already in this study, some US scholars have also skeptically regarded the concept of multiculturalism.

It is important to recognize the value of approaches to multicultural education in the US society. Authors such as Banks (1993) and Sleeter (1991), among others, are major proponents of multiculturalism in the US society. No one should doubt their political commitment to build racial equity into the educational system. The great risk of generalizing strategies arising from this theory, however, is the transposition of strategies and definitions of multiculturalism in education without understanding the historical context and development of this concept and practice in the US. Just to give an example, we could mention again the way a leader of the Black community and 4th grade teacher approached the issue of identity in her classroom as presented on page 113.

That classroom activity in Brazil points out the necessity of challenging race, class and gender-based oppression. Although that activity might not be classified as an example of a multicultural or multiethnic educational approach in Brazil, it is exactly what Banks and Sleeter believe should happen in classrooms in the US. What we find in this example in Brazil is the creation of a new paradigm based on its own social and historical conditions, rather than an articulated argument based on multicultural theory. Therefore, the leaders did not call the new paradigm "multiculturalism," because it does not refer to the same history

and context. That does not mean that important presuppositions of multiculturalism should not be used in Brazil. However, common assumptions about multicultural theory have to be challenged. As McCarthy (1993) asserts:

As departments of education, textbooks publishers, and intellectual entrepreneurs push more normative themes of cultural understanding and sensitivity training, the actual implementation of a critical emancipatory multiculturalism in the school curriculum and in pedagogical and teacher-education practices in the university has been deferred. (Critical multiculturalism is defined here as the radical redefinition of school knowledge from the heterogeneous perspectives and identities of racially disadvantage groups -- a process that goes beyond the language of "inclusivity" and emphasizes relationality and multivocality as the central intellectual forces in the production of knowledge). (p. 290)

It seems as if in Belo Horizonte, educators and leaders of the Black community were experiencing different ways of developing a theory able to challenge racial inequalities in the multiracial Brazilian society. The issue for Brazil is we might label something "multiculturalism", or another kind of "ism," yet the context in which the term is used may be quite different. Or we could recognize a different content and context yet keep using the same label: "multiculturalism." The issue is how leaders in different societies are able to challenge institutional racism, unequal structures in societies, and savage capitalist forms of exploitation. Brazil, as I have described in chapter one, is a society in which racial relations have been so perverse that the watering down of racial identity on the name of ethnic heritage can be a dangerous one. Likewise, many approaches to multiculturalism tend to put emphasis on ethnicity instead

of culture, ignoring the fact that racial inequality has been (both in Brazil and the US) a permanent and structural phenomenon. Also, because Brazil is a country in which culture and ethnicity have been used by the government, mass media, schools, and churches as a rhetorical vehicle for racial democracy, which then lead instead to another form of racial injustice. Afrocentrism is still an important issue to be understood by Black peoples in Diasporas.

This study conducted in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from January to March of 1995, with some leaders of the Black community who had organized the platform for curriculum change 1990, involved issues of consciousness raising--both for me, as an Afro-Brazilian studying educational discrimination in the United States, and for the leaders who wished to share their stories. It became clear that they were not discouraged with the results of the curriculum reform movement. Hope was still flowing and Black organizations in Belo Horizonte were working on important issues for social change and racial justice in education. The municipal election of the Worker Party in November of 1992 had created an opportunity for progressive educators, educational policy makers, social scientists, and educational researchers to elaborate their ideas and propose educational and cultural projects in Belo Horizonte. Some interviewees talked excitedly about the importance of two projects being developed by the City Hall: "Escola Plural"(Plural Schools) and the "Centro de Referência da Cultura Negra"(Center for Reference of Black Culture). *The Centro de Referência da cultura negra is like a house full of mirrors in which we can see ourselves. It is the result of our work and what we believe. (Sebastião)*



It is a very rich experience. I think it will be possible to create new ways of approaching racial issues in education. I'm still having the hope that it is possible to elaborate important things regarding Afro-Brazilian people in Belo Horizonte. (Conceição)

The current "Escola plural" project grew out of analyses of previous pedagogical findings which came as a result of the Black leaders' demands. It is a direct attempt to intervene in schools which have disappointing educational results. Based on 8 guiding points, the project "Plural Schools" now aims for a radical intervention in the school system to bring about the end of selective school selection based on mainstream cultural and social values; a sensitiveness toward the total human formation of children; a valuing of school as a time to experience and share culture; school as a space for collective production; intervention in the school structure in order to understand the dynamics of culture present in schools; adequate socialization of children depending on their developmental age; and a new school identity for professionals in schools.

The second current project, the "Centro de Referência da Cultura Negra" is a cultural project which aims to collect, organize and disseminate the history of Afro-Brazilians in Belo Horizonte. At the same time, it represents a physical center for educational meetings, debates, etc.

Unfortunately, because of the nature and objective of this study, I was unable to fully analyze the pedagogical and political repercussions of

both projects. What is important to this study though, is that the projects are based on the original demands that the Black leaders began in 1990, but now taking more concrete forms. The rationale behind the projects still intends to improve school outcomes for Black, lower class and female students.

Educational proposals and projects based on United States multicultural approaches in education will arrive in Brazil sooner or later. My belief is that they will arrive first through progressive educators attempting to improve educational outcome for minorities. When that occurs, Federal, State, and Municipal Boards of Education will try to put pieces and bits of into practice in order to appear modern (or post-modern) to rest of the world. Similar processes have happened with other educational theories. An important aspect of this study is the contribution it can give to the understanding of the limits of expanding theories of multicultural education beyond its birth place: the United States. I suggest a cautious skepticism should prevail while presenting those ideas in Brazil. One of the reasons researchers in both countries have traced parallel patterns regarding racial issues is due to what the historian Andrews (1992) asserts:

Over the twentieth century as a whole, however, the country with which United States race relations have been most frequently compared is Brazil.... The Brazil/United States comparison has a compelling logic. The two countries are the largest multiracial societies in the Americas. They share a history of plantation slavery which extends into the second half of the 1800s. And over the course of the 1900s both societies have confronted the legacy of slavery in the form of deeply entrenched racial inequality. (p. 229)

5. What are we left with?

We are still left with some questions regarding the curricular reform movements to end racial inequities that in fact are not easy to answer because they depend greatly on the historical and social conditions in which a school system is located. The main thing is not to try to work them out as if answering a sociology of education exam. However, it is important to understand their nature and limiting aspects.

(1) If we change (expand) the curriculum in order to include the standpoint of "minorities," is there a guarantee that this curriculum will not still carry different knowledge and expectations for children belonging to different social classes? (2) Is it possible to take for granted that the school commitment to social justice would bring about racial justice? (3) Should equity in education assume that schools must consider themselves to be the redeemer of the poor? (4) How much does teacher education confront gender, class and race issues? (5) Are families' abilities to interact with school being included in the movement for curriculum change? (6) Can schools overcome demographic, economic, social and political realities simply by expanding the curriculum?

For instance, in 1990, Black leaders succeeded in gaining approval for an amendment regarding Afro-Brazilian culture. It required that State employees, especially those working in nursery centers and schools, should receive specific preparation regarding issues of race. It was an important victory because, as some interviewees recognized, preparing teachers and other school personnel to better understand cultural aspects

of racism was a crucial element. However, the long-term results of that action were mixed. After the city approved the law regarding racial issues, the Commission "Citizenship and Afro-Brazilian culture in Belo Horizonte Municipal Schools" closed down. That is why structural changes in society are so important in order to bring about educational reconstruction, and vice versa. It seems that the lessons learned by the Black leaders from the first round of curriculum reform in the 1990s led them to reconsider more structural and concrete changes seen in the current projects. Whether or not this leads to fuller and more equitable participation by Afro-Brazilians in the educational scene in Brazil remains to be seen.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED/OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEWS PROTOCOL

PART I

PROFILE OF INTERVIEW, HER/HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AND OPINIONS ABOUT SCHOOLING, AFRO-BRAZILIAN ISSUES, AND CURRICULUM.

- 1) What is your current profession or occupation? Your age and relative income? Do you have children in school? What have their experiences been? How are they different from your own schooling?
- 2) What has been your life story which led you to hold personal views on curriculum during the process of organizing the platform for curriculum reform in Belo Horizonte in 1991?
- 3) Who or what influenced your belief in the importance of curriculum reform?
- 4) In your opinion what are the unique characteristics of African-Brazilian people's experience ?

PART II

WHAT MOTIVATED AND MOBILIZED THE BLACK LEADERS TO ORGANIZE THE MUNICIPAL COMMISSION AGAINST RACISM

- 5) What is the name of the Black Organization you were affiliated with in 1991 during the movement for curriculum change in Belo Horizonte? What was the purpose of your organization?**
- 6) What were considered problems in the school curriculum for African-Brazilians prior to 1991? How did you and the other leaders become aware of those problems?**
- 7) Were young Black people blamed for not succeeding in school? If yes, where do you think was the root or the roots of the problem? Can you give me specific examples of talented Black children in school who were frustrated? What happened?**
- 8) How should schools help children learn to relate to different cultural groups?**

PART III

THE INTERNAL PROCESS OF DISCUSSION AND PREPARATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR SCHOOL CURRICULUM CHANGE IN BELO HORIZONTE

- 9) What were the main changes that your Black Organization included in its platform for school curriculum change? What are your personal thoughts (and the thinking of your organization) related to the ways different cultures should be represented in the school curriculum?**
- 10) Did your organization believe schools should try to achieve a new and reorganized set of pluricultural values?**

11) Was the critique of Brazilian curriculum limited to content, or did it include teaching methods and even broader issues, such as the purpose of schooling?

12) What was the internal process of discussion like in your Black Organization for the development and presentation of that platform? How long did the platform take to write? Describe the difficulties or promising aspects of this process? Who were key players in this? What kinds of interests were expressed in the process? What kind of unity or consensus? What else was important for my understanding of the process of your deliberation?

13) Did the members of your organization have any knowledge on how the Municipal Secretary of Education handled the curriculum? Was such information important to your deliberation? Please explain?

PART IV

EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS

14) Do you believe that movement has had a concrete effect on Black children's schooling in Belo Horizonte? Please explain?

15) What has the role of your organization been in the Commission since 1991? What changes do you anticipate in Belo Horizonte school curriculum in the future as a result of your organization's work?

16) Could you tell me how you see the social and educational implications of that movement? What were your personal goals? Were they achieved? Why or why not?

17) Did your organization and you yourself learn something special from that experience?

18) What were the strengths and weakness of that movement?

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19) If you were to develop a platform for curriculum reform today, how would you hope to do it differently? Why and for what reason?

20) Is there anything else I need to know to achieve the purposes of this study?

NEW QUESTIONS ADDED TO THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1) What is the mission of school?

2) In your opinion what does school curriculum mean?

3) In Belo Horizonte what has been the issue between public and private schools?

4) What is (are) your understanding (s) of the term multiculturalism?

5) Does the Municipal Board of Education have implemented any significant change regarding school curriculum in Belo Horizonte after the demands of the Black movement in 1990?

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