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Using Teacher Narratives for Reflection, Representation and
Reforms in Teacher Training Programmes

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of
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ABSTRACT

Using Teacher Narratives for Reflection, Representation and Reforms in Teacher Training Programmes

Deborah Baverstock-Angelus

The focus of this study is to examine the experiences of teachers who find themselves in the position of 'other' by virtue of their race, culture, gender, and beliefs. As teachers share their teaching experiences in culturally different and diverse educational settings, it becomes evident how narratives can lead to reflection, representation, and empowerment.

Based on postmodernist theory, this thesis contends that as teachers who are in the position of 'other' reflect on their teaching experiences and share their narratives, they will gain representation and validation. The use of narratives can provide a discursive space in which to challenge the patriarchal and institutional power structures that exist in educational settings such as religious schools in Montreal and in schools in Northern Québec and Asia. This thesis illustrates how the 'meta-narratives' of the history of education have silenced teachers' voices, and discusses how the authority of the teacher has been undermined. As well, it shows how postmodernism's critical pedagogies have not

addressed the oppression of teachers in the position of 'other'. Finally, this thesis examines the need for reforms in teacher training programmes in Canada in order for teachers to engage in discourses which will lead to the construction of knowledge, authority, and empowerment.

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PREFACE

The stories of teachers who have worked in culturally different educational environments is particularly interesting to me because of my teaching experiences in private Muslim and Jewish schools. I was one of the countless teachers unable to find a teaching position in a public school when I first graduated from the Education Faculty of McGill University. A few years later, I studied at Concordia University to obtain a certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language, feeling that I would have a better chance of finding a job in that field. I did, in fact, find a job as the English Second Language Specialist in a Muslim school where I taught at the high school level for three years. After that, I taught for one year at a Hasidic school for girls. These teaching experiences have had a profound effect on me. I have gained a sense of myself as a teacher and as a person. I have come to learn about and to respect other cultures, and to appreciate what it feels like to be an 'other'.

Many teachers I have spoken to over the years have asked me what it was like to teach in these schools. The ability to share my stories has allowed me a voice that I did not have before. But my voice is not singular; it tells of oppression; it speaks of self-reflection and self-knowledge, and it recounts valuable teaching experiences and lessons learned.

In this thesis, I speak in more detail about these different voices as I share my own narratives and those of other teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Based on the much debated theory of postmodernism¹ which challenges the notion of 'universal truths', this study examines the use of teacher narratives of those in the position of 'other'², in order to illustrate their reflective, representational, and empowering effects. Specifically, the narratives of teachers in the position of 'other' will be provided to demonstrate how the telling of teaching stories can enable teachers to reflect on their experiences, provide a voice to teachers that has traditionally been ignored, and to empower these teachers by enabling them to contribute to reforms in teacher-training programmes.

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. In the first chapter, the Introduction, I introduce the notion of teachers in the position of 'other'. I define the genre of narratives and discuss its uses. In this chapter I also look at the need for reforms in teacher training programmes. Finally, I outline the methodology employed in eliciting the teachers' narratives. In Chapter Two, entitled **Voices Unheard**, I examine the exclusion of teachers' voices in the history of

1

According to Luke and Gore (1992), postmodernist theory or poststructural theory addresses power/knowledge relationships, the negative effects of meta-narratives, and the way institutions are controlled and are controlling (p.ix).

2

I refer to 'other' in this study as teachers who are different from their students, colleagues, and/or administrators on the basis of culture, race, religion, gender, or beliefs.

education. I describe the various critical theories under the umbrella of postmodernism, such as critical, feminist, critical/feminist, and liberatory pedagogies, which challenge the absence of teachers' voices. I show how these pedagogies fall short in providing a means of overcoming the oppression of those in the position of 'other'. As well, in this chapter I illustrate how the authority of the teacher is undermined. In Chapter Three, **Teachers Share Their Stories**, teachers are given the opportunity to speak candidly about their experiences of being in the position of 'other'. From the context of religious schools in Montreal to the culturally different school settings³ of the Far East and Northern Québec, teachers describe their feelings of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness. They reflect on their experiences and offer useful advice about coping in these environments. They confirm the need for reforms in teacher training programmes. Using a 'mixed-genre' format, which is a style of writing that is comprised of short stories and connecting text (Ceglowski, 1977), I juxtapose my introductions to each teacher, how I see each teacher as an 'other', and provide my personal feelings and observations, onto the

³

I use the term 'culturally different' to mean the "cultural backgrounds of all students and school personnel with particular emphasis on their ethnicity, race, religion, class, and sex" which are different from the teacher (Gollnick, 1992, p. 228).

narratives. In Chapter Four, entitled **Where do we go from here?**, I suggest that university teacher training programmes need to be reformed in order that teachers are better equipped to work in culturally different and culturally diverse schools, and I show how narratives can actually be a part of these reforms. I touch upon two main areas of concern: Firstly, I discuss reforms in teacher education which examine the importance of exposure to different cultures and the benefits of doing in-service training (or student teaching) in culturally different school environments. Secondly, I consider the social reconstructionist theory as a means of examining one's own social beliefs in order to de-construct (or re-think) the authority we grant to educational practices. Finally, I return to critical/feminist pedagogy to show that within its discourses, it is possible (if critical/feminist pedagogy broadens its definition of 'most disenfranchised' (bell hooks, 1993) to include teachers in the position of 'other'), to encourage teachers to create their own discourses to challenge 'universal truths' and to gain authority and empowerment. Chapter five, the **Conclusion**, sums up the major themes of this work and offers areas of further study on the subject of teachers as 'others' and how narratives can lead to reflection, representation, and empowerment. I provide a personal note of reflection about how this study has helped me

to understand my experiences as a teacher in the position of 'other'.

Throughout the thesis, I use the terms "reflection", "representation", and "empowerment". By "reflection", I mean the distancing of oneself from one's experiences to acknowledge one's subjectivity, which is who we are in relation to sociocultural categories such as ethnicity, religion, class, and gender. In doing so, teachers come to realize that all experiences are a result of one's situation at a particular time, and that the way one interprets these experiences will be different at different times in one's life. This leads to what Bloom (1996) refers to as a 'non-unitary' perspective. Based on feminist postmodern theory, this process of reflection, which is always active and always in the process of production, provides the "opportunity for greater self-knowledge from the experience of [sharing one's narratives] as a respondent" (Bloom, 1996, p. 179). As well, reflection is "a way of helping teachers understand themselves and learn to cope with the dilemmas of teaching" (Dhamborvorn, 1996, p. 289). Next, I refer to the notion of "representation" as the providing of a voice. Where the voices of teachers, especially those who are 'others', had traditionally gone unheard, teacher narratives enable these voices to be heard, thus providing representation. "The

themes of inclusion and giving a voice to those who hold subordinate roles in society are important for education and for contemporary society" (Scott-Jones, 1991, p.32). Finally, I use Luke and Gore's (1992) definition for the term "empowerment", which is the exercise of power in an attempt to help others resist the dominating effects of patriarchal⁴ and institutional authority⁵ (p.57). Specifically, teachers who exercise power against the patriarchal and institutional authority in religious schools, for example, and empower other teachers through their narratives to resist this authority, is indicative of empowerment.

Although much has been written about students who are singled out because of their race, culture or religion in Canadian mainstream classrooms, the voices of teachers in the position of 'other' have been virtually ignored. In many classrooms across Canada and abroad, teachers face students and colleagues who are different from themselves on the basis of their religious beliefs, culture, race, gender, or even

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'Patriarchal authority' refers to differential and most often, privileged authority awarded to men (Luke & Gore 1992, p. 202).

5

I use the term 'institutional authority' to mean the protocol that is inherent in institutions such as a school in terms of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors, administrators and subordinates. This authority is most often taken-for-granted, and rarely challenged.

philosophies. Yet, we know little about their experiences. By allowing teachers to share their narratives, we will be able to learn about their experiences as 'others' in these culturally different school environments.

The Need for Reforms in Teacher-training Programmes

One of the most important educational concerns we are faced with today is how to effectively train future teachers for a culturally diverse⁶ student population (Myers, 1996). This is because, since World War II, large migrations of peoples from around the world have changed the cultural make-up of Canada. It is believed that by the year 2000, almost 50% of the population of Canada will be made up of ethnocultural minorities (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996). It would seem apparent, then, that more ethnic and religious schools will be founded in Canada's urban centres over the next few years. In Montreal, for example, there already exists several ethnic and religious schools. I have taught at two of them: an Islamic school and a Jewish girls' school. More of these schools are likely to open in the near future due to Bill 107, which brought the transfer of schools from

⁶

I use the term 'culturally diverse' as referring to the "cultural backgrounds of all students and school personnel with particular emphasis on their ethnicity, race, religion, class, and sex" which exist within one school or community (Gollnick, 1992, p. 228).

confessional or religious boards to linguistic boards on July 1st, 1998⁷. As the government has yet to come up with programmes for moral and religious instruction in these new linguistic boards, this may provide the impetus for fundamentalist schools to defy these reforms by designating a particular denominational status. According to *The Advisory Board on English Education's* report, English-Catholic members "articulated a strong demand for religious instruction and pastoral services and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the guaranteed right to designate a school's confessional status" (p.8). Furthermore, with more government cuts to education, it would seem likely that many schools in the public sector will close. In fact, several schools on and off the island of Montreal have already been slated to close at the end of the 1998/1999 school year. Therefore, graduates from teacher-training universities, who will not be able to find work in public schools, will have to consider teaching positions in ethnic and religious schools, schools in the Québec North, and

7

In a historic attempt to reform the educational system of Quebec, the *Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation* has implemented the transfer of schools from religious to linguistic school boards. It is believed that "school board reorganization [Bill 107] is closely linked to the development of better education for young English-speaking Quebecers; education that is better adapted to today's requirements, better suited to the English-speaking student body and more responsive to the social and cultural values and aspirations of Quebec's English-speaking community" (*Advisory Board on English Education*, p.1).

abroad. Although teacher-training programmes provide student teachers with the methodologies they need to teach the curriculum, they do not instruct student teachers to actually teach the students in these culturally different and culturally diverse educational institutions, or how to work effectively with their administrators. For this reason, teacher training programmes of the future will need to address these concerns. It is my intention, therefore, to investigate how teacher narratives can help equip future teachers to teach in these institutions, and to empower those already working in them.

What are Narratives?

Narratives are stories about lived experiences. Kathy Carter (1993) states that stories or narratives are "a way... of capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal..." (p.6). Yet, the use of narrative research in qualitative research studies is a relatively recent phenomenon (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). Called the "Fifth Movement" by Denzin and Guba (1994), it is acclaimed for being both a 'mode of reasoning' and a 'mode of representation' (Richardson, 1990). McEwan & Egan (1996) suggest that "the narrative shift...represents a significant change in the way that researchers approach the

study of teachers and teaching" (p.86). It goes beyond the impersonal generating of lists and reporting of correlation coefficients. As Kathy Carter (1993) states,

These stories capture more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understandings of what teaching is and how others can be prepared to engage in this profession.
(p. 5).

The sharing of narratives is particularly important as a means of conflict resolution. Narratives provide a way to cope with situations or persons who are oppressive. For example, according to Florio-Ruane (1997), "psychologist Donald Polkinghorne (1991) suggests that narratives arise out of tension or conflict in experience. Stories are attempts to cope with events that are hard to reconcile one with another" (p. 156). Therefore, it is extremely relevant that teacher narratives be used to reconcile the feelings of those who are in the position of 'other'. In this study, teachers will describe their teaching experiences in the form of personal narratives. They will share specific events and reflect on feelings of anguish, fear, frustration, and isolation that teachers who are considered 'others' experience.

Moreover, narratives can legitimate teacher struggles. Nophanet Dhamborvorn (1996) says,

It was not until years later when...[I] had opportunities to reflect on my own stories that I became aware, I think, of my own voice. Little by little, I began to understand my own stories, to see my stories as containing my struggles of trying to become who I am as a girl, a woman, and a teacher. I came to an awareness that my stories of struggles, angers, and conflicts counted (p. 289).

Thus, this thesis attempts to legitimate teacher struggles through narratives. By providing a collection of stories, I attempt to show that a 'shared consciousness' (Denison, 1996) can be created and teachers in the position of 'other' can gain a voice.

Methodology

The thrust of this research relies on narratives from teachers in the position of 'other'. It is my contention that a better understanding of what teachers experience as 'others' is gained by the telling of teacher narratives. To this end, I interviewed teachers who have worked or are working in culturally different school environments, such as religious schools in the Montreal area, and in schools in Northern Québec, and Asia. These narratives come from several teachers I have worked with in the past. As well, thanks to advisors and colleagues, I was given the names of several other teachers who have taught in religious and culturally different

school settings.

Seven teacher narratives are provided in this study. Five narratives are from teachers whom I interviewed in person, and two narratives are taken from literature in order to illustrate specific points. In most cases, teachers met with me on at least one occasion. In some cases, it was necessary to speak with them again for clarification.

One of my main concerns was to provide a 'safe place' for teachers to tell their stories. Due to the very sensitive nature of the narratives, all the teachers I interviewed chose to use a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity. Many teachers felt that if their identity were revealed, they might lose their jobs or be put in compromising positions in their schools for exposing some of the more disagreeable goings-on. Therefore, each teacher was required to complete a consent form. The consent form provided the objectives of this study; it informed them of their right to anonymity; and it provided a clause which would allow them to discontinue participation in this study at any time (See Appendix I).

The interviews proceeded as follows: First, a location was agreed upon by the respondent which provided her/him with the most comfort and anonymity. In many cases it was in the respondent's home or in my home. Second, I explained the nature of the study; I provided the objectives and explained the consent form, and informed the respondents that I would

use a tape recorder to record the interview. Third, after the consent form was signed, the interview began. I started with a series of questions to elicit background information on the respondents. For example, I asked what degrees they had, the number of years they had been teaching, how they obtained their teaching position, etc.. Fourth, I asked them to describe their particular school, what it was like physically, and what it was like in terms of atmosphere. Finally, I allowed the teachers to tell their stories. Through a series of open-ended questions, the teachers described events that were particularly memorable. I asked them to talk about how these events made them feel at the time they took place. Then I asked them to reflect on these events. I asked them to think about what they learned from these experiences, and how their feelings changed about what happened. I also wanted to know if their formal education prepared them for their teaching assignments, and what suggestions they could make to better prepare future teachers (See Appendix II for a sample of the questions within the *Departmental Ethics Committee Summary Protocol Form*).

What was particularly interesting about the interviews was that I was not confined to my list of questions. The teachers felt comfortable telling their stories with very little prompting on my part. I would interject periodically

to ask for clarification or to provide a new point of departure. I was impressed by the teachers' ability to share their stories, to speak candidly about their experiences, especially those which were painful.

Once the interviews were recorded, I transcribed them. For the most part, the teachers' narratives were transcribed verbatim, except in some cases, where I had to make editorial changes in order to make the stories easier to read. In some cases it was necessary to change the order of the events because the respondent moved on to another topic and then returned to the original idea at a later time.

CHAPTER TWO
VOICES UNHEARD

Heteroglossia:

*Many voices, some contesting,
some cohering, all demanding and
deserving of attention.*

(Mikhail Bakhtin, from Greene, 1993)

This chapter examines the absence of teachers' voices in the historical accounts of education. I show that the voices of women teachers were mostly ignored, and despite the Revisionist Movement, the voices of women teachers, and teachers in the position of 'other' are still voices unheard. As well, I discuss how several educational theories, such as critical, feminist, critical/feminist, and liberatory pedagogies, that have attempted to challenge the hegemonic⁶ and patriarchal power structures present in schools, have been ineffective in providing teachers with a voice in their particular teaching environments. Finally, I show that because the authority of the teacher has been undermined, there is yet another reason why teachers do not have a voice.

If we are to fully understand the experiences of teaching we must gain our knowledge from listening to all voices, especially to the voices of teachers themselves. In the above quotation, Bakhtin's words emphasize the relevance of all

⁶ Lewis (1992) defines the term 'hegemonic' as referring to the power structures which are maintained by the dominant class in such a way that they are accepted as natural and common sense by those who are in fact subordinated by them (p. 174)- taken from Jaggar (1983).

voices in the production of knowledge. Yet, we have not always questioned to whose voices we are listening, or to whose voices we have given power and importance. In the construction and transmission of our knowledge of teaching, we have often considered historical accounts, and we have relied on the "grand" or "meta"-narrative (the widely accepted conceptions or assumptions of race, gender and ethnicity, and power relations).

Until the Revisionist movement⁹ of the 1960s and 1970s, educational historians have relied on established research methodologies that have ignored many voices. When the Revisionist movement began, however, social scientists and historians began to see the meta-narrative as problematic. Bernard Bailyn, one of the founders of the Revisionist movement, "was appalled by what he perceived to be the narrow character of educational history as it had long been written by men lacking in historical vision or imagination" (Veysey, 1969, p. 294). Colin Greer (1972) called it "filiopietist, parochial and narrowly institutional" (p. 38). Grumet (1988) states that Greer hoped the Revisionist movement would provide

⁹

The Revisionist movement came about as a rejection of the meta-narratives of education and purported to "incorporate the study of education into current scholarship and, even more, to expand notions of social, cultural, intellectual, and political development through exploring and highlighting the role of education in modern history" (Katz, 1976, p. 381).

a truer picture of the history of education in the 1900s. She says:

Greer called for a revisionist account that would address the actual practice of education and not merely the claims of its theorists and apologists. He called for a history that would incorporate the experience of those the school did not serve: its dropouts rather than its valedictorian, its teachers rather than its superintendent. (p. 59)

Not only was the recorded history of education narrow, antiquated, and uninteresting (Katz, 1976, p. 381), it was patriarchal. Burnstyn (1987) asserts that the historians collected their data from one gender - men alone - and then made generalizations about all people, assuming the data from women would be the same" (p. 174).

The Silence of Female Teachers' Voices in the Meta-Narrative of the History of Education

The flaw in the meta-narrative of education is that it has, for the most part, relied on only the voices of those in charge - white, male administrators and researchers. What they have described has been through their eyes, their perceptions, and driven by their motivations. It would not be right to say that they have not provided a great deal of valuable information about the earlier forms of education. However, as Burnstyn (1987) suggests, they have generalized

about what was true for male administrators, teachers and students, and assumed it was true for females. Miller (1989) asserts that, "the various accounts of schooling dealt almost exclusively with the history of men and boys and of boys' education" (p. 128). More recent studies of the history of education however, have depicted the reality of schooling through the eyes and voices of both sexes, and they have shown that female teachers, especially, were very often oppressed by the hegemonic and patriarchal power structures that existed at that time.

In her account of teaching as a gendered experience, Griffin (1997) states that women first entered the teaching profession during the Industrial Era, almost two hundred years ago. Teaching especially welcomed women because they could be paid less than men. Using statistics from Norton (1926), Griffin (1997) reports that in the 1820s female teachers were paid \$10.00 a month less than male teachers, a sizeable difference at that time (p. 7). Katz (1976) also suggests that although towns were growing rapidly and more children were being educated, the feminization of teaching and the low salaries for women teachers allowed the town to provide mass education and at the same time it was able to keep its costs down (p. 389).

However, women teachers were not in a position to protest the low wages. During the Industrial Era there were few

opportunities for work outside the home. Katz (1976) contends that besides teaching, there were only four other alternatives: domestic service, dressmaking, work in the mill, or prostitution. He states, "to many young women at the time, teaching, despite its low wages, must have appeared a welcome and genteel opportunity" (p. 389).

Griffin (1997) also suggests that during the 1800s, female teachers were not equipped to deal with the patriarchal power structures that existed in schools. It was men who held the power and had the opportunity for advancement; whereas female teachers were "a captive labor force, politically powerless, without opportunities for work in other fields, without suffrage, without even the right to own property" (p. 7). Ironically, during the nineteenth century, people believed that the schools, like other institutions, should be like the home. They should be "presided over by a wise and loving mother" (Katz, 1976, p. 389). However, even though a great number of women were finding employment in teaching, teaching was not a job that required feminine characteristics. Women teachers were expected to deny their nurturing traits. They had to adopt more masculine attitudes and behaviours to deal with the 'business of teaching' (Griffin, 1997, p.7). The traits of caring and sensitivity, attributed to women, were excluded from the curriculum (Sikes Scering, 1997, p. 64). Even so, patriarchal power structures

maintained the hierarchal status for teachers: men on top, women on the bottom. "Principals expected teachers to control students and accept control by superiors" (Griffin, 1997, p.7). Furthermore, although women teachers were expected to be controlling in their dealings with students, they were expected to be submissive in their dealings with administrators. Grumet (1981) states, "The ideal teacher was one who could control the children and be controlled by her superiors" (p. 173).

Because of the rigidity of the workplace and the lack of power, many women teachers left the teaching profession in the Industrial Era. Not much has changed today, argues Griffin (1997). The structure of schools has, for the most part, remained the same. "The patriarchal structure of schools and the dominance of men in decision-making positions and positions of power provide female teachers with little voice" (p. 8).

Theories for Challenging the Absence of Voice

Weiler (1991) states, "We are living in a period of profound challenges to traditional Western epistemology and political theory" (p. 449). Based on postmodernist theory, "white male bourgeois dominance is being challenged by people of colour, women, and other oppressed groups, who assert the

validity of their own knowledge and demand social justice and equality in numerous political and cultural struggles (p. 449). Under the umbrella of postmodernist theory, attempts are being made to challenge the hegemonic and patriarchal power structures in educational institutions that have led to the absence of teachers' voices. These include critical¹⁰ and feminist¹¹ pedagogies, critical/feminist pedagogy¹² and liberatory¹³ pedagogy. However, these theories have been ineffective in their quest for empowerment, especially of

10

Sikes Scering (1997) notes, "'critical pedagogy' challenges the hegemony of economic and dominant cultural formations obscuring the instrumental relationship of schools and society" (p.63). Important theorists include Aronowitz, Gramsci, and Giroux.

11

"'Feminist pedagogy' seeks to change educational practice that values objectivity, competitiveness, and self-interest for personal gain, practice that elevates the public sphere over the private" (Sikes Scering, 1997, p. 63). Notable theorists include Weiler, Grumet, hooks, and Maher.

12

'Critical/feminist pedagogy' is based on critical and feminist theories. "It challenges the emphasis on efficiency and objectivity that perpetuate the domination of masculine rationality [and it] is a different way of thinking about the relationships of school and society and the hierarchal social relationships for teaching/learning contexts" (Sikes Scering, 1997, p. 62).

13

According to Longhi (1995) 'liberatory pedagogy', based on the work of Paulo Freire, focuses "specifically on the role of education in aiding individuals in becoming critically conscious [in order that they may] critique common sense and school knowledge [to] unveil how dominant interests shape our thoughts and guide our actions" (p. 28).

those in the position of "other" whose voices are still unheard within these frameworks. According to Sikes Scering (1997), for example, critical pedagogy, on the one hand, helps teachers "locate their realities within the social, cultural, economic, and historical formations of society... [but it] fails to address the patriarchal character of schooling and society and the power of patriarchy to regulate and determine the meanings and knowledge in the social relations of pedagogical activities" (p. 63). On the other hand, feminist pedagogy attempts to "counter the patriarchal influence as a power in and out of schooling" (p. 63) but neglects the uniqueness of teachers' oppression by presenting a unified, singular voice, or "universal sisterhood" of all those oppressed by virtue of patriarchal power structures (Mohanty, 1994, p. 146). Feminist pedagogy's "claims to universal truths and their assumptions of a collective experience of oppression do not adequately address the realities of their own confusing and often tension-filled classrooms" (Weiler, 1991, p. 449).

Freire's liberatory pedagogy helps individuals realize their subjectivities, which is "knowledge which [one] already possess[es], that which they gain from experiencing life as a particular individual in a particular historical and social circumstance" (Longhi, 1995, p. 29). This realization, or validation of subjectivities as Longhi (1995) refers to it, results from a dialogue between teacher and students who are

'equals'. In turn, they challenge the notion of knowledge as value free and objective and come to understand that they too can be producers of knowledge. Once individuals become 'critically conscious' (Freire, 1993), that is they become "cognizant of the forces which exploit them", they are able to reflect on and then participate in changing the world around them, which Freire refers to as 'praxis'. (Longhi, 1995, pp. 9,28-31). Although Freire's liberatory pedagogy recognizes "those most disenfranchised" (bell hooks, 1993, p. 151), it is a utopian theory which universalizes subjectivities and oppression. According to Longhi (1995), Freire "thinks solely in class terms...[but] the reality is that individuals within the category of oppressed all experience unique forms of oppression..." (p. 33), not simply that of class.

The pedagogy that comes closest to addressing the oppression of those in the position of 'other' in the culturally different school environments I have described, is that of the critical/feminist. Because critical/feminist pedagogy critiques patriarchy, capitalism and racism (Longhi, 1995, p. 44), it is able to shed light on the various forms of oppression teachers in the position of 'other' feel in their work environments. Critical/feminist pedagogy acknowledges that the voice of oppression is not a unified voice, "but a legion of voices articulating many perspectives, personal experiences, oppressions and knowledge" (Longhi, 1995, p. 45).

Critical/feminist pedagogy does not go far enough, however, in acknowledging all forms of oppression. Ellsworth (1992) reminds us that there are other forms of oppression such as homophobia and fat oppression. This thesis sheds light on other forms of oppression as well, such as religious, cultural, and linguistic oppression. For example, teachers who work in religious schools experience forms of oppression that others who work in public schools do not. Similarly, teachers who teach in foreign countries experience forms of cultural oppression that teachers who teach in their home country do not. Moreover, critical/feminist pedagogy may help future teachers learn to resist patriarchal practices in their future schools, but for many teachers already teaching in religious and culturally different schools, resistance is often met with severe admonishment. Critical/feminist pedagogy provides a framework for teacher education in a democratic society, but democracy does not live in most cultural and religious schools, even in Canada.

The pedagogical theories I have just discussed are important to our understanding of oppression. However, if they are to be truly critical and liberatory, they must include the voices of all those who are oppressed: women, homosexuals, those overweight, teachers in culturally different and culturally diverse school environments, anyone

who is an 'other'. Yet, I have found nothing in these theories that addresses the powerlessness of teachers in the position of 'other'. This point, perhaps, provides the strongest argument for the importance of teacher narratives as a means of understanding what it is really like to teach in culturally different school environments.

The feminist and critical pedagogies employed in teacher training courses in universities have not dealt with the issue of teachers in the position of 'other'. By allowing teachers to tell their stories, they will be able to provide a voice that reflects 'otherness'. They will provide the missing link, or perhaps help concretize the theories; they will help put theory to practice. For this reason, I revisit critical/feminist pedagogy in Chapter Four, **Where do we go from here?** for the purpose of showing that reforms in teacher training can take place within these discourses, providing of course, that they include the voices of teachers in the position of 'other' and that teacher narratives are given credence in their arguments.

The Authority of Teacher

The authority of the teacher has been much debated. Whether it be the control teachers have over their students, or the consideration given to teachers' voices, their

authority has largely been challenged. In this thesis, the 'authority' of teacher that I refer to, is not so much the control teachers have over their students, but more importantly, the 'authority' of their voices (that is, the acknowledgment that teachers are important sources of knowledge), as well as the command (or respect) that is granted to teachers by virtue of their position within the institution of the school. Nonetheless, I do refer to the control teachers have over their students at the beginning of this section to show that, although teachers are bigger than their students and are expected to discipline them, the teachers' authority is nevertheless challenged. For example, the fact that teachers are larger than their students (in most cases), *should* establish their authority. However, as Biklen (1995) points out, as far back as when women first joined the teaching profession, their authority or ability to control has been questioned. It was believed that because women teachers were not as strong as men teachers, they would not be able to handle their bigger male students (p. 179).

According to Freire (1971), teachers inherently possess authority over their students on the basis of "the structural role of 'teacher' within the hierarchical institution, and ... by virtue of the teacher's greater experience and knowledge (Weiler, 1991, 454). Although women teachers may find

themselves in the privileged position of authority in their classrooms, they are not spared from authority over them by colleagues and superiors. Ellsworth (1992) illustrates this point as she describes her experiences at the university she taught. She says, "I was in the fourth year of a tenure-track position, and felt I had 'permission' from my colleagues to pursue the line of research" (p. 303). Ellsworth's position of professor at the university automatically awarded her authority, but because she had to have her colleagues' permission, illustrates how little authority she actually had.

Weiler (1991) asserts that teachers possess authority by virtue of their race, gender and class (p. 454). The fact that teachers may be white as different from their students of colour, that they are male and not female (or vice-versa), and that they are educated and privileged and not illiterate or overtly oppressed, is evidence that teachers are indeed different from their students and hold all the 'authority' that race, gender, social class, etc. can claim. However, what is not challenged in this assumption is that teachers' authority can be undermined by their own race, gender, or social class because they are different from their students or colleagues. Such is the case of many of the respondents in this study. It was because the teachers were different,

because they were 'others', that their authority was challenged. In my own experience (as you will read in Chapter 3) my authority was challenged because of my sex, my religion, and my social class.

I believe that the authority of the teacher has been undermined by the *institution* of teaching. What I mean by this is that the patriarchal power structures and the hegemonic attitudes of the profession of teaching have only helped to subordinate teachers and their authority. I believe that the reasons for this are many: teachers, especially women teachers, are not considered important sources of information; they have little control over, and autonomy in, their work; they are constantly under the scrutiny and evaluation of those in authority; they have a low status among other professionals; and they are often in conflict with parents, especially mothers.

Throughout history, teachers have not been considered important sources of information. Rather, they were merely receivers and dispensers of information. Freire (1968), for example equates teaching of knowledge with 'banking education' whereby teachers fill their students (whom Freire refers to as "empty receptacles") with facts and information that is memorized and regurgitated, and rarely questioned. Because the history of education has for the most part, relied on

'meta-narratives', the personal experiences of women teachers has been sorely overlooked. Women teachers "have been denied the title of "knowers"; [since] historically "knowledge" has been rooted in the experiences of men" (Smith, 1987, p. 109). Not much has changed; teachers still feel that they are not asked to contribute to knowledge about teaching. "Teachers often believe that they have no influence in either their classrooms or in the total school. Principals neither ask for nor want their input" (Griffin, 1997, p. 10). Nor are teachers asked for their input on school expenditures. Griffin (1997) cites the example of schools in Texas that had the worst test results and highest drop-out rates in the country. Teachers were not asked where monies could be put to good use, and instead, the state spent more on sports than education (p. 11). Moreover, teachers are not even considered important sources of information on textbooks. Teachers have become de-skilled by the implementation of prepackaged instructional kits and visual aids. Book publishers are the ones who set the curriculum, rather than the teacher (Griffin, 1997, p. 10).

Because teachers have not contributed to knowledge of education, they have become puppets of those who have. Teachers must conform to programmes and practices set by those in authority. Their own authority is undermined by the constant supervision of their work by administrators. For

example, teachers are often asked to hand over their weekly lesson plans and they are held accountable for following the instructions given to them by their principals about how they should conduct their classes (Griffin, 1997, p. 10). When teachers fail to live up to their supervisor's expectations they are often reprimanded.

The system of evaluation further undermines the teacher's authority. As is often the case, female teachers are supervised by male evaluators. Griffin (1997) notes that evaluation is a form of domination. She says, "One visit may determine a teacher's professional status for the next year, even though the evaluator may be ignorant of the teacher's strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing instead the quiet of the students or the teacher's appearance and personality" (p. 14).

Further devaluing of the authority of teacher is the low status attributed to teaching. Most teachers resent the low social status and low salary that goes along with teaching. Although some efforts have been made to equalize the teaching profession, teaching is still considered a women's job. For that reason, some 70,000 teachers in the province of Quebec held a one-day illegal strike on November 18th, 1998 to protest against the Quebec government's refusal to pay their teachers up to thirteen years of back pay to "wipe out the wage gap between female- and male-dominated jobs" (The Gazette, July 30, 1998). Teachers are particularly riled because they are

one of the last groups of public service workers to undergo the Pay Relativity or Pay Equity Act. Since 1990, statistics from *The Government Pay Relativity Plan: Report presented to the Commission de l'équité salariale* (November 20, 1998) show that 86% of the monies to finance the Quebec Government's agreement to satisfy the Pay Equity Act has been paid. Yet, teachers have not seen one cent of it. In fact, the Government refuses to reach an agreement with the teachers on the classification of teachers. This classification is based on the "duties inherent in the job and the skills required for its performance" (p. 8). Even after exhaustive studies and surveys have been done that show teachers rank the same category as engineers, for example, the Government refuses to accept the results. As one teachers' delegate has said, "It's not that the Government won't agree it has to pay us, it is that it won't agree on how much."

Finally, the authority of teachers has been undermined by parents. Most often, teachers come in conflict with their students' mothers, because mothers and women teachers "share social and gendered positions because of their relationship to children" (Biklen, 1985, p. 127). Both mothers and teachers try to challenge the notion of "domestic" work associated with mothering and teaching: "teachers by resisting mothers' demands and the mothers by attempting to insert their

knowledge into the pedagogical arena" (p. 127). But in attempting to shed the devaluation of their roles, mothers and teachers have become 'natural enemies'. Instead of working as a team in an effort to best meet the needs of the child, mothers and teachers have positioned themselves in opposition. The conflict is mostly over status and power. What upsets mothers is that both mothers and teachers share a common role: the care and instruction of children. Yet teachers are awarded a professional status and mothers are not. To make matters worse, mothers are expected to accept the authority of the teacher. Their acceptance is not easily given, however. Teachers often complain that mothers "challenge their professional identity,...that mothers [do] not trust their ability to teach: to diagnose, to develop curriculum, to stimulate their children" (Biklen, 1985, p. 132). When mothers try to become more involved in their child's education, teachers see this as a challenge to their professionalism. "[Teachers] resist mothers' interference in the classroom because they want their work taken seriously and they see mothers' activities not as a parallel effort, but as a challenge to this desire" (p. 139). Furthermore, Grumet (1988) asserts that the contradictory roles teachers are expected to play, the 'nurturing mother' role versus the 'authoritarian father' figure, further exacerbate the animosity between teachers and mothers. She states,

The gender contradictions, the simultaneous assertion and denial of femininity, have served to estrange teachers of children from mothers of those children. Instead of being allies, mothers and teachers distrust each other. Bearing credentials of a profession that claimed the colours of motherhood and then systematically delivered the children over to the language, rules, and relations of the patriarchy, teachers understandably feel uneasy, mothers suspicious (p.56).

There are many reasons teachers feel that their authority is undermined: the patriarchal and institutional authority over them, the fact that teachers are not considered important sources of information, their lack of control and autonomy in their work, and their low status among professionals. The conflicts teachers have with mothers further devalues their work and challenges their professional authority. What teachers want is to be "considered full-fledged professionals with all of the privileges entailed by that status. Mothers want "recognition that the bearing and nurturing of children does not render them vacuous" (Biklen, 1995, 142). Teachers thought that they would enhance their professional credibility if they distanced themselves from mothers. But, according to Biklen (1995), the separation of mothers and teachers has not helped either of them attain the recognition they desire.

In this chapter, I have shown how teachers have not had a voice. In the history of education, teachers' voices, especially those of women, have been excluded in favour of the

meta-narratives derived from those in authority: male researchers and administrators. I have shown that although critical, feminist, critical/feminist, and liberatory pedagogies have attempted to challenge the patriarchal and institutional authority inherent in schools, they have not addressed the oppression of teachers in the position of 'other'. I have also discussed how teacher authority has been undermined. I contend, therefore, like theorists Ellsworth (1992), Sikes Scering (1997) and Grumet (1997) who argue against the inherent authority of the teacher, that teachers, especially those in the position of 'other', have many challenges to overcome in order to claim their authority. And without authority, they have no voice.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES

In this chapter, the narratives of seven teachers are shared. For many of these teachers, this has been the first opportunity to share their feelings and experiences as teachers in the position of 'other'. Their stories are not flattering; they do not speak of battles fought and won. More often they speak of failure, of self-abnegation, and rejection. But in telling their stories, they are relieved of the burden of always trying to appear in control. They are given the opportunity to speak about their experiences without being judged. And even though each teacher has a different story to tell, running through each narrative is an underlying theme of powerlessness that unites them all. All the narratives except my own, are under pseudonyms.

The Effects of Cultural Differences

Teachers can experience many forms of 'otherness' depending on their work environment. When a teacher finds her/himself in an environment where the culture or religion is different from their own, they can feel isolated, rejected and afraid. As I stated in the Introduction, I have worked in two religious schools. My experiences there have had a profound effect on me as a teacher and as a person. In the following narrative, I explain how I got my first full-time teaching assignment at a Muslim school and how my experiences at the

Muslim school helped me get a job at a Hasidic school. I talk about how unprepared I was for the cultural differences in both of the schools. I speak of feeling powerless and afraid. I discuss how my own religious beliefs strengthened my resolve and how I began a crusade for religious equality. I speak also, about how important it is to understand another's culture, to be respectful and tolerant. And I speak about feeling completely overwhelmed, to the point I had to quit to maintain my own sanity.

It was kind of a joke at our house. My husband was glancing in the classified section of the newspaper when he spotted an ad for a Muslim school. I remember him saying, "Apply for the job, but you'll never get it." So I applied for it, and to both our surprise, I got invited for an interview. I suspected that a modest dress would be appropriate for the interview so I donned a long-sleeved dress that fell below my knees. I have to admit, however, that I was unprepared for what I saw when I arrived. The building itself was not that of a school; it looked like a factory of some sort. The inside of the school had outdated wood-paneling and there were class pictures on the walls. All the female teachers had scarves (hijabs) covering their heads. I was greeted by two ladies dressed in floor-length gowns (chadors) and both their heads were covered. I was sure that I wouldn't be hired because I was not a Muslim. After several minutes, I was shown to the principal's office. The floor was covered with an ornate Persian rug and the walls were adorned with a religious calendar and some plaques. Three men were

seated in the office. The interview went very well as far as I could see because I received several nods of the head. They seemed to think I was qualified and liked the fact that I agreed to wear a scarf to cover my head if I got the job. The following Sunday, I received a phone call telling me that I had the job.

There were several new teachers hired that year so the administration gave us an orientation session. They told us the rules of the school, they gave us an introduction to Islam, and they assured us that we were all equals under Allah¹⁴. Therefore, we were to be called by the title of Brother or Sister. I can remember feeling like a nun when my students called me Sister Deborah!

The first year went by quite well. Of course, that is not to say that there weren't a lot of cultural things I didn't have to get used to. First of all, the religious aspects of the school were unfamiliar to me. I had to learn not to wear shoes when I entered the Mosque. I learned, as well, that women were considered dirty when they were menstruating so they were not allowed to pray when they were on their periods. One day I happened to be carrying a Qur'an, the Muslim's holy book, to the Mosque. I got the most unapproving stares from my male students that I could not understand. I thought I was doing the right thing by returning the Qur'an to the Mosque so that it would not get dirty in the classroom. Before I could reach the Mosque, however, one of my male

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According to the *New American Desk Encyclopedia* (1989), Allah is the "Arabic name for the supreme being used by the prophet Mohammed to designate the God of Islam" (p. 44).

students abruptly took the Qur'an from me. When he returned, I asked him what I had done wrong. Very red faced, he explained that one must not touch the Qur'an without first washing ones hand, and secondly, if I was on my period then I really had offended Allah. I apologized profusely for my ignorance.

It didn't take me long to realize that women were not quite equal to men, as we had been assured. The administration were all men and they made the rules. If you tried to speak out, you were told that it was not your place. If you further challenged authority, your job was threatened. The expression, "if you don't like it here, you can leave," was often used. The non-Muslim teachers had a lot of difficulty being deferential. Many of them challenged the wearing of the hijab. During the second year I was there, there was a lot of protest about requiring the non-Muslims to wear the hijab. Some teachers had even voiced their complaints to the newspapers. The response from the media was only lukewarm. The media had not wished to show any cultural intolerance. The journalists' modus operandi at the time was "Let them do what they want, as long as it doesn't harm anyone." It was only after a Muslim girl was sent home from a French Catholic high school, and told not to return with the hijab, did the press show any real interest. After that, there was a constant barrage of media in the school. Local, as well as national coverage of this event spawned a heated debate from both sides of the religious communities in Montreal. Muslims called the refusal to allow the hijab in a Catholic school discrimination; Christians called it observing a dress code. Finally, the Human Rights committee stated that it was

unconstitutional to forbid the wearing of religious attire. Moreover, forcing individuals not of the particular faith to wear religious garb was also unconstitutional. Therefore, the Muslim girl could return to her high school wearing her religious headgear. The ruling had implications for the teachers at the Muslim School, as well. All teachers who were not of the Muslim faith could remove their head scarves. The decision was met with elation from the non-Muslim staff and both disdain and jealousy from the Muslim staff. Some of the Muslim teachers were actually jealous of us because they also believed that the hijab was used more for submission and control by the males members than religious observance.

The local press was now really interested in the story. In fact, both a newspaper crew and a television crew came to my house for an interview. On February 16, 1995, my picture appeared on the front page of *The Gazette* (see Appendix III). In the television interview I tried not to speak out against the administration of the school. I was still on probation before receiving my official teaching license, so I didn't want to jeopardize my position. I guess because I was too diplomatic, my interview was not aired. Instead, coverage was given to a French teacher from another school who was more outspoken about the wearing of the hijab.

An incident happened after the ruling had been made public, in fact, on the day after my picture was in the newspaper. It had snowed during the day and there was a covering of snow on the ground and cars in the parking lot. I was leaving school for the weekend, and as I got closer to my car, I noticed that something

had been written in the snow on the trunk of the car. It was not the writing of a child; rather, it was the printing, deliberate and large, of an adult. The message etched into the snow on the trunk of my car read, "Guerre contre Chretiens" (war against Christians). I angrily pushed the snow from my car with my bare hand. I got into my car and drove home, my heart cold like the snow, my head dizzy, and my gut filled with fear. I remember being so angry: angry with the person who had written the message, but even angrier with myself for feeling so powerless to do anything.

I stayed for three years at the Muslim school. There were other incidents that made me feel frightened and helpless, but the one just mentioned had the most profound effect on me. Seeing the injustice toward the female students and teachers seemed to reaffirm my faith in my own religion and my own beliefs. The last year I was there I decided to make a crusade for religious equality. I asked if I could invite my minister to come to speak to the graduating class so that they could better understand Christians. The principal agreed but the students and their Islamic teacher were less interested in understanding Christian theology than trying to prove how the bible was flawed.

I then decided to introduce *The Diary of Anne Frank* to my Secondary 5 class because I found many of my students were anti-Semitic. I remember being called into the principal's office. He was outraged that I wanted to use this book. He demanded that I tell him why I chose that book. I explained that it was a book that was read by almost every high school student in the country and that I felt that if the students

understood what the Jews experienced during the war, it might eradicate some of their prejudices regarding Jews. I told him that the students could make parallels between what had happened to the Jews and what was happening in Bosnia where millions of Muslims were being killed. He was unconvinced; he sat back in his chair, crossed his arms, and said, "You know, Deborah, there are many people who don't believe that the Holocaust ever happened." I must have looked totally shocked, because he told me to go home for the weekend and we would talk about it on Monday. I left that day, so filled with disgust, so frustrated that I couldn't do what I felt was pedagogically good and morally right. Interestingly enough, he had had a change of heart over the weekend and he allowed me to use the book. All questions and materials had to be screened by him first, but this was a concession I could live with. In some regards, I was lucky he was the principal when I was there. Other than that incident, we got along quite well. I heard from the teacher that replaced me that a new principal had been hired and *The Diary of Anne Frank* was removed from the reading list.

I have to admit, I was probably one of the few female teachers who could at least be listened to in that school. For some reason, although my beliefs and philosophies about teaching were not always welcome, I did feel that I got respect from the staff and administration, and from the students, too. Perhaps it was because I knew how to play the game; I knew when to be polite and deferential, and I knew when and who I could push. I'm also quite sure that because I was not afraid to show that I am a religious person, it

worked in my favor. Muslims may not agree with Christian doctrine but they do respect anyone who 'is of the book', anyone who believes in the old testament scriptures such as the story of creation. I made a point of reciting the Lord's Prayer every morning when my students recited their morning prayers as they lined up before classes started. At first they all thought I was a little strange because no Christian teacher had said their prayers publicly before. But as time went on, they came to accept me and my beliefs. Flowers were even sent to the Christian teachers at Christmas and Easter. But the respect that I got was not dolled out to everyone. Many of the Christian teachers who did not openly practice their faith, and those who didn't know how to play the game, were treated differently. Worst of all, however, the female Muslim teachers were treated the most unfairly. They were not given the chance to speak their views. They were not afforded the same privileges concerning dress. And they were criticized in front of their students and other colleagues. Even though many of these teachers were fully qualified and competent, they felt that they had to stay at this school because of their hijab. They believed that no one else would hire them if they wore the scarf.

After I obtained my teaching certification, I decided that I wanted to try my luck somewhere else. There was a teaching position at an orthodox Jewish girls school in Outremont (a part of Montreal where there are a lot of Jewish residents). The principal was very impressed with my teaching experience and felt that because I was able to cope in a Muslim school, I

would also be able to cope there. I decided to take the job, although it was only a part time job. My husband started to think of me as a Middle East peacekeeper!

I knew that this particular school was a fundamentalist school, that the dress would be very conservative, and that I could not discuss my own faith with the students. But in my naivety, I could not imagine just how rigid the environment really was. On the first day of school, a pedagogical day, I met the secular teachers (the school made a distinction between the religious teachers and the secular teachers who taught the academic subjects). They seemed to be very nice and welcoming. It turned out that there were three other Christian teachers, although one was not a practicing Christian. We were then introduced to the religious teachers. I thought I would be friendly so I tried to make small talk. I noticed that one of the religious teachers was reading the Torah (the holy book of Jewish teachings). I remarked that she was reading it the same way that Muslims read their Qur'an (from back to front). I asked her if Jews had a greeting similar to Muslims (Assalamu Alaikum, meaning God be with you). She looked up from her reading and said that Jews do have a greeting but it was the Muslims who copied them. I realized right then that Jews did not like to be compared with Muslims. Later that day, one of the secular teachers complimented my blouse. I thanked her, saying that I had just bought it because I needed more conservative clothes for this job. "But it has a cross on it," she said. I didn't know what she was talking about until she pointed out that the city scene in white embroidery on my blouse had a

church steeple in it. Without wanting to appear stupid, I asked what was wrong with it. "Well, you can't wear the symbol of a cross or a church here," she told me. "They'll (the administration) send you home to change." I learned to be suspicious of compliments, because as I came to learn, an attack of some sort usually followed. Discussion of dress continued and I was to learn that teachers had been sent home for similar offences: inappropriate symbols or designs, length of skirt, sheer blouses, etc..

In retrospect, the blouse incident was very minor. Other incidents occurred that were more startling. After about two days I was called to the principal's office. She had a few things to talk to me about. Again, the compliments came first and then came the attack: I was being too personal with the students. The principal told me that I was sharing my personal life with the students and that was not a good thing. I had only told my students that I had two children. I didn't think that was too personal. Besides, I always believed it was good to give a 'human' face to the teacher. I didn't realize that the principal's reprimand was for my own protection. The students began to ask more personal questions, such as why I only had two children, what was wrong with me (Hasidics have very large families by Canadian standards - 10 and 12 children are not unusual). Most startling was the question, or rather accusation by one of my Grade 7 students of "Do you sleep in the same bed as your husband?" When I replied that it was none of her business, she quickly retorted in a mocking voice, "Then I know you do." The Hasidic couple may share the same bedroom but they sleep in separate beds.

Immediately after the class was over, the principal called me into her office again. She knew that one of my students had asked me about my sleeping habits. I was blown away! I couldn't figure out how she knew what was said in my class - did she have spies? After talking about it to a few of the staff, they laughed and asked, "Don't you know that your classroom is bugged?" Bugged - my classroom was bugged! I didn't realize that the intercoms in each classroom were used by the administration to listen in on our classrooms. I was outraged!

Even though I tried not to discuss my personal life, I was still mocked by my students. They would ask where I bought my clothes, do I eat pork, do my children believe in Santa Claus, do I wear slacks, etc.. These questions were all used to judge and criticize me. But I was not the only one to be criticized in this way. The other Christian teachers were experiencing the same things. What we felt was particularly rude was that the students would speak Yiddish under their breaths after we would come into the room. They would point at something we were wearing and utter something in Yiddish and laugh. If we would try to reprimand them for something they would again turn to a friend and say something behind our backs and laugh. One time I had had enough of the disruptions by one of my students that I asked her to leave the class. As she walked out, she said in a mocking voice, "Mishega, Mishega, Mishega." I didn't know what she had said, but I knew it wasn't good. When I spoke to the principal about it she told me that the student had said, "You're crazy, you're crazy, you're crazy."

There were many incidents like that one, where the students held us in total disrespect. After most of the secular teachers had complained about disrespect to the administration, they finally decided to call the Rabbi in to talk to us. After about an hour of talking and listening, he finally said, "Well, it's a cultural thing - there's not too much you can do about it." We couldn't believe our ears. What were we as teachers to do with "It's a cultural thing?" How were we to go back to our classrooms now, knowing that there was nothing we could do and nothing the administration would do to help us?

There were many other cultural things we had to get used to. Because the Hasidic community in Montreal is so small, if one of the students' sisters or brothers was getting married, the school would close because most of the students would be attending the wedding. The administration also made it quite clear that because High School would be the only formal education these students would have (they do not go on to university, instead, they get married after leaving school and begin their families) it was to be a pleasant experience. What that meant was that the students were not to be put under stress of exams, assignments, etc... So, a field trip was planned right in the middle of the final exams so that the girls could relax. Those teachers who were trying to prepare their students for the Ministry exams were extremely angry because the girls would not be able to study while they were on the field trip. The teachers were left wondering what was more important - whether the girls passed their exams or whether they had a good time.

Although many of these things happened over the course of the year, by October I was ready to quit. Everyday I had gone in with a smile on my face, eager to teach the lessons I had worked so hard on the night before, and every evening I would leave school, with a scowl on my face, determined to quit. Had I not employed an absolutely wonderful babysitter for my own children whom I knew needed the money, I would have quit before the end of October. But I am not a quitter. I was determined to honor my contract til the end, even though I thought I'd lose my mind. I know I was not an easy person to live with at home either. The stress was visible; everyone at home knew I hated my job. My husband would often tell me to just quit, that it wasn't worth it. I was making myself and everyone around me miserable. The only thing that got me through it all was the extraordinary amount of holidays we had throughout the year. But in May I had had enough; I let the administration know that I would not be returning the following year.

I had not imagined that working in a Fundamentalist Jewish school could be so difficult. Had I known from the beginning that the school was so rigid, I probably would not have taken the job. But I was not the only one to feel so powerless. I found out a year later, that by the next December three separate teachers had been hired and quit. The fourth one, made it through to the end of the year but did not renew her contract.

When Language and Politics Lead to Isolation

Language and politics can have the profound effect of creating barriers that contribute to isolation. In the politically polarized province of Quebec, many teachers find themselves being excluded because of their inability to speak the others' language and/or because of their political affiliations. Dee Dee Belanger, an English speaking teacher who taught English immersion in a French public school in Joliette (80 kilometres northeast of Montreal), experienced feelings of isolation and frustration. In Dee Dee's story, she talks about the difficulties of being the only English teacher in a French 'Péquistes'¹⁵ school.

I drove to Joliette every day - an hour there and an hour back. It was difficult being the only Anglophone¹⁶ in a Péquiste environment. You knew the political bent of the school right away; there was a big Quebec flag flying outside the school and when you walked into the principal's office, there was another Quebec flag behind the desk. There's no question about it -

¹⁵

According to the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (1983), the term 'Péquistes' refers to the members of the mostly French-speaking political party in Quebec known as the Parti-Québécois (formed in 1968), whose political agenda is for the province of Quebec to secede from Canada (p. 838).

¹⁶

An 'anglophone' is "a person in a bilingual or multilingual country whose native or principal language is English" (Ibid, p.44).

Joliette is a separatist¹⁷ neighbourhood. It was a little uncomfortable for me because my French is not perfect. Sometimes in the staff room the teachers would be talking about politics. It would make me feel a bit uncomfortable when they would be making references to what was in the news about the political situation in Quebec. There was no secret about their political views.

The administration wasn't too bad, though. The principal was somewhat nice to me, although I can't say that I got all the support that I needed. I stayed away from the administration quite a bit and the year went by okay. Unfortunately, I didn't feel that the principal would give me a glowing evaluation because I knew that he would have preferred to have a francophone¹⁸ teaching English as a Second Language than to have an anglophone. But they were desperate when they hired me because they had to replace their English teacher who lost her voice at the end of September. I got a call one day and they asked me if I could teach the very next day.

I didn't have a great relationship with my colleagues; none of them could speak English. I didn't feel that I was invited into things they were doing. For example, they decided to paint the teachers' staff room and they didn't tell me about it. They had all come in on the weekend and had volunteered to paint.

¹⁷

A 'separatist' is "an advocate or supporter of the withdrawal of a province in Confederation" (Ibid, p. 1022).

¹⁸

A 'francophone' is "a person in a bilingual or multicultural country whose native or principal language is French" (Ibid, p. 469).

They didn't ask me if I wanted to join in. It was little things like that, that make you feel that you are excluded. Also, when they had social events at Christmas time and Easter, when they planned a lunch together, they never asked me ahead of time; they would ask me or I was told about it on the day of the event - I was always an afterthought. I have to admit that I was busy and that I didn't spend that much time in the staff room. But at the same time I didn't feel that I was part of the staff that much.

The students, on the other hand, treated me very well. First of all, in that programme there was no French spoken in the classroom at all. When I came into the classroom it was an all English environment. They saw me as competent because they were learning English from an anglophone. They knew that my French wasn't perfect because when I had to supervise the kids outside, they would laugh at my French and make little comments. They couldn't understand why I couldn't speak French very well, especially because my last name is French.

There was only one teacher at McGill University in the TESL programme who addressed the problem of anglophones teaching in French schools. He told us that if you don't speak French, good luck trying to find a job in Quebec! The students got really angry with him. He explained to them that pedagogically you don't want to use the students' first language in the classroom. But the reality of Quebec is that many of the students don't speak English. In order to discipline or to explain things to the kids, the administration wants you to be able to speak French. And if you can't speak French, you're going to have a

hard time because they aren't going to accept you. This teacher was right on the mark! Student teachers experienced what it was like to be in a separatist environment when they did their stages¹⁹. I experienced that when I had my first stage in Verdun (a suburb of Montreal). I remember the guy who was my cooperating teacher. He was very nice to me the whole time and he gave me a very good evaluation, except for the last line. He said, "However, I don't think that Dee Dee's French is adequate enough to teach Francophones in Quebec". In other words, go teach Hispanics in the United States, or teach Koreans, or whatever. So I felt that I could never use that evaluation as a reference because anyone who saw that wouldn't hire me. I felt he really closed the door for me. I didn't agree with the evaluation but I didn't feel that I could say anything. Besides, he was a Francophone teaching English!

Dee Dee Belanger went on to teach at the same Muslim school that I taught. In fact, she was the teacher who replaced me when I left. In Dee Dee's narrative she speaks of the lack of communication between the Muslim teachers, administrators and herself. She speaks about having to learn about the culture on her own, through her own mistakes. She talks about differences in attitudes about dress, marriage,

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A 'stage' (pronounced staj) is a term borrowed from the French which refers to a student teacher's practice and evaluation in the classroom. It is part of the teacher training programme.

and beliefs. She tells of never feeling secure in her job and about how the administration would threaten her future with the school if she didn't conform to their regulations. She addresses the need for teacher training programmes that would help inform future teachers about different religions and cultures, what their belief systems are, and about what you can or cannot do as a teacher in these schools.

When the Muslim school called me for the interview, they didn't tell me the name of the school. I went through the listing of schools and realized that it was a Muslim school. On the day of the interview I wore a long skirt and long sleeves because I had studied in a Moral and Religious Education course that Muslims cover up. When I went to the interview they told me that they were looking for someone who spoke English well and did all of her education in English, and that they wanted a woman. They told me that there were no discipline problems at the school, and that they were like a family, that they would give me all the support I needed. One of the interviewers told me that they'd help me all throughout my probation. He said, "I guarantee you, if you're here with us the two years of your probation, you'll get very good evaluations. Wait until you see the schedule," he said. "It's excellent." I took the job.

When I started, no one spoke to me! I found that in the beginning people hardly spoke to each other. In the staff room they spoke mostly Arabic. There was a real lack of communication. I wasn't informed about everything that went on. When I first started at the

school, I would come and go when I didn't have to teach. Finally, after a few days, one of the teacher's told me that I was supposed to sign in every morning and after school. I had to be there between 8:00 a.m. and 8:15 a.m., otherwise they would dock my pay at the end of the year. When I got my schedule, I was under the understanding that, like most school systems, you only came in when you had to teach. I did have a good schedule; I was off many afternoons, which surprised me, but I had to stay at the school even though I wasn't teaching.

The school was dirty; it was shocking to see. And when the kids started school, I found that they weren't super-nice - there were a lot of discipline problems in the school. My grade seven and my grade eights were the worst - you know, they test you. They ask lots of personal questions like, "Do you eat pork?" I told them that I was part French-Canadian, and like most Canadians I eat bacon; I eat sausages. They said, "Eeew, eeew. You're a pork eater!" Little things like that to make you feel really uncomfortable.

It wasn't only the students who asked me personal questions. The teachers wanted to know about my personal life. They would say things like, "You're thirty years old and you're not married!" I even had one teacher ask me if I was unable to have children! A male teacher told me that I looked younger than thirty and told me not to tell anyone that I wasn't married, as if I had done something wrong. Even the principal kept asking me when I was getting married.

I had a lot of trouble at the beginning. I wasn't told about how to deal with my students by the administration; I either had to learn by mistake or the

teachers took it upon themselves to tell me. Sometimes a teacher would come up to me and say that she saw me talking too close to a boy or that I touched a male student. They would tell me things that I was not supposed to do in the classroom. I remember that one day I decided to pair up the students. I put all their names in random order and then paired them up. One of the teachers said, "You put a boy with a girl? You have no right to do that!" Teachers began to tell me things that were really the administration's job to tell me. Really, the administration should have sat me down at the beginning and explained everything that they didn't want me to do at the school.

I had other dealings with the students that got me into trouble. During my first year, there was a girl, sixteen years old, who was getting married. She was marrying a man who was much older and who already had another wife. His wife couldn't have children so that was why he wanted to marry her. I told her that I had a real problem with that. She didn't know anything about this man, if he was a Canadian citizen, what he did for a living. I told her, in front of a class of girls, that she should find out first who she is marrying. The principal called me into his office because the girls had told their parents about what I had said. He told me that he got three calls from parents. He said, "I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your opinion to yourself." It was then that the culture and religion really got to me.

The dress code became an issue, too. When I went to the interview, I specifically asked whether or not I could wear slacks. They told me I could wear them in the wintertime. They told me that I had to dress

conservatively but because I was not Muslim, I was not expected to wear the hijab. I tried at first to wear skirts but I got tired of them and I began to wear slacks almost everyday. When a new principal arrived, he didn't like me wearing pants and he told me that parents had complained that I wasn't wearing the hijab. He said, "I think it's important for your future at this school for you to consider wearing a hijab." I wasn't going to, and I was pretty sure that it was against the law for him to ask me to wear one. I called up the *Normes de Travails* (Work Standards Commission) and they told me that the school had no right to ask me to wear the hijab. Then the principal asked me to wear a white lab coat. "You wear pants all the time," he said, "and it shows off your figure." I told him that when I was hired, they told me I was allowed to wear pants. He was quite surprised when I refused to wear the lab coat, and I began to get a little worried because my probation was not yet finished.

When I think back, I realize that things got better in my second year. The administration pretty much left me alone. And the best part of the job is that I got exposed to a different culture and it's interesting to work in a new environment. But teachers need to know about different cultures. In teacher training, learning about different cultures and what would be acceptable and unacceptable would help. You need to know what other people believe and don't believe. I remember in my second year, I'd gone into a classroom and there were all of these textbooks with the pages ripped out of them and the pages were in the garbage. The students told me that their teacher made

them rip out the pages on evolution and Darwinism because Muslims don't believe in it. I told them that you don't have to believe in it, but you should at least know about it. I said that sometimes the greatest way to defend yourself is to know something about the other person's point of view. I actually believe that having me in the school helps the students adapt to the Canadian point of view. I chose materials that most Canadian kids do in English schools, to expose them to the English culture, North American culture as well.

The Muslims don't have a lot of respect for their school. The administration is not very efficient. They don't consider their school to be a 'real' school. They know it's different. The teachers said to me after I got my brevet (teaching license), "Oh Dee Dee, you've got your brevet now. Why don't you get a job at a real school?"

I've never really felt that I've had job security at the Muslim school. I've always felt that if they could find someone to replace me, they would.

Making Waves

Patricia Miller was in her first year of teaching. She was employed as a kindergarten teacher in a French private school. Patricia speaks of the difficulties of being one of the two English teachers in the school. She tells of feeling alone because she didn't have the support of the staff or administration. Particularly, her narrative speaks of

frustration when she tries to stand up for her rights, and for the rights of her students, but no one cares. She talks of being harassed by the school principal. Patricia is an 'other' because she is the only one to confront the director; she is the only one to stand up for what she believes; everyone else is afraid.

I worked at a French private school for a year. The building was very large but not the kind of building that should be used as a school. It was located on a busy industrial street in Laval (just off the island of Montreal). The physical facilities weren't really suited to a school; it was one level, plus a basement level. There were five classrooms upstairs and three classrooms in the basement, and a small room for the teachers to meet in. There was also a larger, more open area for the children to have their out-of-class activities. It was a primary school with a daycare/preschool component.

I taught kindergarten and had two classes of twenty-seven students each, which is quite big for a kindergarten class. The classroom was in a confined area in the basement - not the usual size for a class that big. I didn't have any help. We didn't even have parents come in and help and we had no teacher's aides.

We had a problem with smoke coming through the walls. The school was situated near a garage that worked on diesel engines - and somehow the fumes were coming into the ventilation system. I'd pull the kids out of the classroom, and into a better-ventilated

area. The director didn't seem to care. When I got pregnant I tried to get a leave of absence because of the fumes, but because I couldn't prove that the fumes were present on a regular basis, I couldn't get it. The director started to think of me as a troublemaker.

It is interesting that the director of the school seemed to treat the English teachers better than the French teachers. For the most part, he seemed to respect us more and tried to cozy up to us more, although he was a very authoritative man. At the beginning he tried to please us, maybe because he was having a hard time keeping English teachers there. They'd been through a lot of English teachers; no one had ever renewed their contracts. So, there was a very high turn-over of teachers.

I was hired within the first three days of the beginning of school. I couldn't believe that the kindergarten didn't have any equipment - there were absolutely no supplies. All they had was about ten puzzles, four books, a few desks, and a little bit of art material. Maybe there was one box of toys - that's it. It didn't seem like it had been set up for a kindergarten. The administration did not seem to understand what a kindergarten class needed.

The staff treated me pretty well, but it was difficult because I was the only person who would stay after school. There were two of us English teachers, but the other English teacher didn't stay around much. Also, it was difficult because most of the teachers couldn't speak English - only one could - so I had to listen and converse in French. I don't think they tried to exclude me but it was very hard to follow everything they said because it was in French. After

a few months they asked me to have lunch with them, but I was pretty lonely in the beginning. They didn't go out of their way to make me feel welcome, but then again, the whole climate of the school wasn't very welcoming. All the teachers were under a lot of stress - the pay was bad and the working conditions were bad. There was no support for the teachers vis-à-vis the administration. If you had a problem with a child, they didn't care. Even if the child was violent or had a learning problem, as long as their parents paid the fees, then there wasn't a problem as far as the administration could see. One teacher was already in the process of a union grievance against the owner of the school so that made the atmosphere in the school even worse. We were all unhappy because we were not entitled to benefits. In order to receive benefits you had to work twenty hours a week or full time. But all the teachers worked just under twenty hours, so none of us got any benefits.

I wasn't afraid to make waves. I began to question the way the director was running things. For example, I wanted to confront him on class-size. It became a problem in my class because I had a student with major socialization problems. His parents were told by the Children's Hospital that he should be in a smaller class. That's why his mother put him in the private school. But there were twenty-seven students in the class and when she found out the class was so big, she was very surprised and asked if she could take her son out of the school. There was really nothing I could do. No one else in the school wanted to say anything to the director to support me; they didn't want to make any problems.

After I started to complain, the director began to be a little abrupt with me. He started watching what I was doing and started changing the programme. A couple of times he hinted at firing me, especially when I got pregnant. He suggested that maybe I should leave. I was monitored a lot more closely after that.

The parents were satisfied with the work I did with the kids, but I didn't feel that I'd accomplished what I had wanted to. I became so disillusioned - I began to feel that I should have never gone into teaching. I felt that I wasn't a good teacher. I was overwhelmed. The most difficult part was not having any teacher's aides for the students who needed help. The director's wife, who was the school psychologist, came in to observe one of the children who had problems. The child was violent; he was hitting, stabbing others in the back with his pencils, and throwing things across the room. He was dangerous for the entire class. The director's wife said there was nothing she could do. The director told me to give the child stickers and keep him quiet. His parents had three children in the school and they paid the tuition. The other teachers told me not to get upset. They didn't understand how I felt. I was frustrated with the method of teaching the administration wanted me to follow, and I was frustrated because I didn't get any support. When I complained, the director would watch me more closely.

The teacher training programme I had was good, but I don't think it prepared me. I think there should be a course on teachers' rights, and what kind of legal help you can get. Private schools are different than public schools. And in this one, I didn't feel that I

had any support. I didn't feel that I had a voice; I don't think anyone did.

Experiences of the North: Being an "Other" while being a "Native"

Betty Martin was a young, single mother when she went to the area of Northern Quebec to teach. Finding a quiet, unpolluted environment, Betty realized she had found the perfect place to bring up her son. Her experiences in the North made such a significant impact on her, that to this day, Betty vows to retire in the "Great White North". Although she has found a place that she can call home among the native Cree people, her teaching experiences were extremely varied. In Betty's narrative, she talks about the rewards of teaching among the Cree, and she also talks about the difficulties. She speaks of the problems among the non-native teachers who found living in isolation very difficult. But mostly, Betty's story is one of finding herself as an "other", not among the native people, but among her very own people.

I had been teaching without a formal teaching certificate in South America. When I returned to Montreal, I wanted to get a diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) because I intended to teach in a Native School up in Northern Quebec. I attained

my position with the Native School Board in 1980 and enjoyed it very much but sometimes it was very difficult.

Before I got to the North I had misconceptions about what the weather was like. I thought that it was cold and snowy there even in the summertime. But when I got there I was amazed to find that it was 27°C and there was lots of sand. I had gone up with my son and I suddenly realized that this was an ideal place to raise a child, mainly because there wasn't any pollution, and it was a very small community. It was like a big sandbox for him and he was in heaven.

The school I taught at was very old and spread out. We would joke and call it a campus because it was spread out in different old trailers, and the main building, which was very small, I think was once an army barracks. The America army was based there. The school was very decrepit, but cozy at the same time. My sister, who lived there, had told me a bit about the area and she had sent me some pictures so I knew ahead of time what to expect. I knew not to expect 'southern comforts'. And you learn to make do with what you have - it is what holds people together. The school was not equipped with very much. Their audio-video facilities included one overhead projector. We didn't have a television or other video equipment. They only got television in the community the year before I arrived. Telephones were only four digits. The natives didn't have any telephone manners. Instead of answering "Hello", they would say a phrase in their language for "Who's that?".

When I first arrived, most of the teachers at the school were non-natives, except for the kindergarten

teacher. The pedagogical advisors were also white. Now, most of the elementary teachers are native, but for a long time it was as if the whites ruled. I was the only teacher there who had a degree in TESL. I didn't get my preparation for this experience from the TESL programme, however. I was prepared because of the different experiences I had had in foreign countries. The other teachers, however, didn't know what to expect. Unfortunately, they prejudged the students. They didn't think they were bright, or talented, or even capable of learning in an academic fashion. So it was the teachers' biases and inexperience that made it difficult for them.

I didn't get along too well with my colleagues. My view on things did not make me socially acceptable to the non-natives. The teachers would often have pot-luck suppers. I went one time, and all the teachers did was back-stab the people they knew and they would talk very prejudicial about the native people. They would say things like, "They (the natives) smell." They complained about the living conditions. They talked about the problems of doing their shopping, about having to wait for the cargo plane. After that, I stopped going to the pot-lucks. What made me really unacceptable to the white teachers was that I made friendships with the natives. There was a woman, also a single mother, who lived a few doors away from me. She acted as the liaison between the parents and the teachers. She was a wonderful and very helpful person. She could translate for the parents and teachers and she was open to both cultures - her own and the white people. I tried to encourage the teachers to work with her. Unfortunately, the teachers didn't trust her so

they didn't have much to do with her. This animosity went both ways, though. There was a lot of hatred for non-natives. I managed to get accepted by the natives, at least some of them. But the other teachers resented me. They felt I was ostracizing them, so in return they would ostracize me. It got to the point that because I wasn't going to their pot-luck dinners, they stopped inviting me. The funny thing about it was that although they thought they were punishing me by ostracizing me, I felt kind of relieved. I didn't like making excuses for not showing up.

The administration was really no better than the teachers. When I first started, there was a very caring and attentive principal, but he left for another community. His replacement was a very bad teacher. He would take the kids' heads and bang them against the blackboard saying, "Are you dumb, are you stupid? Can't you learn?" He didn't understand that English was not their native language. I'd like to see him speak in two languages and learn in two languages. Occasionally I would visit him in his home, but this made me very uncomfortable because his house was full of native sculptures that I know he got deceitfully. The sculptors would come around selling their sculptures (in the 1980s they were worth about \$200.00). Even though the principal knew how much the sculptures were worth, he would pay for them with a bottle of booze. He was encouraging alcoholism when he knew the people needed money for food and for their families. He would laugh at what he was getting away with and he'd say, "This is worth a couple of hundred dollars and I'm getting it for a bottle of vodka".

I endeared myself to the natives because I tried

to incorporate their culture into my programmes. For example, I was the first person ever to put their native language in the Christmas Concert. It was overwhelming to see the reaction of the parents, especially the elders. Also, I created materials to use with the "bush kids" that incorporated their native language. Bush kids are kids who spend many months in the bush with their family, hunting and participating in their traditional way of life. When they come back to the village and come back to school, they're really out of it. First of all, it's like coming from a small community to a big city; coming from the bush into their community is a culture shock. They have very little understanding of English, maybe just a few words. They're at a loss just for being out of class for so long, and they haven't kept up. To help them, I created teaching materials that incorporated some Cree words. For instance, a tent is *mitchua* - so I would have a text and a drawing of a tent. The text might read: "Sandy came out of the *mitchua*." That really caught their attention. When I asked a child to read it out and he read the word *mitchua*, he gave me the look, the expression, that gives a teacher true satisfaction.

It was the non-natives that made me the "other". I do have some non-native friends - mostly people I knew from way back. But many resent my closeness to the native people. I've tried to help them understand the native way of thinking and to get them to realize that their judgements come from their culture. I try to get them to understand that their culture is not the one and only. And they resent me for that.

I left the North for different reasons. At that

time, I was teaching secondary and I had a very difficult group. Often the girls can be much more difficult than the boys. They would give me the silent treatment, or make nasty remarks. The worst part is that they always think the worst of non-natives. They abuse that and exploit it, and they would make up the most absurd stories to tell their parents, so their parents would complain to the administration about you. I found out that they never forgive and forget the past. Things that happened twelve, fifteen years ago are brought up whether these things really happened or not. That really hurt! We left after my son got frostbite. But really, I wanted my son to get a better education.

We went back in 1992 for a visit. My sister had passed away and I wasn't able to see her grave. When we got there, my son and I realized that we were homesick. Unfortunately, when I applied to teach again in the North I was told that I had to wait about two years. I did finally go back in 1995. This time, though, I ended up twice as far north as I was originally, and teaching adult education. On my way up, I got into some difficulty with the director. She was flying up with her new teachers and invited us all to go to a camp with her. I just wanted to settle in to this new community before teaching and I explained this to her. She seemed snubbed and she resented me from then on. She was Inuit, and was a new director as well. We had many clashes. For example, there was one student I had that was amazing. He had dropped out of school in grade five and was abused by his family. He told me that he had attempted suicide by shooting himself in the stomach. He tried to get accepted in an

adult education centre in another town so he would be away from his family. The director wouldn't allow it. Because of his family, he missed a lot of school. But he tried very hard to keep up. He was dyslexic and just writing a couple of pages would take him hours. It got to the point where I had to insist that he didn't have to write everything because it was so time-consuming. He really did make an effort, though, to catch up. But, the director pulled the rules on him. She didn't like his family. She decided that he had been away too much and suspended him. She told him that he couldn't reapply until the following year. I was so afraid of what he would do. It took so much courage for him to come back after leaving in grade five, into a class of adults, especially with all his family problems. But I saw the injustice. There were other students who got away with so much, just because the director liked their families, or because they were important people in the community.

Even though I've had difficulties in the North, it is still the place I want to go back to more than any other place. There, I feel the satisfaction and challenge I want as a teacher. I feel the satisfaction in making a difference in a student's life that I can't feel anywhere else.

Teaching in Korea: A Male's Point of View

The point of this thesis is to show the importance of listening to all voices. It would not be right, then, if this thesis relied only on the narratives of female teachers.

Women teachers are not the only ones to be oppressed by the hegemony of the teaching profession. Male teachers have also experienced prejudicial treatment and feelings of 'otherness'. While in Toronto, I had the good fortune to meet with a young man who taught in Korea for one year. During James' contract in Korea, he experienced many of the same feelings that female teachers have experienced as 'others'.

James O'Connor, who is in his mid-twenties, is an English Second Language teacher. He studied History and Political Science before going into teaching. He also belongs to his local chapter of Toastmasters. What is particularly unique about James is that he is 6'9" tall and as he says in his story, people would constantly stare at him. James spent close to one year teaching in a suburb, 45 minutes from Seoul. He was part of a private institution, called a Hogwan, that contracted foreign teachers to teach in the institution, as well as in public schools. This is his story:

The public school I taught in was very poor. What I first thought were tin shacks in a garbage dump at the outer edges of the courtyard of the school, turned out to be the students' houses.

The school system had varying calendars depending on the institution or the individual school - unlike our September to June calendar. Class sizes ranged from 20 to 40 students. Wintertime was tough in my

school because it was not well heated. They only had a wood stove in the middle of the classroom. It had a pipe that ran out of the window. They had to open the window, not to let the cold air in, but to let the smoke out. When you walk into a Canadian school, it's like a palace in comparison.

One thing you notice in these schools is the corruption. I know in our Hogwan, they had to bribe the principal to get us to teach there. Parents would also bribe the teachers so that we would give special attention to their children. There was a lot of bribing going on.

I remember when I first arrived in Korea, I felt kind of special. Generally, Koreans consider teachers as valuable assets because parents spend a lot of money for their children to learn English. But it wasn't the same for the Korean teachers. I wouldn't want to be a Korean teacher. They were given a lower status and were expected to work very long hours. There was a large turnover of Korean teachers.

The Korean teachers treated us foreigners well, though. A lot of them wanted to come to our institute, not because they wanted to work for our director; it was more the fact that they wanted to improve their English. You get higher pay if you're more fluent in English. But it was very difficult to socialize with the Korean teachers. The departments were separate. Another thing was that many of the foreign teachers did not want to stay at the Hogwan for longer than their teaching time dictated. One reason was the commuting time. Another reason was that a lot of the teachers had privates (tutorials which provided extra income to the teacher), which is technically illegal but the pay

was about twice as much as what they normally got. We did get invitations to our students' and colleagues' houses all the time, though. But it was almost too overwhelming because a lot of them wanted a free English lesson. It's very expensive to take English lessons. I didn't mind socializing with some but it could become very tedious because you're exhausted from teaching and the last thing you want to do is teach another lesson.

When I first arrived I socialized more with the other foreign teachers. You're in strange surroundings, so of course, you want to go with something familiar, so you go with these teachers. But overall, it's a strange scenario because you get tired of each other very quickly because they're the only people you talk to and it is a very small group. Eventually it gets claustrophobic. One thing that is interesting is when you walk down the street and you see a foreigner, you want to say hello to them but a lot of them ignore you. Foreigners try to avoid one another - it's really kind of weird.

You never really become part of the culture there. You're the immigrant; you can't read, you can't speak the language, and you're very 'non-Korean'. No matter how many times you socialize with the Koreans, you never become really socialized. There's also a very anti-foreigner culture there. Historically, they have been invaded by Japan and Russia, and they have been dominated by the Americans.

My relationships with the administration were up and down. One thing that I really think should have been taught to the teachers in teacher-training is the Korean culture. What I mean by that is how to deal

with your employer and what is considered polite in Korean society. For example, looking someone directly in the eye is fine here, but over there it is considered very rude. You're not supposed to talk to your boss; you're supposed to go to your immediate level superior. Also, showing visible anger is considered very rude and stepping on the floor with your shoes on is a major 'faux-pas'. I had a couple of run-ins with the director and in hind-sight if I had known the cultural differences, I probably would have done things differently. Overall, though, I had a good relationship with the director. It wasn't easy for a lot of the teachers. At the institute, it was very difficult because you never really felt part of the institute. It is supposed to be like a family relationship where the director is the father-figure but the foreign teachers were never regarded as part of the family.

Another thing I noticed was the Korean's dress. I was always surprised by how well dressed they were. The men were very conservative and so were the women. The children looked beautiful. The little girls had all these beautiful dresses and shoes. The boys were well dressed too. But the foreigners took the job a little less seriously. They didn't dress as formally as they should have and that caused a lot of friction. Koreans pay big attention to your appearance. Facial hair is not regarded very well. Many of the teachers with their lackadaisical attitudes towards dress offended many of the Koreans. The Koreans treated school like a business so they dressed well. The foreign teachers thought this was very strange.

Something that upset a lot of the foreigners, as

well as myself, was that our contracts were constantly being broken. In Korea, it is more like a relationship than a contract. In Western society a contract is a contract; it's legally binding. But in Korea, it's not - it means very little. So there was a lot of conflict about pay. Every month it was the same problem; you wondered if you were going to get paid a certain amount and there was always confusion. That was probably the worst part about teaching in Korea. We never knew where we stood at work. We constantly worried about pay, class time, time off. You don't have set hours or set days there. The organization that we take for granted here, just doesn't exist there.

Another thing the foreign teachers found difficult is how to relate to their superiors. You're supposed to act deferential to your boss. For a lot of the American teachers, and some of the Canadian ones, it was very hard to act that way, so there was a culture clash. My roommate saw a movie while he was there. It showed this gang member being treated like crap by his boss but he was still very loyal to him. So my roommate tried it. I know it sounds kind of strange but he tried acting almost like a dog and the director's attitude was so much better toward him. It's rather interesting; if you observe more of the cultural stuff, the relationship is so much better. But when you go over there you don't know this.

I think the female teachers had a harder time than the male ones. The culture was very strict with the women. They didn't have the freedom that the male teachers had. I think I read that Canada was ranked sixth for women's rights and Korea was ranked seventy-seventh - so there's a big gap between the two

countries. Foreign women were judged more critically about their social behaviour. In Korea, you need to have a third party to introduce you. Their dating situation is very interesting because they always went out in groups. Koreans had a big problem with teachers living together. For them, premarital sex was definitely against their traditions. And a big thing over there was age; by the time you are thirty you're supposed to be married.

They talked about my height all the time. They had a special name for me: "Long Daddy". It could get a bit annoying after a while because you're constantly being stared at. They often asked me if I was a basketball player and if I knew Michael Jordon (a very famous, very tall American basketball player). Sometimes, I would joke with them and say that I knew him.

I learned a lot in Korea. When I think about how I treated Asians in Canada, I think, "Oh God" - I probably offended many of them. I learned about dealing with people from other cultures. I'd like to teach again overseas, but first I want to go to teachers' college to get my teacher's degree. I would certainly tell teachers going over there, to study the culture and the history first. Because I like to read history, I was probably a lot more prepared than the other teachers. I found a lot of teachers didn't realize how they acted or what they said that had a lot of impact on their relationships with the Koreans. I would certainly recommend that new teachers learn the culture and take some lessons in the language.

Another thing I learned was that adjusting to a new country and culture take time. You go through many

phases when you first get there. First, you're excited about a new country and everything is interesting. That lasts about a month. Then you start to compare, "This is not like at home," or "They have strange customs," etc.. That's the second phase. The third phase is when you become more easy-going. A lot of people didn't like being there, they didn't like the culture and they wanted to leave just after getting there. A lot of teachers can't handle the contracts or the directors, and a lot of them leave right away. I think that's the biggest mistake. Even though you might not make the money you wanted to, the experiences are a lot more valuable. There are so many things that you can learn; learning another culture and how they do things is extremely valuable.

James' story tells us about the struggles of being in a foreign culture. He stresses the importance of learning about the culture and language before going over to teach. His story makes it quite clear that teacher training programmes are remiss in their ability to train teachers to teach in foreign countries. James discusses the various phases new teachers go through when they first arrive; these are very important and teachers in training would surely benefit from this information.

Teachers who have already spoken out

In this last section on teacher narratives, I include

two articles from texts on teaching experiences in order to emphasize the point that there are many ways in which teachers find themselves in the position of 'other'. In the first article, a teacher describes her experiences as a lesbian in a school for boys. Even though it is an experience that is shared by only a limited number of teachers, it is worthy of mention, for at its core are the same feelings of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness that is shared by everyone who is an 'other'.

The second article describes the experiences of Mrs. Lauren who is an 'other' because of her different teaching styles or philosophies. Mary Jean Ronan Herzog (1995) documents an example of a teacher who stands alone because she advocates multi-grade classes, something that is simply not done in the traditional rural schools in North Carolina. In "Breaking Tradition: The Experiences of an Alternative Teacher in a Rural School", Herzog (in Thomas, 1995) tells the story of Mrs. Lauren (a pseudonym), whose untraditional teaching styles and philosophies "pushed the margins of tradition back" (p. 154). But in pushing those margins of tradition back, Mrs. Lauren experienced many of the same feelings of isolation and criticism that teachers in the position of 'other' experience.

Breaking Down the Barriers of Homophobia

In the chapter entitled "'Miss is a Lesbian': The Experience of a White Lesbian Teacher in a Boys' School", taken from *Women Teachers: Issues and Experiences*, the author (anonymous) shares her experiences as a lesbian teacher. Having taught in a Boys' school for thirteen years, she feels that it is necessary to justify her existence in the school by pointing out the valuable contributions she makes to the lives of her male students by trying to break down the barriers of homophobia. She says,

A lesbian feminist teaching boys is in a paradoxical position. My approach is not to try to identify the 'gay' student in each of my groups and to give him some special attention. I want to engage all the students in becoming aware of, and examining, the conditioning process which damages all of us, which conditions us towards accepting heterosexuality as the 'real world'.

(Taken from De Lyon & Widdowson Migniuolo, 1989, p. 155)

The experience of trying to break down homophobic barriers is often times painful and tiring. The author describes the taunting that gay and lesbian teachers experience in their daily lives. She points out the constant ridicule and feelings of insecurity that homosexual teachers

experience. She explains that if students become aware that a teacher is gay, they "may well run around the room clutching their bottoms and refuse to come to detentions in case he 'jumps on' on them" (p. 155). And, in order to survive these taunts, homosexual teachers have to find coping mechanisms. These may include trying to maintain anonymity, or blending in, or the opposite, taking a stand and becoming advocates for equality. In trying to remain anonymous, the author tried hiding behind a pair of 'Doctor Martins'-type boots and dark clothing, like a school uniform, in order to blend in. But blending in is almost impossible. She writes,

The lesbian walks the school as - at best - an advertisement, but always more objectified, 'larger than life', than the heterosexual teacher. She experiences 'acceptance' or rejection, but the solid block of authority which makes these decisions needs shifting, is sure of its rights to judge, doesn't want to shift (p. 156).

She also states that whether or not she wore a skirt, whether or not she was assertive and tried to challenge sexist comments, she was still described as "being like a man" (p. 156). The pornographic pictures etched in desks, the obscene taunts that are screamed down the hallway towards her, sometimes strengthened her resolve.

I go on existing; I go on teaching my lessons. Maybe on some days the atmosphere is soft enough, I have enough energy to take an insult into a conversation, to 'talk it through' with a student, to re-interpret physically threatening behaviour as a quest for information. However, it is very rare that the current of homophobia lessens enough for this creative point to be explored by the teacher and student(s) at the same time (p. 156).

As in most cases of 'otherness', the subject feels little support from her or his colleagues. The author talks about the difficulties she faces in her relationships with the other staff members. "How can I trust the hierarchy to support me when I share with that hierarchy no common language or experience?" (p. 158). And when she tries to fight against the oppression she feels as an 'other', and challenges the homophobic views, she wonders if it is possible at all for a lesbian teacher to exist in the authoritarian structure of a boys' school. She states,

[If a lesbian teacher] seeks a radical change in the way boys and staff relate together, to each other, then she challenges the world view which the institution peddles. [If] she seek[s] to subvert the institution from within, [she] knows that in so doing she can expect little support or understanding (p. 164).

What we have seen in this account is another form of 'otherness'. Yet, in the author's descriptions of the

attitudes held by her students and colleagues, and their behaviours, we see similar forms of oppression, rejection and powerlessness that we have seen in the narratives of the other respondents.

When Philosophies clash: Being an Alternative Teacher in a Traditional School

The narrative below is different from the other narratives included in this study. This is the story of a teacher who is an 'other' because of choice. In the other examples, teachers have found themselves in the position of 'other' by means of their religion, their language, or their sex, in other words, traits that are not chosen, but are consequences of birth. Mrs. Lauren, a veteran teacher of twenty-seven years, teaches in a very traditional rural school in North Carolina. Her narrative describes the oppression she experiences because her teaching style does not conform to the norms of the school. She is an 'other' because she chooses to be different.

Mrs. Lauren's views about teaching are different from her colleagues. She feels that many of the structures in public education are harmful to children (p. 155). Therefore, many of the common artifacts found in traditional classrooms, such as workbooks, chairs and desks, and even the teacher's desk

are absent from her classroom. But getting acceptance from her colleagues for her untraditional teaching style has not been easy. She has come to realize that trying to sell her ideas does not work. She points out,

Most of the teachers see school a certain way, and they already know that within my classroom I'm functioning quite differently from them. If I start coming on loud and clear, then they may feel like I'm attacking what they're doing. They will accept me more easily if they just observe from the sidelines and gradually see that my children are learning and that they have good manners and good self-control. They will gradually develop respect for what I'm doing as they observe what I do - better than if I go trying to talk and explain or sell my programme (p. 157).

Because many of Mrs. Lauren's colleagues are critical of her teaching styles, she often feels isolated and unaccepted. She has to be careful about what she says so as not to offend the other teachers. She feels that she is constantly having to defend herself and her methods. Even though Mrs. Lauren has been treated like an 'other', she has found ways to cope. She is always prepared, she keeps a journal wherein she writes down her philosophy, what she is doing, and what her students are doing on a daily basis. "She has learned that if she takes the time and effort to justify her approach in writing, she is usually free to use that approach" (p. 159).

So why, then, does Mrs. Lauren continue to teach in such an unorthodox way? It is because she is dedicated and believes that her approach makes a difference. As well, she receives strong support from the parents, and she is often invited by her university to share her methods and experiences. Herzog concludes her story about Mrs. Lauren by saying,

[Mrs. Lauren] seeks professional freedom in a hierarchal environment. She struggles with her lack of power. She does not feel free to voice her concerns to colleagues and administrators. [But] she has developed coping mechanisms. She avoids other teachers who are critical of her. She keeps her classroom neat and clean to be above reproach. She documents her philosophy, methods and her children's progress. She seeks support outside of her school...While Mrs. Lauren is unusual within her school system, she is not unique. Many traditional schools have teachers who take risks and who face many of the same problems. They need to be identified, and their stories need to be heard (p.p. 161-162).

In this chapter, teachers have shared their narratives of their teaching experiences. In each case, the teacher has been an 'other'. As we have seen, there are many ways in which a teacher can find her/himself in the position of 'other'. These include being different on the basis of language, religion, culture, gender, and sexual orientation.

One can be different because she/he is the only one to challenge authority, beliefs, and educational philosophies. One can be an 'other' because of traits determined at birth, or even because one *chooses* to be an 'other'. No matter how different the form of 'otherness' may be, what is painfully clear, is that those in the position of 'other' share overwhelmingly similar experiences of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness. In order for teachers to regain their sense of belonging, their self-worth, and their dignity, the voices of teachers in the position of 'other' must be heard. In sharing their narratives, they have at least begun to speak.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Throughout this thesis I have contended that narratives can be used for reflection and representation. I have shown that by allowing the respondents in this study to reflect on their experiences in culturally different schools and share their narratives, they have created a 'shared consciousness' (Denison, 1996) which speaks of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness. This 'shared consciousness' unites the individual voices and provides representation to a group of teachers in the position of 'other' who did not have a voice before. Although the teachers in this study have shared their narratives here, and hence, have been given a voice on the pages of *this* thesis, we must ask, "Where do we go from here?" Where will other teachers and future teachers who will be in the position of 'other' find a 'safe place' in which to share their voices? And how will they be empowered to contribute to knowledge about teaching in order to help others? I believe the place to begin is at university teacher education faculties.

Consequently, I have further suggested in this thesis that narratives can lead to reforms in teacher training programmes. I discuss several reforms in teacher training in this chapter. Moreover, I show how narratives can be an important part of these reforms. Accordingly, this chapter

will examine two main proposals for reforms in undergraduate teacher training programmes: 1) the incorporation of practice teaching experiences in culturally different and culturally diverse school environments, such as religious or ethnic schools, and the necessity for better multicultural education courses²⁰, and 2) university undergraduate courses which draw on the theories of the social reconstructionist tradition,²¹ and critical/feminist pedagogy. I believe it is imperative to incorporate the discourses of both multicultural education and critical/feminist pedagogy in teacher education programmes in order to specifically prepare teachers to work in culturally different and culturally diverse schools.

²⁰

Swartz (1992) defines multicultural education as "an education that uses methodologies and instructional materials which promote equity of information and high standards of academic scholarship in an environment that respects the potential of each student" (p.34).

²¹

Liston and Zeichner (1991) describe the social reconstructionist tradition which began in the 1930s as a "tradition which is primarily concerned with the preparation of teachers who can play a positive role in the making of a more just, equitable and humane society" (p. 154).

Reforms in Multicultural Education and Student Teacher Internships

Having experienced first-hand what it is like to be an 'other' when I taught in culturally different schools, I feel strongly that pre-service teachers should be required to do a practice teaching session (or practicum) in a culturally different or culturally diverse school, as well as be required to take courses in multicultural education. As many of the respondents in this study have pointed out, there is a need for exposure to different cultures. For example, James O'Connor strongly suggests learning about the culture and the language before teaching in a foreign country. He states that he would have done things very differently if he had known about the Korean culture before hand, and feels that a lot of the problems new teachers experience with their administrators and students is because they don't understand the culture. William Herman (in Herman and Bailey, 1991) echos James' sentiments,

My teaching experience in Taiwan quickly demonstrated that I was working in a most unusual and uncomfortable professional role - I was not in control! I didn't speak Chinese or understand the culture, and my students didn't know English (p. 117).

Another respondent, Betty Martin, feels that many of the

non-native teachers who went to the Québec North to teach did not know what to expect and had preconceived notions about the Cree culture. She purports that the teachers prejudged the students because they did not think the students were capable of learning. Martin claims that their biases and inexperience made it difficult for them. It would seem apparent, therefore, that future teachers require courses in multicultural education in order to understand other cultures, and to counteract their own prejudices and racism. Likewise, Herman and Bailey (1991) contend that "successful teaching in a foreign culture involves a reduction of ethnocentric ideas, attitudes, and behaviors, while at the same time maintaining a high level of academic integrity (p. 119).

In trying to deal with the emerging multicultural population in our schools and the proliferation of ethnic schools in Canada, there has been pressure to develop and implement multicultural educational policies in faculties of education across the country (Solomon and Levin-Rasky, 1996). However, even though these courses exist, very few deal with student teachers' attitudes about race/or racism and their preconceived notions concerning people of different cultures. Young and Buchanan (1996) state that "a substantial body of research ... demonstrates that students bring to faculties of

education well-entrenched conceptions of teaching that significantly shape the ways in which they attach meaning to their experiences there" (p.60). Furthermore, research shows that there is much resistance to multicultural education courses by existing teachers and teachers in training. Some of the resistance to multicultural education has to do with the nature of the initiatives, conditions of work, characteristics of teachers, and teachers' own ideologies, norms, values, traditions, and beliefs (Solomon and Levin-Rasky, 1996, p. 20).

Notwithstanding, it is felt that the best way to develop multicultural literacy is to be actually *immersed* in the culture. Ball University in Indiana, for example, is an institution which is committed to offering international study opportunities for students. The university believes that "the most effective teacher education programmes with regard to promoting cross-cultural literacy are those that actually immerse pre-service teachers in other cultures in other nations for teacher internships" (Myers, 1996, p. 579). Ball University's internship programme offers the students the opportunity to complete their sophomore practicum during the summer semester in Monterrey, Mexico. The programme also includes courses in multicultural education. Students who

have participated in this programme speak of its effectiveness. One student states,

This is my first time in Mexico so that the biggest benefit I got was to experience the culture. There are many Mexicans in my home town. It was from them that I had my first image of Mexicans. However, I am so glad I came here so I can see different Mexicans and get a broader opinion (Myers, 1996, p. 581-2).

Another student says,

I don't know how you could possibly expect me to list all the things that I learned since I got here. What I mean by that is that not only have I learned so much about the differences in our cultures but the students here have taught me patience and understanding beyond anything I have ever known. (Ibid, p. 582).

As one can very clearly see from these comments, and the narratives of the respondents in this study, teachers want and need courses in multicultural education, especially those which deal with teachers' attitudes concerning people of different cultures. As Larke, Wiseman, and Bradley (1990) assert,

The more knowledgeable teachers are about the culture of their students and the more positive interactions between teachers and students of different racial/ethnic groups, the less threatened and acceptable teachers and students become of each others' cultural differences (p. 72).

And, as the respondents have suggested, future teachers would greatly benefit from actually being immersed into culturally different or culturally diverse schools in their own cities, or even in other countries.

Using Narratives as Part of the Reforms in Teacher Education

I have shown how teacher narratives illuminate the need for reforms in multicultural education courses, as well as in the internships of teacher education programmes. Now, I would like to suggest how teacher narratives can also be *part of* these reforms. In the internship portion of the teacher education programme at Ball University, for example, the students are required to write a weekly journal which recounts and reflects upon classroom activities. While I strongly support the concept of journal-keeping, I would more strongly advocate the writing of narratives which tell of student teachers' *personal experiences and feelings*. Student teacher narratives would speak about what it is like to teach in these schools, about how they get along with their supervisors, administrators, and peers, and what they have learned about the culture of the students. As well, student teachers would be expected to reflect not only on their teaching, but on their attitudes towards the culture, and on the way their

biases affect their teaching. In this way, the use of narratives for reflection can help to transform personal biases. As Powell, Zehm, and Garcia (1996) suggest, narratives can help student teachers understand their own life histories. Life histories are what we have learned socially, and what defines us; they shape our belief systems and our philosophies about teaching (Hunt, 1987). "If your life history has been limited primarily to monocultural experiences, you may have a limited sensitivity for teaching students with culturally diverse backgrounds" (Powell, Zehm, and Garcia, 1996, p. 44). Therefore, student teachers should use narratives as a means to reflect on their belief systems in order to understand their cultural identities and their cultural values. "Clarifying [our] values and exploring [our] cultural identity are essential first steps toward having successful ... interactions with culturally diverse students" (Ibid). Finally, students should use narratives as a means to critically evaluate whether or not their university courses have adequately prepared them for teaching in culturally different or culturally diverse school environments. In this way, students would feel empowered to affect change in teacher training programmes.

The most important purpose of the narratives, however, is

that they be shared with the other students, so that the student teachers feel that they are actively contributing to the knowledge about teaching in culturally different and culturally diverse schools. One point that I would like to emphasize, however, is that student teacher narratives *must not* be used for evaluation purposes. As Jennifer Gore (1993) points out, very frequently journals or narratives are used for monitoring students' progress or for holding students accountable. Therefore, students write what they expect their teacher wants to read. Or worse, journals are used as a means of confession (p. 151). For example, when journal-keeping is prescribed by someone in authority, such as the teacher, the student will "confess in the actual or imagined presence of a figure who prescribes the form of the confession, the words, and rituals through which it should be made, who appreciates, judges, consoles, or understands" (Rose, 1990, p. 240).

Rather than for the purpose of evaluation, narratives should be used for their reflective value and for their ability to produce knowledge about culturally different and culturally diverse schools. Thus, narratives have a very important function of revealing the social conditions and school climate of these schools. Until now, very little, if anything, has been written about the teaching experiences in

culturally different and culturally diverse schools. In fact, "unfortunately, most accounts of teachers' practical knowledge seem to give little emphasis to these cultural, social, or political [experiences]" (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. 67).

Reforms in Teacher Education for Critical Consciousness

The second part of this chapter examines reforms in teacher training programmes which lead to 'critical consciousness'²² (Freire, 1993). Courses in the social reconstructionist tradition and critical/feminist pedagogies of education, which come under the umbrella of postmodernist theory, enable students to identify the sources of their oppression. This is especially pertinent to teachers who work in culturally different and culturally diverse schools because they experience more blatant examples of patriarchal and institutional authority. First, social reconstructionist theory enables future teachers to understand their life histories and to critique their own social beliefs. In doing so, students will more clearly understand what makes them the

²²

Drawing on Freire's concept of 'critical consciousness', Longhi (1995) notes, that to be critically conscious is to be "cognizant of the forces which exploit... and can be accomplished through a process in which teachers assist students in problematizing knowledge, language and lived experiences" (p. 9).

kind of teachers they are (or will become). Courses in social reconstructionist theory can also help students understand the reality of schooling, so that they do not simply accept the social context of schooling as a given (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. xvii).

Furthermore, in critical/feminist pedagogy courses, students engage in discourses which lead to an understanding of patriarchal and institutional authority. Within these discourses student teachers can learn about how to gain representation and empowerment to challenge this authority in their prospective schools. Although I discussed the limitations of critical/feminist pedagogy in terms of its exclusion of teachers in the position of 'other' in Chapter Two, I would propose that as long as its discourses expand the notion of 'most disenfranchised' (bell hooks, 1993) to include teachers in the position of 'other' such as those who work in culturally different and culturally diverse schools, and those who are different because of gender identification or teaching philosophies, the voices of teachers in the position of 'other' have a good chance of being validated.

The Social Reconstructionist Reform Tradition

One of the most recent reform movements that has taken place in teacher education programmes is the social reconstructionist tradition which aims to prepare teachers to act in a just and humane way towards all students (Liston and Zeichner (1991). Several reconstructionist theorists such as Ira Shor, and Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux have propagated within current teacher educational theory the notions of teachers as 'transformative intellectuals' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985) and 'egalitarian teacher educators' (Shor, 1989). But criticisms of the social reconstructionist theory have pointed to its 'marginal status', suggesting that it is simply "an academic discussion that has had very little influence outside its own inner circle" (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. 34). Moreover, studies show that many universities are reluctant to completely endorse social reconstructionist-oriented reforms on the basis that student teachers may feel alienated because of their own support for the status quo in school and society, and because universities themselves are afraid of the tensions produced by an "approach that assumes an oppositional stance toward existing institutional and societal structures" (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. 155). Nonetheless, we can still look to the

social reconstructionist tradition for some insights into contemporary teacher training programmes which have adopted the notion of reflecting on one's social beliefs, and which challenge the reality of schooling. One example is the teacher training programme at Lewis and Clark College, which joins a gender-balanced perspective with a multicultural perspective. Here teacher educators focus on respect for cultural and gender differences.

Through the selection of readings, lecturers, and particular ways of organizing issues for discussion, teacher educators continually and deliberately focused students' attention on issues of gender, race, and class and sought to create an environment where students would be inspired to work against discrimination in these areas when they confronted it as teachers (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. 158).

Another example of contemporary social reconstructionist-oriented reform is one adopted by Susan Adler of the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Jesse Goodman of Indiana University. Here the university teacher training programmes emphasize the role of the teacher in curriculum development. Adler and Goodman, who are concerned with preparing teachers to be committed to social justice and democracy, place themselves on the side of marginalized people such as,

women, people of colour, and the poor by using their courses in part to help prospective teachers question the ways in which existing school practices in the social studies help to reproduce social and economic inequalities. Their hope is that their students will be inspired toward and capable of teaching in ways that promote the interests of all in the society and not just those of certain privileged groups (Liston and Zeichner, 1991, p. 160).

Although Liston and Zeichner (1991) highlight many ways that universities are employing a contemporary social reconstructionist tradition in their book, *Teacher Education and the Social Conditions of Schooling*, they emphasize that these methods alone cannot change the reality of schools. Michel Foucault's notions of *Regimes of Truth* (1988), also dispel the idea that teachers versed in the methods of social reconstructionist tradition can bring about social change. Rather, Foucault (in Gore, 1991) suggests, "instead of blazing forward toward liberation and change with the "intellectual" as leader, [he] asks that we look back in an attempt to understand what we are today" (p. 147). He is advocating that teachers reflect on what kind of teachers they are and how they came to be that way. This notion is in keeping with the ideas of Powell, Zehm, and Garcia (1996) that were stated earlier.

Looking To Critical/Feminist Pedagogy for Reforms

The strength of the social reconstructionist-oriented reform tradition in teacher education is that it prepares teachers to become more just and more humane. This is particularly important for teachers who work in culturally different and culturally diverse schools. The fact that they are more open to students of different cultures facilitates a more equitable and inclusive environment for both students and teacher. Nonetheless, as I mentioned previously, there are weaknesses in the social reconstructionist-oriented reform tradition. For example, it is not wholly endorsed by student teachers or universities, and it has been considered a 'marginal' theoretical approach that cannot change the reality schools. Moreover, it, like many other educational discourses, does not address the notion of teacher as 'other'. This leaves us in a conundrum: Given the limitations of the social re-constructionist theory and critical pedagogies (as presented in Chapter Two), is there an educational theory in which the concerns of teachers in the position of 'other' can be situated?

I believe we must look to critical/feminist pedagogy as a site for validating the voices of teachers in the position of 'other'. In Chapter Two, I suggested that critical/feminist

pedagogy most closely addresses (although not sufficiently) the concerns of teachers in the position of 'other' on the basis that it critiques the dominant ideologies of gender, race, and class. Another important contribution that critical/feminist pedagogy makes to teacher education is that it examines the role of the teacher educator. For example, the teacher educator must analyze and critique her/his own social situation in order to create a classroom environment which is inclusive to all students and which helps to validate the voices of all her/his students. Brady (1994) states, "It is not enough to respect the specificity of the voices that students bring to the classroom or any other educational site. It is imperative to deconstruct the place from which teachers speak" (Brady, in McLaren and Lankshear, 1994, p. 146). Unfortunately, this is not an easy task. In Ellsworth's (1992) attempt to illustrate the difficulties of critical/feminist pedagogy within her own classroom, she does not reflect on her own practices. She does not comprehend her own authority, nor does she understand the role of dialogue in developing trust between teacher and students. By not engaging in dialogue with her students, she ignores the basic premise of critical pedagogy which acknowledges the nature of authority in all dialogue. The use of dialogue in

critical/feminist pedagogy does not presume equal power in decision-making, rather, it illustrates the role of authority, it creates trust so that an exchange of ideas is possible, and it validates the voices of those who are oppressed.

Moreover, critical/ feminist pedagogy requires teacher educators to act as 'transformative intellectuals' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985).

Transformative intellectuals are the most powerful agents of change in schools because they can plan, think, design and implement curriculum policies and practices. Their goals could be to assist students in becoming critical agents by analyzing knowledge and relating this knowledge to their "life world" and by becoming agents in resisting practices which do not validate their knowledge (Longhi, 1995, p. 9).

Using concepts of deconstructing or rethinking of dominant ideologies such as patriarchy and institutional authority, critical/feminist pedagogy can provide a means to understand the power structures operating in culturally different schools. In order for this to happen, though, critical/feminist pedagogy must acknowledge the oppression of those who teach in culturally different schools by expanding its notion of 'most disenfranchised' (bell hooks, 1993). It must accept that the voices of teachers in the position of 'other' are authentic and worthy of being heard. I believe

that it must also accept that narratives are a useful and valid method of discourse which seeks to represent and empower teachers who are oppressed by the patriarchal and institutional power structures which exist in culturally different schools.

If student teachers are to be trained to play an active part in creating a more just and more humane society (Liston and Zeichner, 1991), and who are 'critically conscious' (Freire, 1993) of their own positions in society and the power structures which exist in schools, there needs to be reforms in teacher education programmes. The narratives of the respondents in this study address these concerns. They voice the need for better courses in multicultural education and they discuss the benefits of learning about the culture of their students before taking a job in a culturally different school. This would necessitate being *immersed* in the culture during their practice teaching sessions. As well, in order for teachers to contribute to knowledge about teaching in culturally different and culturally diverse schools and become empowered to make changes, they need to be able to critically assess their own social position. They need to become familiar with critical/feminist discourses which critique dominant ideologies of gender, race, and class in order to validate

their voices through a process of dialogue. Therefore, reforms in teacher education programmes must include multicultural education, cultural immersion practice teaching, and courses in critical/feminist pedagogy to better equip future teachers for jobs in culturally different and culturally diverse school environments.

I should stress at this point, that all of these reforms must take place at the *undergraduate* level; for it is here that the courses would affect the largest number of prospective teachers, and this is where student teachers acquire theories, skills, and methodologies that will equip them for life in the classroom. Unfortunately, in many Canadian universities, courses in critical and feminist pedagogies which examine the power structures inherent in schools, are only offered at the graduate level. This is an obvious example of "too little, too late," in that, by the time teachers pursue studies at the graduate level, the number of teachers is reduced tremendously, for it is not a requirement in teaching to have a Master's degree. As well, many teachers who have been teaching for several years will hold on to methodologies and philosophies which have become part of their teaching. They may not be willing to embrace the discourses which can enable them to alter the patriarchal

and institutional power structures that exploit them in the schools that they teach.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the use of teacher narratives, especially of those teachers in the position of 'other', in order to show their reflective, representational and empowering effects. It has also explored how teacher narratives can be an impetus for reforms in teacher training programmes which would better equip future teachers to work in culturally different and culturally diverse school environments.

Narratives serve to enable teachers to reflect on their subjectivities and on their teaching experiences. First, in the telling of their stories, teachers can critique their own privileged social positions and the biases they may hold toward other cultures. Secondly, narratives can help teachers distance themselves from their teaching experiences in order to understand their feelings. From past experiences, teachers can make changes in their attitudes and methodologies to improve their teaching in the present and future. As Maenette K. P. Benham (1997) suggests,

Stories are inescapably in our lives, as they frame the foundations of our souls and have the power to shape the present and future of our lives. It is through stories that we come to know our own values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, relationships, rituals, and traditions (p. 282).

Narratives have the power to provide representation to

teachers who have not had a voice before. I have shown in this study that the absence of teachers' voices is not a new phenomenon. In fact, the voices of teachers, especially those of women teachers, were silenced by the 'meta-narratives' in the history of education. For the most part, teachers' voices are still silent because of patriarchal and institutional power structures that exist in schools that negate the importance of teachers as sources of information. Nonetheless, teachers can have a voice by sharing their narratives. Although all the narratives in this study are different, they all speak of feelings of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness. In a sense, these narratives have become a 'collective story' (Richardson, 1990) and teachers have gained a 'shared consciousness' (Denison, 1996) without having known each other. As Richardson (1990) states,

People do not have to know each other for the social identification to take hold. By emotionally binding people together who have had the same experiences, whether in touch with each other or not, the collective story overcomes some of the isolation and alienation of contemporary life (p. 129).

By providing teachers with a voice, they can be empowered to resist the dominating effects of patriarchal and institutional authority. That is not to say that narratives possess magical powers that can eradicate the difficulties in

effecting change in culturally different schools. Notions of democracy and equality are not welcome in these schools, and are often seen as challenges to patriarchal and institutional authority. However, by sharing teaching stories, changes can come about, if only very slowly. What narratives do is provide a 'safe place' for teachers who are in the position of 'other' to share their experiences and their feelings of isolation, rejection, and powerlessness without being judged. By sharing their stories, teachers can band together to fight the oppression in culturally different schools. Had it not been for some courageous teachers who spoke out about being forced to wear head scarves, even though they were not of the Muslim faith, non-Muslims at the Muslim school where I taught, would still be required to cover up. Likewise, I have recently learned that teachers in two religious schools in the Montreal area publically voiced their grievances and went on strike to protest their oppressive working conditions. Teachers in the Hasidic school reached an agreement with their administrators, and the teachers of the Muslim school are awaiting the decision of an arbitrator. (This is the same Muslim school that I previously taught.)

Many of the respondents in this study spoke about not being adequately prepared for teaching in culturally different

schools. Their narratives have pointed to the need for reforms in teacher training programmes. In suggesting possible amendments, I have recommended courses in multicultural education and teacher internships in culturally different schools. I have advocated the use of narratives for reflection on teaching practices and social beliefs. As Stephen Marble states,

Narratives ... are crucial not only for providing insight into what teachers think and do, but for helping teachers themselves, particularly new teachers, make sense of what they think and do. This sense making is a critical component of a new teacher's transition into school culture (1997, p. 56)

I have also recommended courses in contemporary social reconstructionist theory and critical/feminist pedagogy in order to deconstruct the authority we award to patriarchal and institutional power structures that are part of the reality of schools. I contend that narratives have a place within these discourses such that they can help to expose the real experiences of teaching and help to broaden the definition of 'most disenfranchised' (bell hooks, 1993) to include teachers who teach in culturally different and culturally diverse schools, who find themselves in the position of 'other'. Thus, teachers who share their narratives can feel empowered because they have provided insights into what it is like to

teach in these schools, they have offered suggestions as to how to cope, and they have provided the impetus for reforms in teacher training programmes.

As I stated previously, the use of narratives in research on teaching is relatively new. It is just beginning to gain acceptance by a larger scholarly audience, yet there is much work still to do in order that narratives are deemed a valid source of knowledge of teaching. To date, virtually nothing has been written about teachers who work in culturally different schools who find themselves in the position of 'other', but it is my hope that further studies will be carried out to validate their knowledge and experience. As more and more public schools are slated to close in the near future, more new teachers will have to take teaching assignments in culturally different schools in Canada and abroad. This will provide vast opportunities to study teachers in the position of 'other'. I believe that teacher narratives can greatly contribute to new sources of information about teaching. Teachers just need to be given the opportunity to speak and to be listened to. "Unless teachers believe that others will listen to them, that what they have to say is worth hearing, they will remain silent" (Llorens, 1994, p. 8). This point is both hopeful and

disheartening.

On a personal note, the writing of this study has been therapeutic. It wasn't always easy to recall the feelings of utter powerlessness and frustration that I experienced at the Muslim and Hasidic schools. These are feelings I would rather forget. But by sharing my stories, and by listening to the stories of other teachers who are in the position of 'other', I feel we have gained a closeness that was not there before. I have reflected on my teaching experiences and I can now understand the reasons I felt so frustrated and powerless. My expectations of a just and humane society were not met in these schools, but much of my disappointment was a result of my clinging to my own social beliefs. Nonetheless, I think I have become a better teacher because of my experiences. Most importantly, however, I have learned from my narratives, and the others in this study, that you must share your experiences in order to understand them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I agree to participate in a programme of research being conducted by Deborah Baverstock-Angelus pertaining to the use of teacher narratives for representation, reflection, and reforms in teacher-training programmes under Doctor Joyce Barakett of Educational Studies at Concordia University.

I have been informed that the purpose of the research is to:

- (i) to elicit narratives from teachers who have been in the position of 'other',
- (ii) to show that these narratives can provide representation to teachers who have traditionally been non-represented, and,
- (iii) to illustrate the need for teacher-training programmes which address the issues related to teaching in institutions that place the teacher in the position of 'other'.

The research will be conducted through interview(s) and the recitation of narratives and will be recorded using a tape recorder. The interview should last one to two hours per session, with the possibility of two or three sessions. There will be no discomfort or risks involved and my confidentiality will be preserved.

I understand that my participation in this study is confidential.

I understand that I may request that a pseudonym be used for myself and that a fictitious name be used in referring to my employers in this research.

I understand that the data from this study may be published.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences.

I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no hidden motive of which I have not been informed.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Check the boxes that apply:

- Do not use my real name.
- Do not disclose the name of my place of work.
- I authorize the use of my transcripts in future research, if required.

Name: (Please print) _____

Signature: _____

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX II

DEPARTMENTAL ETHICS COMMITTEE SUMMARY PROTOCOL FORM

1. Title of Research Project:

Using Narratives for Reflection, Representation, and Reforms
in Teacher-Training Programmes

2. Sample of Persons of be Studied:

I will elicit narratives from primary and secondary teachers who have worked and/or are working in schools where they are considered as "others", such as religious schools, schools in the Far North of Québec, and schools abroad.

3. Method of Recruitment of Participants:

Several of the teachers I intend to interview are those with whom I have worked in the past. I have begun to contact these people. I will only interview those teachers/administrators who are willing to be interviewed.

If required, I will ask permission of teachers in schools I have not previously worked to be interviewed and to provide narratives.

4. Treatment of Participants in the Course of the Research:

(i) The research is not intended to be invasive or intrusive to any great extent. Of course, the participants will be required to disclose their personal narratives. This will take some time. I would like to interview each teacher at least once, twice for clarification, if necessary. I expect the time required for each interview will be about an hour or two. I will try to meet with them at a time that is convenient for them.

(ii) I am unable to pay the subjects for their participation. I can, if requested, provide the participants with a copy of the thesis.

(iii) As the contents of the narratives may be private or confidential, the identity of the participants and their schools will not be disclosed if requested.

5. Indicate Briefly how the Research Plan Deals with the Following Potential Ethical Concerns:

(a) Informed Consent:

As this research may involve both written and oral interviews and narratives, I will request that each participant provide their written consent. As well, I will provide written instructions as to the procedure of the research.

(b) Deception:

It is not my intention to use any method of deception in this research.

(c) Freedom to Discontinue:

I fully understand that my subjects may discontinue participation in the research at any time. This will be made clear to my subjects in writing on the same form as the instructions. I will discontinue the research with any individual if it becomes clear that there is any physical or psychological risk.

(d) Risk to Subjects' physical and psychological welfare:

There are no physical requirements for this research. All participation in this research is on a voluntary basis.

(e) Post-research Explanation and/or Debriefing:

When I have contacted potential participants, I have briefed them about what the research is about and what their role is. Before having the subjects recite their narratives, it will be made clear to them that I intend to use their stories verbatim, with my own introductions and explanations. The identity of the participants will be protected by the use of pseudonyms, if requested. A written copy of the participants' responses and narratives will be provided for verification, also if requested.

(f) Confidentiality of Results:

The consent form will stipulate that although participants' responses and narratives will be made public, their identity will remain confidential, if requested.

(g) Protecting and/or Addressing participants (or others affected by the research) "at risk" situations:

I do not anticipate any situations that will put my participants at risk. All information provided will be on a voluntary basis.

(h) The use of transcripts in future research:

In the event that I choose to do future research and will require the use of the transcripts provided from this study, I have provided a box on the Consent Form for participants to check off if they authorize the use of these transcripts at a later date. The participants are not required to give permission.

6. Bearing in Mind the Ethical Guidelines of your Academic and/or Professional association, please comment on any other ethical concerns which may arise in the course of the research.

I do not foresee any other ethical concerns.

7. Please Comment on Expected Benefits to be Derived from this Research:

I expect there to be many benefits derived from this research:

1) Teacher narratives will provide representation to teachers (especially female teachers) who find themselves in the position of "other". Specific examples of these unique teaching experiences will de-construct meta-narratives on the basis of patriarchal representation and provide a voice to teachers who have not been represented in previous literature because of the obscure nature of their teaching experiences. For example, nothing has been written about the experiences of Christian teachers who teach in Islamic or Orthodox Jewish Schools.

2) Teacher narratives provide a means of reflection. By reciting stories about their experiences, teachers can reflect on how

they view themselves, the students and administrators they work with, their teaching, and their coping strategies.

3) Teacher narratives can lead to empowerment. Because teachers who have found themselves in the position of "other" have not had a voice, teacher narratives can provide them with that voice. By telling their stories, teachers can change the way they are viewed by others, they can share their stories with other teachers so that they can band together to fight against oppression and isolation.

4) Teacher narratives can lead to reforms in teacher-training programmes. Up until now, teachers who have found themselves in the role of "other" in religious and foreign schools have not been represented. However, if more is learned about their experiences, perhaps, teacher-training courses could be developed to meet the needs of these future teachers. For example, it would help if students learned about different religions and cultures. It would help students to know the difficulties in living in isolation or abroad. It would be beneficial for students to learn ways of coping in situations where they are the "other". And, teacher narratives could encourage universities to better support their student-teachers in these sometimes trying situations.

8. Sample Questions or points of departure:

A) Background Information:

Name, school worked at, length of time employed at this institution, etc.

B) Questions pertaining to the study:

For what reasons would the participant consider themselves to be an 'other'?

Description of work environment, colleagues, administration, and students, etc.

Description of feelings of isolation, frustration, fulfillment, acceptance, rejection, empowerment, etc.

Reflections on teaching experiences, teacher-training programs, this study, etc.

C) Teacher Narratives:

Recitation of personal stories about specific events and feelings, etc.

REMOVING THE HIJAB

I'll ignore hijab ruling: MCSC chairman
Muslim school changes its policy, but Pallascio adopts hard line

CAROLYN ADOLPH and IRWIN BLOCK
 THE GAZETTE

The chairman of the Montreal Catholic School Commission reacted coldly last night to a statement by the Quebec Human Rights Commission that it is an attack on freedom of religion to bar or impose the hijab.

Michel Pallascio said the board won't be putting any pressure on its schools to change dress codes to permit the wearing of the Islamic head scarf.

"The scarf doesn't bother me," he said. "It's what's behind it that does."

Pallascio said he will leave it to Quebec City to decide whether schools that ban the hijab are violating students' rights.

Earlier, at the Muslim Schools of Montreal, five non-Muslim teachers removed their hijabs after the principal said the situation will no longer impose the hijab on non-Muslim teachers.

"It's a victory on both sides," said Deborah Angelis, a United Church member who teaches language arts and English as a second language in the school that has 250 primary and secondary students.

"It's just wonderful that finally something has been done to ensure that people from any matter what religion are able to wear garments that are part of their religion in public and private places, without fear they're going to be scorned."

"It's also very fulfilling that teachers who are not of the Muslim faith are being



NANCY ACKERMAN, GAZETTE
 Angelis at home. She removed hijab after Muslim school changed dress code.

respected here."

At the MCSC last night, Pallascio and board member Benoît Bressette met reporters before a board meeting to express reservations about the place of the head scarf in schools.

"This is about the values we want to see in our schools," Bressette said. "Pallascio said he won't ask 'for any dress-code change at Louis Riel High School, where a student who insisted on wearing a hijab was asked to leave."

"We don't need to put pressure on our

schools to change their policies because they have already established reasonable measures," he said.

The meeting voted down a resolution from the opposition MEMO party calling for consultation with parents and students on the place of religion in schools.

After the vote, MEMO member Robert Cadotte told reporters the MCSC is trying to pretend the controversy over the banning of the hijab does not exist.

"There is a problem there," he said. "Everyone is talking about it. It's not acceptable that we refuse to hear the parents on this. We're in a cosmopolitan city, not in the Quebec of 1900."

Cadotte said the MCSC should adopt a policy to either permit the wearing of all religious symbols, including the crucifix and the hijab, or to ban them all.

He also rejected Pallascio's repeated suggestion that the province decide what place the hijab has in a modern Quebec.

"Why don't we just shut down the MCSC then?" he snapped.

"We are elected by the people to take care of these kinds of questions."

In Quebec City, Cultural Communities Minister Bernard Landry said the rights-commission report constitutes a "reasonable accommodation" under Quebec's

PLEASE SEE ILLUAD, PAGE A12

■ Hijab report right: editorial, PAGE B2
 ■ Made-in-France controversy, PAGE B3

HIJAB *Other boards report no problems*

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

policy of integrating immigrants.

"The commission is adding one piece to the debate and it's a very useful and sound piece," Landry said. "We're very satisfied with that."

At the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, Angelo Komatsoulis, director of community services, said the PSBGM focuses on education as its primary responsibility, "rather than who the individual is, where he comes from, what he wears."

"But then the concept of immigrants is not foreign to us.

"Our policy clearly stipulates we have to develop tolerance among youngsters, respect for individual differences and rights, and that is something that has permeated the ethos of our system.

"Once schools develop that ease, those things (such as the hijab) will not be seen as threatening."

Officials of other boards on Montreal Island said they knew of no case of any of their schools banning the hijab.

At the Muslim Schools of Montreal, principal Ridwan Yusuf said the rule making the hijab obligatory for all females was drafted with the parents' committee to create a clearly Muslim environment in the school.

"It appears that the head scarf has assumed a connotation which was not intended and hence it has been decided to make the head scarf optional for non-Muslim teachers in our schools," Yusuf said in a statement endorsed by the Muslim Community of Quebec.

But the 14 Muslim teachers there and the students will not have this option, Yusuf said, because "otherwise there would be no difference between us and other public schools."

The human-rights report condemning public-school dress codes that ban the hijab was aimed at Louis Riel school.

But a 15-year-old student at Collège Regina Assumpta in Ahuntsic, a private school run by the Congrégation Notre Dame, also complained to the commission after she was told last fall to remove her hijab or find another school.

Dr. Mohammed Amin, a Douglas Hospital psychiatrist and Muslim community leader, said he hopes schools that bar the hijab will reconsider.

"They should do as we did when we considered that this (human-rights statement) is fair and reasonable."

"We are after all a pluralistic society and we have to accept that fact and this has to be reflected in our schools."